

Shells needed for Martin County Oyster Reef Restoration Project

By staff report

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MARTIN COUNTY — Organizers of the Martin County Oyster Reef Restoration Project in the St. Lucie River are hoping eateries will donate oyster, clam and mussel shells for use in making the reef.

Shells will be collected and transported to a staging area, where area high school students and other volunteers will load them into 30-pound bags. When enough shells have been collected, the filled bags will be taken to the Rio Nature Park to be part of a comprehensive shoreline restoration.

Students will construct the reef and plant mangroves and cord grass as part of a living shoreline. They will then monitor the water quality of the area and overall project success for the duration of the school year.

“This is a great hands-on learning experience for the students,” explained Baret Barry of the Martin County Engineering Department. “The opportunity to understand the environmental and economic value of the river is a lesson that will last a lifetime.”

The program is a component of Martin County’s Oyster Reef Restoration project taking place in the St. Lucie and Loxahatchee rivers. This large-scale effort has been funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The goal is to create a reef at least 50 feet long, requiring about 4,000 pounds of shell to construct.

Oyster habitat is critical to the health of estuaries, effectively filtering nutrients, fine sediments and toxins from the water.

Martin County will host an open house to provide more information about the Oyster Reef Restoration Project from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sept. 2 at Flagler Recreation Center in downtown Stuart.

To participate in the living shoreline, or for general information about the Oyster Reef Restoration Project contact Baret Barry at 772-221-1387 or bbarry@martin.fl.us. Look for the project Web site coming soon at www.oysterrestoration.com.