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Help our Oyster Babies Move into the Bay With July 15 Parade of Boats

Our oyster babies are growing up and soon they will be ready to begin life on their own. Come join us on Friday, July 15 at 11 a.m. when we carry them to their new home with a parade of boats.

The event will begin with transferring our precious cargo of oyster spat from the tank on the Wildwood Avenue Pier in Ocean Gate, NJ to boats that will carry them to their permanent home on a reef off Good Luck Point. The pier is located near the intersection of Wildwood and East Longport avenues.

Of course there'll be a bit of ceremony to mark the occasion and, perhaps, a song or two to send us marching off. We're also expecting a flotilla of well-wishers to lend a hand during the journey. All boaters are welcome to participate.

The oyster nursery and reef are part of a larger project to bring back Barnegat Bay. Directed by the American Littoral Society, the project aims to help re-establish oyster colonies in the Bay. Decades of pollution, accelerated by rampant development along the bay's shores, have decimated the oyster population. Oysters help keep water clean and protect the shore. They are nature's water filters, each one able to clean up to 50 gallons of water a day. Oyster reefs also serve as speed bumps for waves during storms.

The project re-started in 2015 with construction of a reef off Good Luck Point in Berkley Township. About 62,000 whelk shell were dropped there to provide the hard, calcium-rich foundation oysters need to thrive. Then work began at Ocean Gate pier on a spat tank to serve as nursery for baby oysters.

Oyster larvae are poured into the tank where they begin the work of attaching to whelk and growing their own shells. Less than one-in-20 larvae typically latch on and become spat.

The Good Luck Point oyster restoration project is a collaborative effort led by the American Littoral Society. Partners include the Barnegat Bay Partnership, Stockton University, and ReClam the Bay, with support from the community of Ocean Gate and Berkeley Township. The Good Luck Point Marina has also been instrumental in the project.

For more information, please contact Capt. Al Modjeski, Habitat Restoration Program Director for the American Littoral Society (alek@littoralsociety.org).

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Leaders in coastal conservation since 1961, the American Littoral Society, a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, promotes the study and conservation of marine life and habitat, protects the coast from harm, and empowers others to do the same.

For more information about the American Littoral Society or to become a member, please visit www.littoralsociety.org or call 732-291-0055.

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