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11 MILLION OYSTERS: HUDSON RIVER PARK SURPASSES GOAL IN LARGEST HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT TO DATE

State-funded Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project aims to increase oyster population, diversify river habitat and support local fish species in Hudson River Park's 400-acre sanctuary waters

Population milestone serves as key indicator of project's success

NEW YORK (December 10, 2021) — Today, Hudson River Park announced the completion of the Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project, its first large-scale habitat restoration initiative to take place within the Park's 400-acre Estuarine Sanctuary. The project, which is located between Pier 26 and Pier 34 in Hudson River Park, included the deployment of 11.2 million juvenile oysters with the goal of supporting additional marine life and strengthening the overall health of the Hudson River.

The Hudson River Park Trust, with funding from New York State and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), has built more than 200 individual subtidal habitats, including reef balls, oyster gabions, pile wraps and textured piles in a project designed to boost habitat biodiversity and increase the oyster population in the Park's Sanctuary waters. A major undertaking, the Hudson River Park Trust and its engineering consultant, Moffatt and Nichols, designed the project in partnership with NYSDEC. Billion Oyster Project, the Hudson River Foundation, Riverkeeper and other environmental partners were instrumental in helping conceive the project design and establish habitat enhancement goals, and the Army Corps of Engineers and NYSDEC were among the agencies approving the project's installation.

The installations, which began in July, involved transporting reef balls and gabions seeded with oysters in aquaculture tanks from the Billion Oyster Project as the Trust's contractor, Reicon Group, installed them one-by-one at designated underwater locations. These new underwater homes offer more varied hard surfaces to support the establishment of sessile – or immobile – organisms like oysters, mussels and barnacles. Collectively, they create a reef-like system that diversifies the river habitat and acts as a corridor to support local fish populations during migration or when residing in Park waters.

In addition, oysters offer important environmental benefits. Individually, the filter feeders help clean pollutants from our waterways and when restored at a large scale, they can mitigate storm surge and flood impacts, helping build shoreline resiliency by dissipating wave energy.

"While visitors to the Park don't always get to see the wildlife living below the surface – oysters, fish, seahorses and more – Hudson River Park's Estuarine Sanctuary plays host to these animals, and a core part of our mission entails promoting environmental

stewardship and enhancing habitat to ensure the Sanctuary thrives," **said Noreen Doyle, President and CEO of the Hudson River Park Trust.** "We are grateful to New York State and the Department of Environmental Conservation for funding this project, as well as our environmental partners who shared in our mission. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue working with the scientific community on advancing the study and enhancement of the Hudson River."

"The Department of Environmental Conservation is making sustained investments to restore the health of the Hudson River and quality of life of those living in the communities along its banks," **said NYSDEC Commissioner Basil Seggos.** "Projects like the Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project align with DEC's ongoing efforts improve water quality, and with partners like the Hudson River Park Trust, DEC continues to advance programs and projects to enhance the Estuarine Sanctuary for future generations of New Yorkers."

"This Hudson River oyster installation was our largest in 2021," **said Katie Mosher, Director of Programs at Billion Oyster Project (BOP).** "It's exciting to imagine the reef balls that we set with oysters and the BOP gabion structures — designed and fabricated by Harbor School graduates, BOP staff, and volunteers — recruiting more oysters and creating habitat for hundreds of New York Harbor marine species."

"These exciting projects show real progress toward our shared goal to enhance the shallow water habitats of the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary," **said Jim Lodge, Senior Scientist at the Hudson River Foundation.** "We have come to this point through an extraordinary collaboration of dedicated partners and key organizations and agencies committed to improving habitat and water quality in the Estuary and restoring the legendary New York oyster and its critical ecological functions back to the Hudson River."

"We are thrilled to see the large-scale deployment of oysters and oyster habitat in the Hudson River Park Estuarine Sanctuary," **said George Jackman, Senior Habitat Restoration Manager at Riverkeeper.** "Oysters represent a keystone species in our estuaries with immense ecological value. They help restore the health of our waterways by filtering the water, and by providing forage and habitat for a wide variety of creatures. Along with reducing sewage overflows, adding oyster reefs and other bivalves is one of the best ways to restore the health and maintain the biodiversity of the Hudson River Estuary."

Aside from the 11.2 million juvenile oysters cultivated by the Billion Oyster Project, 600 adult oysters in the project's oyster wraps come from New York's Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR) program, which aims to help oyster farmers impacted by restaurant closures due to COVID. Together, the Park's oysters contribute to the goal of restoring a billion oysters in the New York Harbor.

The Tribeca Habitat Enhancement Project will adhere to an adaptive management strategy. The enhancements will be monitored by experts to learn how the various

habitat enhancement features perform over time, and to increase the science community's understanding of how projects like this can boost species diversity and abundance in critical areas. Hudson River Park's River Project will monitor the juvenile oysters' health as they mature into adults and study the effects of the new habitat structures on other estuarine populations.

The Estuarine Sanctuary provides critical habitat to more than 85 species of fish, including lined seahorses, American eels and striped bass, and is a vital migration corridor for birds and other wildlife. The Park has also begun construction of a new salt marsh on the north side of the Gansevoort Peninsula, which is expected to be complete by 2023 and is funded by the City of New York. The Park has committed to monitoring the enhancement projects and providing meaningful data to science partners that can help inform future restoration management choices.

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ABOUT HUDSON RIVER PARK

Hudson River Park, which extends from Chambers Street to 59th Street along Manhattan's west side, is the longest riverfront park in the United States. This free, urban recreational oasis is home to award-winning skate parks, playgrounds, sports fields, gardens and nature exhibits, boating and maritime activities, art installations, and myriad year-round events that celebrate the diverse cultures and neighborhoods along its shores. The Park, which transformed four miles of decaying piers and parking lots into a premier New York City destination for local residents and visitors alike, plays a critical role in protecting the Hudson River ecosystem. For more information, please visit www.hudsonriverpark.org, or follow the Park on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at @HudsonRiverPark.