

**APALACHICOLA BAY SYSTEM INITIATIVE UPDATE**  
**SANDRA BROOKE, FSU COASTAL AND MARINE LAB**  
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**RESEARCH**

Early this year ABSI staff completed a survey of the sub-tidal oyster habitats. We worked with Shannon Hartsfield to sample 132 sites throughout the Bay using oyster tongs, which is much faster than diving and less limited by weather. We measured type and volume of rock, fossil shell, and live oysters, and counted and measured live oysters at each site. This study showed there are oysters in small areas of the Bay, but good habitat seems to be in short supply.

One of the greatest accomplishments this year was the installation of our restoration experiment. We deployed 15 mini-reefs (30 ft x 30 ft x 1.5 ft) at Dry Bar and another 15 at Peanut Ridge. These reefs were made from oyster shell, small limerock or large limerock. The objective was to see which materials were most stable and performed the best. We had the help of several local oystermen that we employed to deploy the materials. They all worked extremely hard to put the materials out, sometimes in difficult conditions. Early surveys showed lots of spat settlement, especially on the natural shell reefs, but some of the material at Peanut Ridge has been dispersed by the strong currents, particularly the shell reefs

Another success story comes from our research hatchery. The staff managed two great spawning events from Apalachicola Bay broodstock. The resulting oyster larvae were set on shells and placed in cages on the experimental reefs to assess their survival and growth. The hatchery had some water quality problems, which are being resolved and we are in the process of building our permanent hatchery. Next year we hope to have larger spawns to test whether the putting hatchery spat-on-shell will help 'kick-start' the oyster recovery in Apalachicola Bay.

**COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD (CAB)**

We were hoping that 2021 would see the end of Covid and we could return to in-person meetings this year. Unfortunately this was no the case, but the CAB gamely continued with monthly zoom meetings and worked their way through establishing goals, strategies and actions for the '*Apalachicola Bay Ecosystem-based Adaptive Management and Restoration Plan*'. During the October CAB meeting, members prioritized these strategies. Final revisions to the draft Plan will be approved by the CAB in November, and Phase IV will begin early in 2022.

For more information visit <https://marinelab.fsu.edu/absi>