

# THE BEACON

Babylon Village, West Babylon, North Babylon, Deer Park, Lindenhurst, West Islip and Long Island, New York

## Save the Great South Bay creates oyster sanctuary

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The Great South Bay Oyster Project made its mark with an initial planting of over 5,000 oysters in Save The Great South Bay's recently established oyster sanctuary, helping rebuild marine habitat and providing essential environmental functions such as water filtration in the bay.

“Creating an oyster sanctuary in the Great South Bay has been a goal of our organization since its inception. It is humbling and thrilling to see this project come to fruition,” said Robyn Silvestri, executive director at the South Shore-based non-profit.

The Great South Bay Oyster Project was established in 2020 in an effort to support local oyster farmers when restaurant markets closed down due to COVID-19. South Shore-based Blue Point Brewing pitched in with funding for the non-profit to purchase excess inventory from local farmers. Then, working with the Town of Babylon Aquaculture Program, Save The Great South Bay repurchased

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This is a collaborative, multi-organizational effort with Gregg Rivara, aquaculture specialist at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, lending his marine biology expertise to help steer the project. “This is the start of an oyster reef that will filter the bay while providing habitat for many other species,” he said. “It’s great working with community partners like Save the Great South Bay, Seatuck and the Town of Islip.”

Maureen Dunn of Seatuck Environmental sits on the Great South Bay Oyster Project advisory board and is conducting water quality monitoring as well as sourcing reclaimed oyster shells through Seatuck’s Half Shells for Habitat program. The shell will serve as the host to spat, or baby oysters, spawned at the Town of Islip Shellfish Hatchery, for further expansion of this and future sanctuaries.

“We are excited to be working with Save the Great South Bay,” said Carlie Schecht, assistant waterways management supervisor, Town of Islip Shellfish Culture Facility. “Their mission and passion for the bay is inspiring. It’s exciting to see their efforts to boost the community’s awareness of oyster restoration while enhancing the Great South Bay’s ecological productivity.”

“Protecting and preserving the bay for future generations to enjoy is our organization’s mission,” said Todd Shaw, board president at the local, 501(c)3 environmental non-profit. “It’s going to take all of us to get the job done.”

To support the Great South Bay Oyster Project or learn how you can get involved, visit [www.savethegreatsouthbay.org](http://www.savethegreatsouthbay.org).

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