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**Students and Volunteers Bag Shells for Oyster Restoration**

**Wilmington** – Students from Eugene Ashley and John T. Hoggard High Schools in New Hanover County will join volunteers to bag oyster shells on Wednesday, April 25, at Waterway Park on Oak Island. The bagged shells will eventually be used to build an oyster reef at the park.

The bagging will start at 10 a.m. at the park, which is at the end of Northeast 14<sup>th</sup> Street on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Sponsored by N.C. Coastal Federation and Oak Island, the restoration project will ultimately lead to the creation of an oyster reef and restored salt marsh along the shoreline of the park. The reef and marsh will work as a living shoreline to slow down erosion while providing important habitat and water quality benefits. The town is helping with the project to promote the benefits of living shorelines, which use more natural methods of erosion control than wooden or concrete bulkheads and stone rip-rap.

The students and volunteers will fill mesh bags with oyster shells and limestone marl that will be used to create the new oyster reef. This field work is the final component for the students' participation in the federation's Student Habitat Education Program. The program engages students in the classroom and in the field with activities and habitat restoration projects. Over 3,000 students and teachers have participated in the Student Habitat Education program since its start in 2008. The program is made possible by the generous support from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation. The foundation awards grants to nonprofit community agencies, universities and other partners for programs that promote the sciences, health and education.

Volunteers can register for the event at [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org). For more information contact Ted Wilgis the federation's coastal education coordinator at 910-509-2838 or [tedw@nccoast.org](mailto:tedw@nccoast.org) or John Michaux, Oak Island's Public Works manager, at 910-201-8008 or [jmichaux@ci.oak-island.nc.us](mailto:jmichaux@ci.oak-island.nc.us).