

LETTER: Back bill allowing oyster reef restoration

4:11 p.m. EDT September 17, 2015



(Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

As the third anniversary of superstorm approaches, New Jersey continues to look for new ways to be better prepared for future storms.

Shellfish have the unique capability to protect New Jersey communities from flooding and storm events by naturally strengthening our coasts and preventing shoreline erosion. After Sandy, the Army Corps of Engineers even recommended strengthening shellfish reefs to protect shorelines from future damage. Oysters also filter the water and build habitat for other marine species.

But the state Department of Environmental Protection has banned shellfish research, restoration and education programs since 2010 in waters it deems too “contaminated.” This includes most of the waterways from the George Washington Bridge to Sandy Hook Bay.

New Jersey is missing out on valuable resiliency opportunities while New York was recently awarded \$60 million by the federally sponsored Rebuild by Design program to build a “living breakwater,” including oyster reefs, off the south shore of Staten Island.

A bipartisan bill (S2617) that would allow the reintroduction of shellfish research, ecological restoration and education will be voted on by the Senate on Thursday, Sept. 24. The vote in the Assembly is pending (A3944).

If you are interested in lending your voice to urge the state Legislature to support the use of oysters for research, ecological restoration and education purposes in all of New Jersey’s waterways contact sandra@nynjbaykeeper.org (<mailto:sandra@nynjbaykeeper.org>) or Debbie@nynjbaykeeper.org (<mailto:Debbie@nynjbaykeeper.org>) or 732-888-9870.

Sandra Meola

NY/NJ Baykeeper

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