



For immediate release
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Ryan Nece Foundation to Help Restore Fantasy Island

Tampa, FL – Tampa Bay Watch is partnering with the Ryan Nece Foundation on Saturday, October 15 from 9am - noon for a community-based oyster creation project to install new oyster shell communities on the shoreline of Fantasy Island. Approximately 40 volunteers from the Ryan Nece Foundation will assist with the project which will involve shoveling fossilized shell into mesh bags, and then transporting and installing the shell bags to create a series of oyster reefs. The goal of the project is to help provide hard bottom habitats for fish and wildlife resources, promote water quality improvements, and reestablish oyster communities.

Fantasy Island has severely eroded since it was created in the 1970s due to changes in currents and sand distribution, mainly since it is close to the heavily used shipping channel. Creation of a series of oyster shell bars is an effort to restore lost habitat systems to the Bay, prevent further erosion of Fantasy Island, and improve water quality through natural biological filtration. This project is in partnership with The Florida Aquarium, Port Tampa Bay, the Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund, CCA's Building Conservation Trust, the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation and CCA Florida, and the Mosaic Company Foundation.

The goal of Tampa Bay Watch's Community Oyster Reef Enhancement (CORE) program is to increase the oyster population in Tampa Bay and, at the same time, provide habitats for small organisms, prevent erosion, improve water quality and promote fish and wildlife habitats. In addition, this project benefits the Tampa Bay community by promoting environmental awareness and offering hands-on experience in habitat restoration. Visit www.tampabaywatch.org for more information about the project.

***Tampa Bay Watch** is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) stewardship program dedicated exclusively to the charitable and scientific purpose of protecting and restoring the marine and wetland environments of the Tampa Bay estuary encompassing over 400 square miles of open water and 2,300 square miles of highly-developed watershed. Tampa Bay Watch involves more than 10,000 youth and adult volunteers each year in hands on habitat restoration projects. For more information, visit www.tampabaywatch.org, or call 727-867-8166.*

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Photo opportunities: Media is welcome to join us on the shoreline area at the boat ramp or by Tampa Bay Watch boat to get footage of the new oyster bar on October 15 starting at 9:00 a.m. at Williams Park Boat Ramp, 8749 U.S. 41, Riverview, FL 33578. The boat ramp is on the west side of US 41 (Tamiami Trail) where US 41 and the north side of the Alafia River intersect. Eric Plage is the Tampa Bay Watch Environmental Scientist managing the project and will be on hand for interviews. Eric's cell phone number for project days is 720-771-7603.