The Year in Review

Impact and Progress

Restore America’s Estuaries (RAE) is well known throughout the environmental community for a number of reasons, including our coordination of National Estuaries Week, our biennial National Summit, the success of our Community-based Restoration Program, and our leadership of the national efforts to promote the science and practice of blue carbon and living shorelines. More specifically, RAE is widely recognized for our ability to create, within these and other areas, significant impact. Examples from 2017 include:

- **National Estuaries Week 2017** saw more than 27,000 volunteers participate in 215 events in 27 states, contributing 101,852 hours with an estimated economic value of nearly $2.5 million.

- RAE supported **community-based projects** that removed 33,000 pounds of trash and 22,000 feet of fishing line from coastal areas, planted more than 100,000 plugs of salt marsh plants, and recycled 336,000 pounds of oyster shell.

- A **blue carbon study** RAE led determined that Tampa Bay coastal habitats will capture 73 million tons of carbon dioxide over the next 100 years.

- The **online Living Shorelines Academy** was launched and provides vital information on living shorelines to property owners, practitioners, and other stakeholders nationwide.

In light of results such as the above, people are frequently surprised to learn that RAE is not a large organization, with a total of 9 full-time employees. We are frequently asked how a group that small can create such outsized impact, to which we generally provide two answers: 1) We’re really good at what we do, and 2) Through the power of partnership.

Leading a national alliance of 10 coastal conservation groups, RAE was created as a result of and with a mandate to further partnerships among diverse organizations that share mutual goals. Today, more than two decades after our founding, we continue to develop and strengthen relationships with a variety of partners and to leverage these relationships to allow us to achieve together what none of us could achieve alone.

As we look back on 2017, it is both with pride in the results we were able to bring about and with excitement over the groundwork we were able to lay for even greater success in the years to come. We look forward to continuing to work with our member organizations and other partners to create lasting impact for coastal areas and communities nationwide.

Thank you for your support of RAE and our work to protect and restore America’s bays and estuaries as essential resources for our nation.

Sincerely,

Jeff Benoit
President and Chief Executive Officer
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Director of Foundation and Corporate Giving
COALITION TO RESTORE COASTAL LOUISIANA: Giving Back is Delicious—CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program

Louisiana is the top producer of oysters in the nation, shelling more than 70% of the oysters consumed in the U.S.—that’s 1.3 million tons of the briny bivalves. Sadly, most of the shell ends up in landfills instead of being returned to the water. This shell deficit has dire consequences for Louisiana’s oyster fishery and is contributing to the state’s land-loss crisis. About a football field of marshland washes away every 100 minutes, taking with it vital habitat for seafood favorites, economic and cultural opportunity, and stability for those who call Louisiana home.

In response to this, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana’s (CRCL) Oyster Shell Recycling Program was born. Since 2014, CRCL has collected nearly 3,400 tons (~6.8 million pounds) of shell from New Orleans area restaurants, destined to be returned to Louisiana’s coastal waters to help restore oyster reefs, create fish habitat, and stabilize our coastline.

With the help of more than 600 volunteers, CRCL constructed its first living shoreline oyster reef in 2016 in Biloxi Marsh (Southeast of New Orleans). It stretches for a half mile along a shoreline that is battered by high wave action. CRCL’s second reef is slated for the west side of the Barataria Basin (South of New Orleans).

CRCL currently has 16 restaurants participating in the program. So, when you visit New Orleans, you can be a part of saving the coast by eating lots of delicious oysters.

And remember, “Once you shuck ‘em, Don’t just chuck ‘em!”

RAE's Blue Carbon Program works nationally to increase recognition of “blue carbon” ecosystem services – the ability of healthy coastal wetlands to capture and store greenhouse gases. Coastal habitats are especially good at this, capturing and storing carbon at rates up to 10 times greater than forest ecosystems, and storing it primarily in wetland soils (rather than in above-ground plant materials), where it can remain for centuries or more.

RAE is working with partners across the nation to invest in science and increase understanding of the significant role coastal wetlands have in climate mitigation; pilot market projects to connect restoration activities to carbon finance; and build regional capacity through webinars, workshops, and outreach materials to support restoration and enhance management. RAE, in partnership with member group EarthCorps, released a new infographic and short film titled “Blue Carbon: A Story from the Snohomish Estuary,” – both of which can be viewed online at estuaries.org/bluecarbon.
LIVING SHORELINES: Creating Resilient Communities and Habitats

Our living shorelines program is thriving! We champion the nationwide use of nature-based approaches in shoreline stabilization projects, which incorporate habitat elements like marshes and oysters that benefit our critical estuaries.

Some highlights for 2017:

- We expanded and improved the Living Shorelines Academy, which is a combination of an online “one-stop shop” for living shorelines and in-person trainings. Online aspects include training modules, an interactive forum, searchable literature database, professional directory, and project locator. In-person events were held in Texas, Washington, and Rhode Island.

- We continued to lead the national conversation on living shorelines with our Community of Practice (COP), which provides a monthly forum for communicating about living shoreline and nature-based approaches. Consisting of teleconferences and webinars, the COP allows practitioners to stay connected without the expense and commitment of extensive travel. Topics vary – some from 2017 included: monitoring, outreach to contractors and realtors, federal policy and funding updates, incentives programs, and shoreline datasets.

NATIONAL ESTUARIES WEEK: Engaging Coastal Communities Nationwide

RAE, in partnership with the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (NERRA), led a successful National Estuaries Week (NEW) campaign in 2017. This celebration has become the nation's largest estuary-focused event. Volunteers participate in beach cleanups, restoration projects, and more.

NEW 2017 hosted 215 registered events across 27 states, the most we've ever seen. Highlights included:

- 27,880 participants contributed 101,852 volunteer hours to restoring their local waterways and watershed.
- These volunteers contributed an economic value of more than $2.45 million.
- The first annual Hill Expo brought representatives from EPA, NOAA, and USFWS together with Congressional staffers to discuss estuary priorities.
- A tri-partisan Senate tri-partisan Senate resolution with 28 co-sponsors recognized NEW with 28 co-sponsors.
- 13 state proclamations demonstrated local-level support for estuaries and NEW.
- #EstuariesWeek garnered more than 700 mentions throughout the week.
- Social media participation from top-level officials and government agencies.

RAE continued our partnership with CITGO Petroleum Corporation to offer Gulf Region Grants supporting nine different NEW events throughout the Gulf of Mexico. 3,400 volunteers in the region collected more than 146,000 pounds of trash, cleaned 450 miles of shoreline, restored 65 acres of coastal land, and planted 2,100 trees.

SOUTHEAST NEW ENGLAND WATERSHED GRANTS: Partnering with EPA to Restore Estuarine Ecosystems

Beginning in late 2017, RAE partnered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to oversee a major regional funding program: Southeast New England Watershed Grants. The program supports the goals and priorities of EPA's Southeast New England Program (SNEP).

In the first year, RAE expects to award $4.5 million toward programs, projects and partnerships aimed at solving the region's most pressing ecosystem problems, such as water pollution, habitat degradation and the impacts of climate change in Rhode Island and Southeast Massachusetts.

For more about RAE's SNEP Watershed Grants and EPA's Southeast New England Program, see www.snepgrants.org.
COMMUNITY-BASED RESTORATION: Restoring Estuaries Around the Country

In 2017 Restore America's Estuaries worked with groups around the country to implement on-the-ground restoration projects with real results! Students grew and eventually transplanted approximately 67,345 stems of smooth cordgrass to local restoration sites around Galveston Bay, Texas, restoring more than 2 acres of salt marsh. More than 1,500 students and teachers planted 11,600 plugs of bay grasses at 3 restoration sites in Florida, and in Washington toxic creosote debris was removed from Puget Sound beaches. Urban youth from the New York and New Jersey area removed marine debris from the shorelines of Jamaica Bay and 330 volunteers constructed 968 linear feet of oyster reef in Tampa Bay, Florida. RAE also supported research of the ecology, behavior, and health of Galveston Bay dolphins, and helped to improve water quality through green infrastructure implementation projects throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Results such as these brought about by local community members demonstrate not only the on-the-ground impact that RAE and our member organizations and partners are able to produce, but also the value that coastal communities place on their local waters and natural resources.

NORTH CAROLINA COASTAL FEDERATION: Restoring Oysters to Improve Habitat and Water Quality

The North Carolina Coastal Federation launched its 50 Million Oyster Initiative in 2017. The initiative aims to restore 50 million oysters to North Carolina waters by 2020. The federation, working with partners, will construct 50 acres of oyster reef, with each acre supporting 1 million oysters. These 50 million oysters will filter 2.5 billion gallons of water daily.

In 2017, the federation and partners built 16.5 acres of reef throughout the state. Fifteen of these acres were built at one of the federation's largest restoration projects, the Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary in Pamlico Sound. These acres are part of the state Senator Jean Preston Oyster Sanctuary Network. The project was funded by private donations and by the North Carolina General Assembly, which appropriated over $1.1 million. This appropriation helped the federation secure nearly $1.3 million in grant funds from NOAA.

A true North Carolina project, the Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary employed construction workers, restoration specialists, researchers, state employees and private contractors from across the coast, including Edenton-based Stevens Towing, Inc. Construction has moved ahead of schedule, and oysters are already growing on the site. At least 25 more acres will be added to the Swan Island Oyster Sanctuary in 2018 and 2019.
## Years Ended December 31

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
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<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>$1,285,199</td>
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<td>Grants and Contributions</td>
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<td>Net Assets at End of Year</td>
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### 2017 Revenue
- Government Grants (69%)
- Grants and Contributions (28%)
- Other (3%)

### 2017 Expenditures
- Program Services (82%)
- Fundraising (7%)
- General and Administrative (11%)
ACKNOWLEDGING OUR 2017 SUPPORTERS

Restore America’s Estuaries is appreciative of the many individuals, corporations, and organizations that have supported our work over the last year.

Accenture
Amazon Smile
Blue Ventures Conservation
Bob Stokes
Brian Phelan
c.HAIR.i.TEE
CITGO
CLEAN Foundation Conservation International
Courtney Lewis
David Lewis
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wildlife Forever Fund
William C. Baker

If we have inadvertently left you off our acknowledgement list, we apologize and would appreciate your letting us know by contacting clewis@estuaries.org.

DONATE NOW

The support of our generous donors makes possible all that we do. To learn more about how you can help protect and restore estuaries, contact Courtney Lewis at clewis@estuaries.org or visit www.estuaries.org/donate.

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