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“A Good Day for the Oysters”

Let us just imagine this for a second: You are in a small icebox (although you don't know that yet) and you're with thousands of other oysters. Suddenly, light pours into your view, and these massive things come and grab the small bag that you're inside of. You cannot see what's going on, but then something ELSE grabs the bag and you are hauled away into another cooler. You then feel the bumps of what the water and the current felt like, but you know you aren't in water. You are then put into ANOTHER big bag, and you feel the relief of being put back in the water on top of something floating on the water.

That is what an oyster must have felt like when my Papa and I bought some basic equipment that we would need to start growing my own oysters. In case you didn't follow, here is what happened from my perspective. We showed up at an oyster sale in Deltaville, looking for the equipment we would need for me to start growing my own oysters. My papa bought two bags with 500 oysters in each bag that we put in

the cooler he brought. We then moved on to choosing the float (we didn't need ADPI bags because my papa had grown oysters before).

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We bought the Tidal tumbler and spat tube to go inside of it. That was all we needed, so we put our newly bought oysters and equipment in the trunk and drove home. After that, we put about 700 of the oysters into a larger mesh bag called an ADPI bag and put the other 300 into my oyster float. That was on May 27th. Now, my oysters are about three times their original half-inch size.

You may be wondering, what is the point of all this? Why do oysters matter? I will tell you! Oysters are important because they are filter-feeders, which means that they filter the water to get the nutrients they need, but they also produce clean water! It's a win-win! However, some people didn't think about the environmental consequences, so they over dredged and didn't replace the oysters with new ones or leave some there to repopulate. As a result of over dredging, the Chesapeake Bay has been getting dirtier and dirtier since the mid-1800's.

Thankfully, laws have been set in place to prevent over dredging and the long road to recovery has started. And it starts with people like you and me! One reason I became a member of TOGA and started growing

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oysters is because I am aware of the environmental consequences caused by our ancestors. You may be wondering, “What am I going to do with only a few thousand oysters? After all, the Chesapeake Bay has over 18 trillion gallons of water. I know that an oyster filters out 50 gallons of water per day, but in the grand scheme of things, that’s tiny.” Well, it all adds up. Fifty gallons of water per day times 2,000 oysters equals 100,000 gallons of water per day. Adding up the active members in TOGA (around five hundred per Google.com), that’s at least fifty million gallons PER DAY! That’s AT LEAST 18,250,000,000 gallons PER YEAR! Also, that’s just people in TOGA, not including the native population of oysters and other people growing oysters. Just because our oysters completely clean the bay every 1,000 years does not mean that this number will always stay the same. As I said, we are on the road to recovery for the cleanliness of the Bay. That 1,000-year number

is going down year by year as more oysters spawn and we don't over
dredge. Everyone can help save the Bay!!

Sources: [TOGA \(oystergardener.org\)](http://oystergardener.org) and google.com