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Oysters: At One Time “They Were Thick as Stones”

Did you know that the oyster population in 1999 was 600 million and now it is about 400 million in 2020? According to an article by the Chesapeake Bay Program, John Smith once said that the oysters used to be “thick as stones” at one time. Unfortunately, that is not how it is today. Time has not helped the oyster population. Many things have changed since the time that John Smith lived. Sadly, our oyster population is decreasing as we speak. There are several reasons why the number of oysters is declining. One reason we are losing them is because of over-harvesting. Another reason is because of pollution in the water. In my opinion, I think that people need to take things into our own hands. We must act now. If we really want to help the oyster population we all need to help. The oyster population can not be saved by one organization, everyone has to help.

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The oyster is one of the most important keystone species in the Bay. A keystone species determines the fate of an ecosystem; if this animal is taken out of the ecosystem, the entire ecosystem fails. An oyster is a perfect member of a keystone species. The oyster provides many things like shelter to small animals. In addition, the oyster also filters 50 gallons of water a day. Oysters are also good for the economy too.

There are many reasons the oyster population is declining. The first is because of over harvesting. If we continue to over harvest the oyster, it is a struggle for it to keep up with multiplying at a normal rate. Another reason they are declining is because of habitat loss. Oyster habitats have declined around 70% since 1980.

We need to restore the oyster population. There are several local companies and groups trying to restore it to the best they can. One of these groups is called the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is putting oyster shells in the water for the spat to grow on. Spat are a baby oyster and once they attach onto something they stay there

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for the rest of their lives. The goal we need to accomplish is to have mounds of oysters in the water and we need to leave them alone. That is very important and a point that is hard for everyone to understand. The oysters must be left alone. One action we can take is to help grow oysters at our home if we live on the water. Every step we take makes a difference.

The only way we can restore the oyster is if we all work together. We need to educate people on the importance of oysters and what they do for the ecosystem. We also have to stop polluting the water and stop over harvesting oysters to let them grow back to a sustainable number. The last thing we need to do is bring the population up and that can be done in many ways. The next time you hear someone talking about oysters, you can now inform them on what they do for us and the ecosystem. Maybe one day in my lifetime, oysters will be thick as stones again!