

# Moriches Bay Project Receives Donation From Discovery Land



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**By Greg Wehner**

The Moriches Bay Project has received a boost in fundraising efforts in the form of a \$1,500 donation from the Discovery Land Company.

The donation from the Arizona-based developer will help deploy roughly 15,000 oysters into the Moriches Bay—located in the western portion of the South Fork in the Town of Southampton—to help filter the bay.

Discovery Land is in the process of redeveloping the Dune Deck in Westhampton

Beach. The developer is also looking to build a luxury golf course resort in East Quogue dubbed "The Hills" that would also include 118 homes on 600 acres through a planned development district, or PDD, a zoning mechanism that allows more intense density in exchange for certain benefits to the community.

"We recognize that the state of the bays is poor due to excess nutrient loading," Mark Hissey, Discovery Land's vice president, said in a prepared statement, "so we are supportive of all area bay restoration efforts including those of the Moriches Bay Project. Working together, we can restore area bays.

"In addition to supporting local shellfish restoration programs this year, through The Hills proposal we have committed \$1 million towards septic tank subsidies for antiquated or failing septic systems in our area and \$450,000 towards bay restoration," he added. "Advanced septic systems can significantly reduce the amount of nitrogen that is released into area ground and surface water, and the shellfish we restore can naturally filter and remove nitrogen from the bay water."

According to Laura Fabrizio, who works with the Moriches Bay Project, the hope is to introduce oysters into the bay, using floating units called oyster farms, or simply reseeded at the bottom of the bay in oyster beds.

Ms. Fabrizio said over the past four years, the number of oysters placed in the bay has more than doubled. She said a single oyster can filter 50 gallons of water a day, and that 15,000 oysters will be able to filter 750,000 gallons of water a day.

The Moriches Bay Project works closely with the Southampton town Trustees and the Cornell Cooperative Extension, and this year their goal is to deploy 200,000 oysters from June through September.

"Putting oysters and clams in the bay to filter the water is a practice that has proven beneficial," said Southampton Town Trustee Eric Shultz. "It's just as important to limit development along the shorelines and reduce our impact on waterways."

In order to reseed 200,000 oysters this year, the Moriches Bay Project will need to raise \$20,000 through grants and donations. A number of fundraising events are planned to that end.

On May 5 at 5 p.m., the organization plans to hold a cocktail benefit at Buoy One in Westhampton Beach. The event is open to the public.

On June 25, the Moriches Bay Project will hold its second annual Oyster Fling, a fundraising cocktail party, at 28 Stacy Drive in Westhampton Beach. The entry fee for the event is \$125. Those interested in purchasing a ticket can go to [www.morichesbayproject.org](http://www.morichesbayproject.org), purchase a ticket at Buoy One or call Ms. Fabrizio at (516) 662-4701.