

TOMALES BAY OYSTER COMPANY



TOMALES BAY CLEAN UP 2015

WWW.TOMALESBAYOYSTERCOMPANY.COM

15479 HIGHWAY 1, MARSHALL, CA 94940



This is Tomales Bay Oyster Company reporting to the community at large about our efforts to retrieve and remove debris, gear and equipment from Tomales Bay in the year 2015. Our efforts were undertaken on a monthly basis at least and the photos depict some of our better excursions.

There is a map included here which might help some of you orient yourselves on the bay while examining the photos and reading the captions that attempt to describe what you are looking at in each of the camera shots. We apologize for the photo quality as all were taken by phones on location with no professional assistance. We also apologize for not being more detailed in describing the junk collected. Such a variety. Start with small pieces of foam and end with refrigerators and tractor tires. It all got on board.

TBOC concentrates our clean up efforts at the northern and southern ends of the bay, where our leases are located. The mouth of Walker Creek and the mud flat fanning out into the bay created by the creek is our northern area of interest. We do walk the shore from the County boat ramp at Miller Park to the Walker Creek salt marsh and this includes Hamlet, the old Jensen's location. The marsh itself we access by boat from the creek at high tide. The mud flat extending out away from the marsh is approached by Boat at all tides. There are five oyster companies with working farms on the mud flat contributing to the stray bag count, floats etc. The general debris comes from everyone, including farms, people and towns upstream, fishermen and visitors to the bay.

On the southern end of the bay TBOC concentrates its clean-up efforts from Tomasini Point to Millerton Point, but on the higher winter tides we have begun to include the long stretch of shore from Millerton to Bivalve where over New Year we got rich on wind blown trash. Very little oyster gear gets furthest south but much else does. This wind blown debris comes from all points north on the long bay, both east shore and west shore.

We have always had 'bay clean up days' going back a couple decades which were lead by Tom Beatty. Recently, Richard James, The Coastodian has taken the lead by personally going out on the waters and along the beaches in his kayak and collecting and taking photos of what he is finding. Then he shames us on his blog. His efforts over the last two years have inspired us at TBOC to join him in much more vigorously exercising our stewardship duties and our responsibilities to all of you for the cleanliness of the bay.

It's in this spirit that these efforts, captured by the camera, were undertaken.





Here is a photo of the TBOC crew having returned to the company after walking the SALT MARSH at the mouth of Walker Creek in April. What shows here are about 30 oyster grow-out bags along with a couple clam bags, a seed cylinder, bottles, foam pieces and two nasty tires we rolled across the marsh to the boat. Looks as if the crew is pleased with itself, and indeed we do enjoy the clean up work.



Tires again. The cylinder is a seed container called a Stanway. This type of container has been employed by a couple of the companies for years. The cylinders have floatation on either end, causing the seed to tumble and shape as it grows. The floatation also causes the cylinders to become very active in the wind and wave and occasionally get away from their wood frames.



Photo of our truck unloading bags from another winter run out on Walker Creek. These bags were retrieved from the creek channel itself as you can tell from the fur-like growth on them. We call these 'channel cats'. Winter is a good time to go up the creek because the 'king tides' permit us to take our flat bottom skiffs further up the creek and search the shore for runaways. And, winter storms are also the time when seed bags can get loose from their tie downs and get carried by the incoming high tide into the Walker salt marsh. In the marsh the bags settle in pools that have been created by large eel grass clumps burning through the pickle weed as they decompose.



This photo shows the results of a December storm where Walker Creek was in full flood, bringing downstream tons and tons of silt that buried literally thousands of oyster bags. Using hay hooks the crew is able to pull most of the buried bags up out of the mud over the course of a week, but some bags we are not able to get to in time and all the oysters are lost. That's what you're looking at in this photo. When the tide comes back in we'll load all of this onto the boat. The pipes you see secure the rope lines. The rope lines hold the bottom bags in place.



February removal of pipe, bags and debris from Walker Creek mud flat. The rebar was left behind by a former oyster company from the Nineteen Eighties. Enough of the steel was still showing above the mud that we were able to dig down and find the rest. The bags are our own, more of the wastage from the December 2014 storm. Our farm consists in 62 acres which we continue to comb for gear left behind. All of this will be carted to a recycling center by a company called Industrial Carting.



Boat at Miller Park dock with load of PVC pipe, tire, seed cylinder etc. The pipes were part of a temporary fence that we had erected to prevent the storm flooding from burying seed, bottom bags. The fence was 700 feet long and built of pipes and bags. Put up on December 11th and 12th 2014, it was removed mid-February 2015. We were trying to protect an 8 thousand bag seed section and were somewhat successful.



Crew removing another type of barrier constructed to prevent Walker Creek from digging a new channel through the bottom bag area of the farm. The new channel was a result of the storm of December 30th 2005 which caused general flooding in West Marin and had an enormous silting-in effect on Tomales Bay. This berm / barrier was ordered removed in 2015. Work finally completed in November 2015 once the removal permit was issued. The photo is from July. The bags are full of empty shell and stacked to fill-in the new channel cut caused by the storm flow.



More PVC pipe and rebar on the truck removed from Walker Creek area. TBOC doesn't itself use any rebar racks.



Here is a significant collection of equipment and debris pulled off the southern beaches on the eastern shore of Tomales Bay in March of 2015. As mentioned, the southern beaches collect debris from the rest of the bay due to the prevailing winds blowing out of the north. A real variety of debris appears. Some of these oyster bags have been used to collect trash found on the shore. There are four salt marshes at the southern end of the bay and we are trying to clean all of them.



This is a repeat of photo shown above with tires we had recovered added to the shot. The tires appeared to have been rolled into the bay from the roadway north of Bivalve. This is one of two tractor tires we found this year.



Here is a load of racks removed from an area near the pier at TBOC. Once used to grow mussels, they weren't now being used and needed To be pulled out of the bay. Again, a salvage company will take them off our hands.



This shot is of racks we had just stacked and staged on the beach at TBOC to be cut up and removed. These racks come from the cove in front of the TBOC retail area where previous companies employed the rack and bag method of cultivation.



This is employee Gina Warren bringing her trove of tires to the farm after having removed them from the Millerton Point mud flat where they were half buried 100 yards from the beach. She moved one tire by harnessing her dog to it. True story. With Gina's help, TBOC removed more than 30 tires from Tomales Bay in 2015.



Photo of one of our boats stacked high with racks just removed from the mud flats in front of TBOC. The rack removal effort is only partially completed.



Shows a collection of zip ties collected over a period of days from along the beach in the TBOC cove, between Millerton Point and Tomasini Point. The ties originate from our swing bag culture method which we have modified now to prevent zips from falling into the mud when working the Bags. The Coastodian took the lead in recovering zip ties from the TBOC Beaches but we have definitely followed and search regularly. Where once, dozens could be gathered per search, now, just single digits.



Truck load of bags, trays and cylinders recovered from along the shore north of Miller Park as well as in the Walker Creek salt marsh. This is post storm gear and debris.



This is oyster equipment and debris, including a steel drum and part of a broken boat found along the shore south of Walker Creek and north of Miller Park. Again, this is February, post December storm, where a lot of gear got loose from the companies.



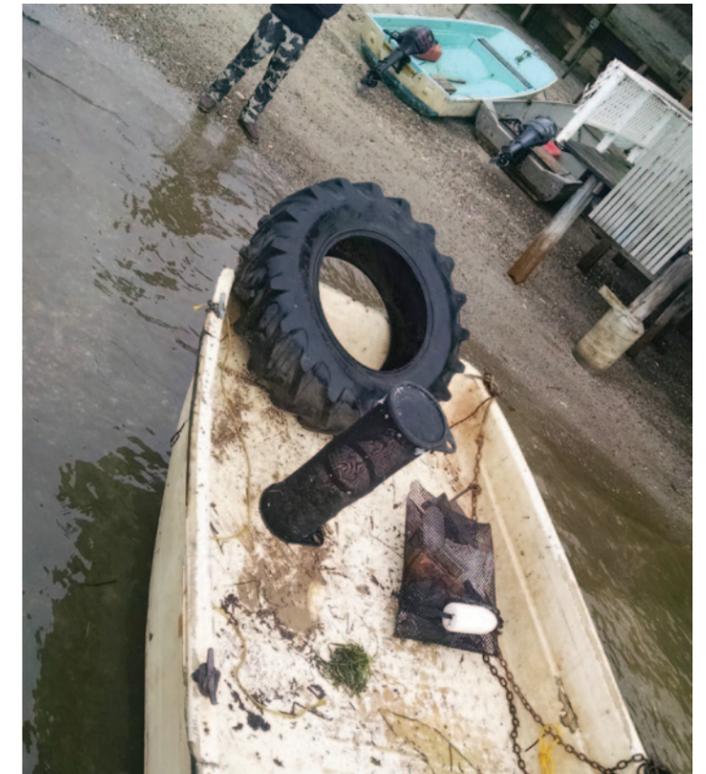
Abandoned oyster culturing equipment pulled out of The Cove at TBOC. The tubes and rope assemblies represent an older oyster culturing system no longer used. Much of this was half buried along the shore in soft mud.



Boat full of oyster bags collected from the shore south of Millerton.



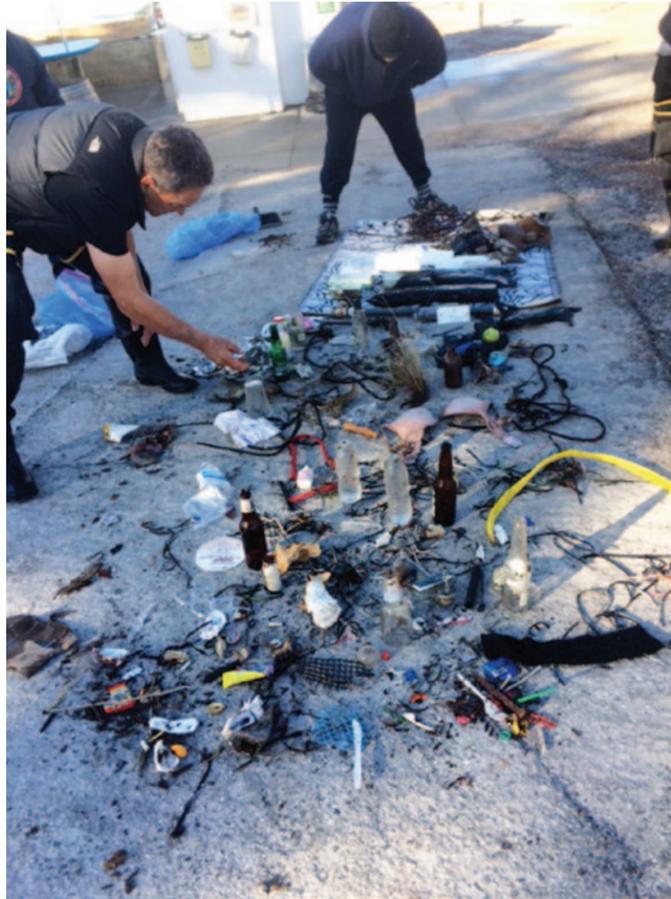
Bags used to construct the berm on the Walker Creek channel. Removed in summer of 2015.



Tractor tire, stanway and seed bag collected at Christmas from north of Miller Park.



Christmas beach cleaning from a couple of the southern marshes and rocky shore south of Millerton.



This composite of photos are the results of beach walking both north and south of TBOC but primarily along the shore south of Millerton Point. The winds do bring the debris to the southern end of the bay. These collections represent a couple two or three excursions by six crew members around New Year 2016.



This composite of photos, and the next 2 spreads, are all results from the New Year clean up of the southern shore of Tomales Bay – south from Millerton to Bivalve. The crew walks the shore with trash bags picking up everything that doesn't belong. There is still debris out there along the rocky and brushy shore. But now there is less.





This is a snapshot of some of TBOC's clean-up efforts during 2015 on Tomales Bay. There were other searches undertaken but not shown here. What you see is illustrative of what was done, but more importantly what yet needs to be done. Thank you for looking at this album, and please contact us with any comment or considered suggestion you have. We want to be good stewards. With our boats and crew strength we should be able to find and remove what doesn't belong on this beautiful and important bay.

Sincerely,
TBOC



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