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Global Company Headquartered in Virginia Supports Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Oyster Restoration Project

PRA Group employees construct oyster cages to revitalize a native, pollutant-filtering population

NORFOLK, Va., April 21, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Global financial services company PRA Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: PRAA) teamed up with the [Chesapeake Bay Foundation \(CBF\)](#) ahead of Earth Day to save the Bay by building oyster cages.

The day-long volunteer project brought more than 30 employees to CBF's Brock Environmental Center near the Bay on April 19 to learn about its delicate ecosystem, regional impact, and current threats while handcrafting structures that will help restore the native oyster population. The wire cages built by PRA employees will be used by volunteer oyster gardeners to raise oysters for restoring sanctuary reefs, as well as by Hampton University researchers to survey young oysters on the Hampton River.

Chesapeake Bay is an estuary that spans 200 miles from Havre de Grace, Maryland, to Norfolk, Virginia. It connects with hundreds of waterways—50 of them major rivers and streams—making saving the bay a matter involving approximately 64,000 square miles through six states, including New York and Washington, D.C., and 18 million people.

The Bay's reach means pollutants enter from far and wide, making its protection an expansive project. However, the size of the task at hand also opens a wider range of opportunities to help clean up the Bay.

Restoring the Bay's oyster reefs is one of these focus areas. According to CBF, the native oyster population has fallen to just a tiny fraction of historic levels.

"Successful oyster restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay are starting to lead to cleaner water, more habitat for fish and crabs, and a healthier Bay," said CBF Virginia Oyster Restoration Manager Jackie Shannon. "This is thanks to the coordination of many different federal, state, and local partners. The support of volunteers and organizations such as PRA Group is a crucial part of bringing back oysters in the Bay."

CBF offers a variety of education and programming for citizens to help restore native oyster reefs, including "oyster gardening," or taking ownership over growing and caring for nearby oyster populations; reef ball production to create miniature habitats; and shell recycling and bagging. To find out how to become an oyster gardener, visit: cbf.org/va/oystergardening.

Oyster cages, specifically, are vital to CBF's Oyster Gardening Program. Over the course of a year, volunteers raise oysters in cages suspended from docks. These oysters filter water and provide a habitat for fish and crabs. After a year, gardeners return the oysters they have raised to CBF, which places the mature oysters on a restored oyster reef protected from harvest.

The 18- by 9-inch wire cages provide protection to baby oysters living on recycled shells until they are mature enough to be transplanted onto sanctuary reefs in the Bay. PRA Group employees built nearly 80 reusable cages for oyster gardeners throughout the region. The oysters raised in these cages will contribute to the [Chesapeake Oyster Alliance](#)'s goal of adding 10 billion new oysters to the Bay.

During their day at the Brock Environmental Center, PRA Group's volunteers also processed more than 150 bags of recycled oyster shells, which could become home to nearly 425,000 new oysters. In total, these oysters could filter more than 21 million gallons of water in the Bay per day.

"Saving the Bay is critical to the ecosystem where we live and work—we are grateful to the CBF for establishing robust restoration programs, and to our employees for their hard work out on the Bay," said Giovanna Genard, vice president of external affairs and marketing leader for PRA Group. "We offer volunteer opportunities because we want to empower every employee to make an impact in their community, which is a big part of our shared values at PRA Group. Hands-on educational experiences like these are invaluable for us and for anyone hoping to preserve the environment."

Visit the CBF website to find more volunteer opportunities and ways to help save the Bay: <https://www.cbf.org/how-we-save-the-bay/>

About PRA Group

As a global leader in acquiring and collecting nonperforming loans, PRA Group returns capital to banks and other creditors to help expand financial services for consumers in the Americas, Europe and Australia. With thousands of employees worldwide, PRA Group, Inc. companies collaborate with customers to help them resolve their debt. For more information, please visit www.pragroup.com.

About Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, founded in 1967, is the largest independent conservation organization dedicated solely to saving the Bay, with offices in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Serving as a watchdog advocating for beneficial water quality policies, CBF works for effective, science-based solutions to the pollution degrading the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams.

PRA Group News Media Contact:

Elizabeth Kersey
Senior Vice President, Communications and Public Policy
Elizabeth.Kersey@PRAGroup.com
(757) 641-0558


PRA Group Investor Contact:

Najim Mostamand, CFA
Vice President, Investor Relations
IR@PRAGroup.com
(757) 431-7913

CBF News Media Contact:

Kenny Fletcher
Virginia Communications
kfletcher@cbf.org
(804) 258-1628

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