



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Students, Volunteers Will Build Oyster Reefs at Oak Island**

WILMINGTON – The N.C. Coastal Federation and Oak Island are recruiting volunteers to help build two oyster reefs along the shoreline of Waterway Park on Oak Island on Wednesday, March 20, and on Saturday, March 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day.

The oyster reefs are part of a project by the town and the federation to restore estuarine shoreline. Over the past year volunteers have made 5,000 bags of oyster shells, which will be used by volunteers to create two shoreline oyster reefs.

The volunteer events will include an orientation to the project, the reef building, fun educational activities and refreshments. Volunteers are invited to spend either day at the park building the reefs. Morning or afternoon shifts are also available.

The project will create two oyster reefs 200 feet long and eight feet wide. The salt marsh behind the reefs will also be restored. The reefs and salt marsh will work as a living shoreline to slow down erosion while providing important habitat and water quality benefits.

The town's Estuarine Shoreline Stabilization Committee and Stormwater Department are helping with the project to promote the benefits of Living Shorelines.

Each day the volunteers will work together to move bags filled with oyster shells from the stockpile area down to the shoreline where the bags will be stacked in layers to form the reefs. The work will occur during low tide.

The bags will form low-profile reefs on which baby oysters will attach. As the oysters grow, the bags will eventually turn into living reefs. Volunteers will later plant salt marsh plants behind the reefs to restore the marsh habitat. The town has cleaned up debris from the shoreline to help with the project.

The oyster reefs and marsh will become valuable habitat for important species of commercial and recreational fish and shellfish. The reefs and marsh will also improve water quality by filtering sediment and nutrients from the water.

The Estuary Restoration Act, a federal law passed in 2000, is providing the money for the project. The law makes restoring estuaries a national priority. The Army Corps of Engineers in Wilmington is the federal sponsor for the project.

This event is suitable for all ages. Federation educators will pull seine nets with students and volunteers and offer fun educational activities focused on oyster and salt marsh habitat.

Pre-registration is requested and can be done by visiting [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org).

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

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**About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:** The N.C. Coastal Federation is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat preservation and restoration. Since its founding in 1982, the federation has worked with citizens to safeguard the state's coastal rivers, creeks, sounds and beaches and has protected or restored more than 50,000 acres along the state's coast. Its headquarters is in Ocean in Carteret County, between Morehead City

and Swansboro, and it has regional offices in Wrightsville Beach and Manteo. For more information about the Coastal Federation visit [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org).