



On-the-Ground Projects

Spotlight on Oyster Reef Restoration in Back Sound, Rachel Carson Reserve, Beaufort, North Carolina

Project Partners

East Carolina University

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

North Carolina Coastal Federation

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Back Sound, Beaufort, North Carolina has been a hot spot for oyster reef restoration, with over 50 reefs constructed since 1990. This project will enhance habitat connectivity in the area by adding reefs in a region of Back Sound, along Carrot Island in the Rachel Carson National Estuarine Research Reserve, that has experienced significant reef and marsh loss. In this area, shoreline is eroding at a rate of 1 - 2 meters per year. This is due to increased storm frequency and intensity, as well as continuous boat traffic in an adjacent channel.

East Carolina University will work with partners to restore 36, 3 x 4 meter intertidal oyster reefs (0.11 acres total) along the eroding salt marsh and remnant marsh shoreline on Carrot Island. Shell bags and Oyster Catcher™ materials will be constructed adjacent to the marsh, protecting over three acres and promoting marsh recovery. The project will benefit species such as red and black drum, flounder, Atlantic sharpnose and bonnet head sharks, spotted sea trout, black sea bass, gag grouper, blue crabs, stone crabs, and diamond back terrapins.

Back Sound is a popular area for recreational fishermen, K-12, and undergraduate school groups, who will all benefit from the restoration.



Aerial view of the project site

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with conservation dollars to partially fund the construction and monitoring portions of the project. Monitoring includes measurements of oyster recruitment, growth, and survivorship; reef dimensions; reef and marsh vertical and horizontal change; and marsh plant percent cover, stem densities, and heights.

Project text and photos provided by Rachel Gittman, East Carolina University.

For more information on the Partnership visit us at: www.atlanticfishhabitat.org

