Rutgers University biologist’s report says oysters are doing well

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On the same day that samples showed no oil-spill contamination of Delaware Bay oysters, a new report detailed how last year’s shell-planting doubled oyster recruitment in the bay.

Rutgers University biologist Eric Powell’s report to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, released Tuesday, detailed the specific successes and weaknesses of the effort to restore oyster stock throughout the Delaware Bay.

“Oyster recruitment doubled in the target areas of the bay, which is a big success,” said Powell, head of Rutgers’ Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory.

“The 2005 program could lead, in three years, to a 50 percent increase in the number of oysters that could be harvested.”

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary released the report, which Powell provided on behalf of the Oyster Group, a collection of New Jersey and Delaware government agencies and Rutgers’ Haskin lab.

The report came the same day that the U.S. Coast Guard said last week’s oil spill on the Delaware Bay hadn’t contaminated oyster beds in New Jersey waters. New Jersey environmental officials reopened those beds to commercial harvesting.

Recovery and cleanup operations continue on Delaware shorelines in Kitts Hummock, Slaughter Beach, and Big Stone, according to the Coast Guard.