

Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Oyster Reef Restoration Projects

Project: Emergency oyster reef restoration

Location: Eleanor Island

Funding: Implemented by a party responsible for the Tampa Bay Oil Spill

Year of Completion: 1996

After the oil spill occurred, field surveys indicated that oil mats were stranded over natural oyster communities in the intertidal area near Eleanor Island. The oil contained toxic compounds that represented a continuing source of contamination. The intertidal oyster community suffered mortality and the substrate, cemented together by the oysters, began to deteriorate. The continued deterioration could have resulted in the loss of additional oyster habitat and the loss of the erosional protection that the oyster reefs provided for the mangroves of Eleanor Island. These factors and the condition of these reefs necessitated emergency intervention.

A party responsible for the Tampa Bay Oil spill, under trustee oversight, implemented oyster cultch removal and replacement on an emergency basis. Where contaminated shell and sediment was removed, new reef structure was provided by the immediate placement of fossil shell material to protect the island's physical stability. Because these oyster reefs are located in sensitive intertidal areas, manual labor was used to implement these actions to prevent additional injury.

Project: Oyster reef construction

Location: Pinellas County's War Veteran's Memorial Park

Funding: \$300,000 (Tampa Bay Oil Spill settlement)

Year of Completion: 2005

To compensate for recreational fishing losses resulting from the spill, Pinellas County constructed an oyster reef adjacent to the shoreline of Pinellas County's War Veteran's Memorial Park. Fossilized oyster shell was placed by shallow barge in strategic locations. The project provides ecological services, essential fish habitat and shoreline erosion protection, as well as recreational services such as recreational fishing. The reef is approximately 705' long by 25' wide.