

Oysters

Eastern oyster, Crassostrea virginica, the availability of clean, firm substrate sites for attachment limits the distribution of the eastern oyster.

Add to the list of restoration projects in Florida, the state's oyster reefs. They've shrunk in number from both human and natural causes.

An effort to restore Florida's oyster population by rebuilding oyster reefs is in part in response to the important role the oyster plays in the ecosystem.

Marine scientist Aswani Volety heads up the oyster restoration project, helping what he calls the ultimate water filter.

Oysters flourish in estuaries where nutrient-rich fresh water meets the salt water and feed mainly on single-cell plants.



Live oysters in Cherry Creek.

When feeding, the oyster can pump and filter 25 gallons of water in 24 hours.

Florida's estuaries provide suitable conditions and a plentiful food supply for Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) to grow rapidly.

As recently as the 1950s, Florida's bays and coastal areas were covered with oyster reefs. But that coverage has declined, and with it, important natural functions that the oysters once provided.