

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brevard Zoo's oyster shell collection program expanding**

MELBOURNE, Fla., November 10, 2021 — Restore Our Shores, Brevard Zoo's conservation team working to restore the Indian River Lagoon, is expanding its in-house oyster shell "recycling" program.

The Brevard County Tourism Development Council awarded Restore Our Shore's Shuck and Share program a grant to begin collecting oyster shells from Orlando-area and other Central Florida restaurants. All the shell collected will be used for Indian River Lagoon projects within Brevard County.

Restore Our Shores gathers discarded oyster shells from local restaurants and uses them to build new oyster reefs in the lagoon. Oyster larvae settle on the shells placed in the lagoon, building new oyster communities that help filter out pollutants in the water and prevent erosion.

Over the years, overharvesting, disease, pollution and coastal construction have contributed to the decline of oyster beds in the Indian River Lagoon.

"Oysters help keep the lagoon healthy for the fish, crabs, manatees, and other wildlife that call it home," said Olivia Escandell, Restore Our Shores' Conservation Manager. "Oysters are the 'liver of the river' - an adult oyster can filter between 20 and 30 gallons of water in a single day."

About 5 million pounds of shell have been collected through Brevard Zoo's Shuck and Share since 2014, creating 1.51 miles (about 42,381 square feet) of oyster reef in the lagoon.

Restore Our Shores currently works with 20 restaurants in Brevard County to collect and transport shells at no cost to the restaurants. Eateries interested in participating in Restore Our Shores' Shuck and Share program should contact [RestoreOurShores@brevardzoo.org](mailto:RestoreOurShores@brevardzoo.org).

More information about the Zoo's Shuck and Share program can be found at [RestoreOurShores.org](http://RestoreOurShores.org).

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*Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at [www.brevardzoo.org](http://www.brevardzoo.org).*

*Treetop Trek features five aerial obstacle courses that whisk guests above parts of the Zoo and through lush Florida landscapes. More information is available at [www.treetoptrek.com](http://www.treetoptrek.com).*

*The Aquarium Project is a plan to construct a world-class aquarium and conservation center at Port Canaveral. More information is available at [www.theaquariumproject.org](http://www.theaquariumproject.org).*