

# SUSTAINABLE UTILITIES COMMITTEE

## MISSION STATEMENT

Work with members of VWEA and VA AWWA to support the development of sustainable practices through activities and programs, education, advocacy, and networking. Actively reach out to, and collaborate with, utility directors, engineers, operators, groundwater specialists, permit specialists, professors, students, and others who share our commitment to protect and preserve public health, the environment, and all of our natural resources. Strive to make the Committee's activities and programs sustainable through leading by example, inspiring others to do so, and incorporating the values of sustainability broadly and deeply in our professional and personal lives.

## GOALS

- Foster the transfer of knowledge and information relevant to sustainability issues facing our industry.
- Maintain appropriate communication with other VWEA/VA AWWA committees, local and national professional associations, and members.
- Create learning opportunities for VWEA/VA AWWA members and provide a forum for them to share their experience in the implementation of sustainable business practices within their organization.
- Provide valuable resources to the VWEA/VA AWWA member community that assist water and wastewater agencies in becoming sustainability leaders in their communities.
- Research and communicate local and national sustainability initiatives and programs with VWEA membership

Because of the importance of a wide variety of topics to the concept of sustainability, the Sustainable Utilities Committee has focus groups for the following areas:

- Water Reuse
- WaterJAM Sustainability
- Earth Day
- Outreach Subcommittee

The Committee also partners with other volunteer organizations, including the Virginia Oyster Shell Recycling Program and Friends of Holmes Run.

## WEBSITE

<https://www.vwea.org/page/Sustainable>

<https://www.vaawwa.org/305562/Page/Show?ClassCode=Page&Slug=sustainable-utilities>



# VIRGINIA OYSTER SHELL RECYCLING PROGRAM

Since 2013, the VCU Rice Rivers Center has facilitated the collection of waste oyster shells from restaurants and returned them to the Virginia portion of the Chesapeake Bay to help restore wild oyster populations, improve water quality, and provide new fish habitat.

The Virginia Oyster Shell Recycling Program (VOSRP) is a public-private and nonprofit collaborative effort. The program takes shells destined for the trash and returns them to the bay. The VOSRP collects from 50 restaurants and 30 public drop-off locations in Charlottesville, Richmond, Williamsburg, Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, VA Beach and on the Northern Neck of Virginia.

## WHY RECYCLE OYSTER SHELLS?

The wild Eastern Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*), also referred to as the Virginia Oyster, is at a critical population level due to increased water pollution, disease, habitat loss and historic overharvesting in the Chesapeake Bay. Estimates put the current population at one to two percent of its peak number.

Restoring the oyster population provides for multiple environmental benefits. Oysters filter more than 50 gallons of water per day, processing plankton and sediment that in excess cloud waterways. As oyster reefs expand, they provide habitat for blue crabs, striped bass and red drum and help mitigate storm-induced shoreline erosion. As those reefs decompose, they act like an antacid and help balance the pH in the water. Oyster shells are the preferred substrate for new oysters to attach to help rebuild reefs.

Recent harvest numbers continue to increase with the 2015 landings exceeding 650,000 bushels and are the result of successful aquaculture and restoration efforts. With proper management, the oyster population can be restored, helping support sustainable coastal economies.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Participating businesses store the empty shells in sealed containers, which are picked up and transported by volunteers to local storage facilities on a regular basis. After aging in storage for nearly a year, the old shells are placed in seeding tanks. The spat (baby oysters) attach themselves to the shells, which are then returned to the bay. Each shell might contain as many as 10 to 15 spat.

## WANT TO HELP?

Annually, volunteers collect more than 75,000 pounds of oyster shells for restoration efforts. If all of those shells are returned with spat, that is replenishing more than 11 million oysters in the Chesapeake Bay.

- If you don't see your favorite restaurant listed on our website, ask them to join us.
- Recycle your own shells at one of our 30 public drop off sites.
- If you have a home on the river, become an oyster gardener and grow oysters on your dock to help restoration efforts. Visit the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) website for more information on how to get started.
- Volunteer with us. As the program grows, we always need your help moving shells, conducting restoration projects, working oyster-related events, fundraising, or organizing events, and help with development of marketing or communication materials.
- If you are a business and want to participate, contact us to find out how you can become involved.
- Donate to the VOSRP to ensure we continue to grow.

## WEBSITE

<https://ricerivers.vcu.edu/community-engagement/oyster-shell-recycling/>



Friends of Holmes Run (FOHR) brings together Fairfax County residents and environmental advocates over shared concerns about the accelerating impact of land use changes, urbanization, and climate change on Holmes Run and related tributaries and lakes in the Cameron Run watershed. Cameron Run drains into the Potomac River. We are community members committed to protecting and improving the health of the Holmes Run watershed. We seek to preserve, restore, and make accessible and attractive this natural resource. We raise awareness about the cumulative impact of human actions and climate change on Holmes Run, and work together to bring about better stewardship.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

FOHR members seek to protect and restore the Holmes Run watershed through strategic actions, public education, and advocacy. Specifically, FOHR strives to:

- Serve as a “voice” for Holmes Run to policy makers and the public
- Make it easy for local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to understand and do the right thing for the watershed
- Provide a mechanism for collaboration among property owners, environmentalists, and other stakeholders

## **GOALS**

- Cut across parochial and magisterial boundaries to promote a coordinated approach to watershed improvement.
- Advocate for policies that protect the Holmes Run watershed and its native plants and animals.
- Dialog with elected officials, developers, and property owners as needed regarding the potential impact of specific land use proposals on the watershed, to minimize downstream flooding, damaging runoff, degradation of water quality, and loss of habitat.
- Organize, promote, and enact watershed protection activities, including habitat restoration and invasive plant management.
- Educate community groups, such as civic and homeowner associations, places of worship, schools, and community pools about their relationship to the watershed and encourage their participation in its protection.
- Seek to minimize and remediate damage caused to the ecosystem by conventional stream preservation projects.

## **FOHR Work Groups**

Members with a particular interest can opt to participate in one or more of FOHR’s sub-groups:

- Invasive plant management and native landscaping
- Litter control
- Community education
- Public policy and land use
- Storm water management/erosion/water quality
- Community health and recreation

Each work group is co-led by one subject matter expert and one community member.

## **WEBSITE**

<https://www.friendsofholmesrun.org/home>