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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FIRST OF ITS KIND LIVING SHORELINE TO BREAK GROUND
IN NY-NJ HARBOR**

NY/NJ Baykeeper to use live oysters to fortify coast on US Naval property

(KEYPORT, NJ) - NY/NJ Baykeeper and partners will begin the installation of a first of its kind urban living shoreline on Wednesday, August 17. Located at Naval Weapons Station Earle in Monmouth County, NJ, the 0.91 acre living shoreline will consist of an artificial reef using live oysters and concrete structures known as oyster castles to fortify and protect the coast along the Raritan Bayshore.

The oyster castles will provide the necessary hard surface that oysters can attach and grow on. This project is one of the first times groundbreaking oyster castles will be used in New Jersey.

“After Hurricane Sandy, it became clear that coastal resiliency should have become an immediate priority,” said Debbie Mans, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper. “We expect the living shoreline to provide data to tackle the impending threats of climate change and shoreline erosion. The project will determine if a living shoreline can stabilize the mouth of Ware Creek, protect the surrounding environment, improve water quality, and create aquatic habitat in the urban NY-NJ Harbor Estuary.”

“As a bi-state restoration leader, we’re excited to construct a living shoreline and thankful for all the help the Navy has provided over the years through our unique partnership,” said Meredith Comi, Restoration Program Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper. “Protecting our vulnerable urban coasts using natural mechanisms is critical to address shoreline erosion and improve coastal resiliency.”

The US Navy and NY/NJ Baykeeper have been partners since 2010 when the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection banned all shellfish research, restoration, and education activities in waters deemed too contaminated or waters classified as "Restricted" or "Prohibited" for shellfish harvest. The United States Navy at Naval Weapons Station Earle provides property, guidance, and support in NY/NJ Baykeeper’s oyster restoration activities.

“Our partnership with NY/NJ Baykeeper is an example of the Naval Station’s efforts to combat the effects of climate change to our nation’s security and military infrastructure,” said Capt. Jay Steingold, Naval Weapons Station Earle commanding officer. “Through this partnership, we seek to employ mother nature’s protective systems, like oyster reefs, to buttress the ever-changing shoreline at the Navy pier complex in Lower New York Harbor, while also enhancing the resiliency of a public storm evacuation route and improving the water quality of Sandy Hook Bay,” he added.

The living shoreline project has received permits from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Additional restoration activities occurring at Naval Weapons Station Earle this summer include setting oysters at NY/NJ Baykeeper’s aquaculture facility, monitoring the oysters and structures in the ¼ acre experimental restoration plot to assess survival and growth, repeating a successful biodiversity study, and continuing to collect water quality data.

This project is funded, in part, by the Marta Heflin Foundation.

Background:

Oysters are a powerful species with unique capabilities to filter and clean water, provide habitat for other sea creatures, improve resiliency to storm surge and erosion. Oysters once thrived in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary, so much so that Ellis Island was previously called Little Oyster Island. However, overharvesting, pollution and sedimentation of reefs resulted

in a sharp population decline. There is no longer a sustainable oyster population in the NY-NJ Harbor area today, which is why NY/NJ Baykeeper works to restore them.

For over a decade NY/NJ Baykeeper has been the lead nonprofit organization conducting important oyster research in NY-NJ Harbor Estuary, partnering with Naval Weapons Station Earle and Rutgers University in New Jersey and with nearly 20 different federal, state, city and nonprofit partners in New York.

NY/NJ Baykeeper had previously successfully managed two oyster reef projects in New Jersey - one in the Navesink River near Red Bank and the second in the Keyport Harbor. Unfortunately, both projects were shut down due to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) decision in 2010 to ban research, restoration, and education projects using oysters in waters deemed too contaminated or waters classified as "Restricted" or "Prohibited" for shellfish harvest.

Despite this setback, NY/NJ Baykeeper has continued to work to ensure innovative shellfish research and restoration projects are implemented in the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary, an area significantly impacted by Superstorm Sandy, water pollution and loss of habitat. Most recently, NY/NJ Baykeeper successfully worked to pass legislation, signed by Governor Christie, that requires NJDEP to revisit its regulations to provide for improved and expanded oyster research and restoration opportunities based on comments from a community engagement process. Current Rules leave thousands of acres of water prohibited for oyster research and restoration use and require 24 hours a day, 365 reef surveillance.

About NY/NJ Baykeeper

NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen advocate of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, we've worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth – benefiting its natural and human communities. Through our Estuary-wide programs we seek to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and NY/NJ state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning for a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary watershed.

About Naval Weapons Station Earle

Located in Monmouth County, New Jersey, Naval Weapons Station Earle provides all ordnance for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups, while supporting strategic Department of Defense ordnance requirements. From the beaches of Normandy to the sands of the Fertile Crescent, NWS Earle continues to provide the hitting power the U.S. Navy & Marine Corps required to execute the mission of Power Projection around the globe.

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Press are welcome on the Navy base next week during installation. Please contact Sandra Meola at Sandra@nynjbaykeeper.org for details.