Billion Oyster Project – Oyster Research Station Program
Frequently Asked Questions

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General

- What is the ORS program?
  - Billion Oyster Project's Oyster Research Station (ORS) program is a key component of our educational initiatives to engage students, teachers, schools, and community members in environmental restoration and stewardship at the water's edge. Adopting an ORS involves managing an 8 x 8 x 18 inch cage, with ~300 oysters, and collecting data on oyster growth and mortality twice a year.

- How can I/my kids/my students get involved in the ORS program?
  - Sign up for an ORS training here: https://www.eventbrite.com/o/billion-oyster-project-9718066591

- What are the requirements of the program?
  - The implementation of Billion Oyster Project's ORS Program is reliant on the data collected and submitted by volunteer participants. BOP provides site accessibility and maintains Licenses to Collect or Possess Marine Resources for the purpose of education, exhibition, or scientific research issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for each ORS. As a condition of these licenses, BOP must receive and submit data regarding each ORS on a **monthly basis.**

    In addition, BOP provides hands-on training, digital resources, and field supplies for teachers and community scientists to conduct oyster research with their students and fellow community members. BOP provides BOP Schools and Community Scientists with free access to curriculum.

    In return, ALL trained Participants are required to:

    1. Attend Basic Oyster Research Training;
    2. Conduct a minimum of two (2) monitoring events per year;
    3. Submit data collected during monitoring events to Billion Oyster Project within 10 days of the event; and
    4. Submit a minimum of two (2) oyster measurement datasets.
    5. Conduct Rapid Visual Assessments of cages on a monthly basis
    *** Tag @BillionOyster (Instagram/Twitter) or @BillionOysterProject (Facebook) in social media coverage whenever possible.***

  Participants may also choose to engage in additional recommended activities:
    1. Study the BOP Field Science protocols and become proficient in all data collection methods.
    2. Attend Billion Oyster Project's Annual Student Symposium and/or Scyposium on Governors Island at the end of the NYC Department of Education school year.

- What other ORS resources are available?
  - You can find our resource library in this [folder](). Please bookmark this folder so you can always find our datasheets. You can find some really interesting and helpful documents within this folder!

Cage Assignment

- How long does it take to set up a new ORS site?
  - It can take up to a year to develop and implement a new ORS site. Once the perfect location is selected, we must track down and contact the landowners which can take weeks or months. Once we have the landowner's permission to place a cage (if we get it), we must get a special LCP permit from the DEC, taking months of back and forth as we negotiate the placement. Finally, once we have everyone's permission, we can put the oysters in the water - but only during warm months, so you may have to wait over the fall and winter.

    As you can see, this is a complex process with many moving parts, and we appreciate your patience.

- How long does it take to get an ORS assignment?
  - This depends on the specific site but can take up to 6 months. Generally, delays occur due to issues with permitting or restricted site access.

- Where is my ORS assignment?
  - Agata or Cody will contact you with an ORS assignment as soon as they have designated an ORS tag number for you. If you have not heard from them, it might be for one of several reasons including issues with site access, availability or permitting (see "How long does it take to set up a new ORS site" for more information on what goes into developing and installing a new ORS site).

- Do you provide Oyster Research Stations outside of the New York City area?
  - Anyone is welcome to attend an ORS training; unfortunately, due to issues with permitting (see "How long does it take to set up a new ORS site" for more information on what goes into developing and installing a new ORS site), we are unable to provide ORS with live oysters outside of New York City. Depending on local regulations, we may be able to provide blank shell instead. Please check with the appropriate local offices to confirm before contacting us. If you are on Long Island, we recommend that you take a look at some Long Island oyster projects, such as [SPAT from the Cornell Cooperative](). Please see [here]() for other oyster restoration projects around the East Coast that could be a good fit for you.

Monitoring

- What should I bring with me to monitor my ORS?
  - Please bring your ORS monitoring kit that you received at your ORS training. Bring water and a hat and/or sunscreen if it's hot or sunny. Please also bring a camera or camera-phone you can use to take pictures.

- I forgot how to monitor! What should I do?
  - Please review this worksheet: Oyster Measurement and Mortality Protocol as well this helpful video: Instructional Oyster Measurement and Mortality Video

- What if I need support in the field?
  - If you need ORS maintenance, new oyster stock, or support in the field please fill out this form and a staff member will be in contact with you to help! *We have been receiving many inquiries so please be patient as we process all our requests.*

- The tag number on the cage at my site doesn't match the one I was assigned. What do I do?
  - We are currently working on replacing all ORS tags and signs at our sites around New York City. The round aluminum tags you may be familiar with have limited durability, therefore the new tags will have a thicker gauge. Please expect an email from the ORS team regarding any tag number changes by late October to November.

    For the time being, if you do not have a tagged cage please monitor another cage on site that is not occupied by another monitoring group at the time of your visit. Be sure to report which cage you monitored on your datasheet.

- What if my cage or another cage needs maintenance?
  - As mentioned, due to the number of cages in the water around New York Harbor we need your support to help keep an eye out for cages that need maintenance. If you happen to monitor a cage that needs some TLC please let us know by filling out this form.

- What is this thing I found?
  - Check out the Species Identification Guide to learn how to ID the different Harbor critters. Fill out this survey and be automatically entered to win a copy(ies) of this guide! iNaturalist is another great resource to see what other people have found in the same area and can help point you in the right direction.

Data Submission

- How do I submit data?
    - Please review this worksheet for submitting data: [How to Submit Data](). You can use this [Data Sheet]() for recording data in the field, and this [Template]() for recording and submitting your data.

- How soon do I need to submit my data after I collect it?
    - Please submit your data within 10 days of collection

- How often do I need to collect data on my ORS?
    - Participants are required to submit data twice per year in order to stay in good standing with the program and keep their cage.

- How do I submit field photos?
    - Please email field photos to ors@billionoysterproject.org with your name, field site, and brief description of the photos.

- What happens to my data after I submit it?
    - Your data is entered by a Research Technician, and analyzed by BOP specialists. We use this data to understand oyster health in the Harbor. You can also use the data you collect to present at the BOP Symposium in June! Learn more here: https://bopuiprod.azurewebsites.net/symposium

- What is the status of the [digital platform]()?
    - Thank you for your patience as we finalize our data import and download section of the new digital platform. This platform is being produced in partnership with Morgan Stanely's volunteer program as well as Fearless. The curriculum portion is up and running and we expect the data import and download sections to be complete mid-2023.