

Coast 4U Quarterly
Spring 2010 Issue
WHALE TAIL® Grantee Spotlight:
The Watershed Project with “Oysters on the Half Shell”

The WHALE TAIL® Grants Program distributes funds from sales of the WHALE TAIL® License Plate. The grants support programs that teach California’s children and the general public to value and take action to improve the health of the state’s marine and coastal resources. Adopt-A-Beach programs, as well as other beach maintenance and coastal habitat restoration projects that have an educational component, are also eligible for these grants. This grants program focuses on reaching communities that are currently poorly served in terms of marine and coastal education.

*Each issue of the Coast 4U Quarterly features one of our **WHALE TAIL® Grant-funded projects**. This issue we feature **The Watershed Project’s “Oysters on the Half Shell.”** Please read on to hear how The Watershed Project developed a program that aims to restore oyster beds in San Francisco Bay and collect data to monitor the progress.*

The Watershed Project is working in partnership with scientists in the San Francisco Bay Native Oyster Working Group to involve the community in oyster reef restoration. Oyster beds used to cover tens of thousands of acres of the Bay and are important habitat for eelgrass, migrating salmonids, and spawning herring.

“Oysters on the Half Shell” involves both the general public and students in oyster reef restoration. As part of the Whale Tail grant, 200 volunteers from the general public, increased their understanding of the native oyster (*Ostrea conchiphila*), collected data to help the scientists and inform future restoration activities. They created and deployed bags of oyster shells to be used for a reef for oyster larvae to settle upon. They also determined the number and size of new oysters, their placement in the reef, and other species found in the reef. In addition, 500 students learned about the history, ecology, and biology of Bay oyster reef habitats; why oysters have been depleted; and what can be done to help. They visited a restoration site and also helped make bags of oyster shells. The students came from all grade levels in four Bay Area counties, with an emphasis on the city of Richmond.

To learn more about the “Oysters on the Half Shell” program or to learn more about The Watershed Project, please click visit their website at www.thewatershedproject.org.