

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March 25th Public Forums to Spotlight Oysters and Conservation

Held simultaneously at three locations along the coast:
North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher (Kure Beach)
Duke University Marine Lab (Beaufort)
North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island (Manteo)

Believe it or not, oysters are multi-talented. As filter feeders, they help clean the coastal sounds. Their reefs provide habitat for dozens of species of marine animals and plants. They're an essential link in the coastal system. And they're one of North Carolina's favorite foods.

On Saturday, March 25, you're invited to help celebrate the oyster and its importance to the coastal sounds at three regional forums on the NC coast. Sponsored by a diverse partnership of state agencies and conservation groups, the forums will include field trips, hands-on activities, and talks by oyster experts. Activities begin at 10 a.m. and conclude around 3 p.m. Registration for the forums is required by March 22.

Each of the events will begin at a central meeting place and will feature afternoon field trips.

The southern coast gathering, at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher in Kure Beach, will feature a morning speaker session and a lunch session with education displays and a box lunch. Afternoon field trips include an excursion to local rain gardens and a creek bank planted with natural vegetation to reduce runoff, a visit to an oyster shell recycling facility, and a trip to a stormwater mediation project, complete with a talk on water quality monitoring.

The central coast forum will be at the Duke Marine Lab in Beaufort and will also start with a speaker session, followed by a poster session and box lunch. Field trips will visit oyster and wetlands restoration projects, a stormwater mitigation project, an oyster

hatchery, and a “living shoreline” designed to control erosion while providing habitat for fisheries, including oysters.

On the northern coast, participants will gather at the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island for a morning of hands-on activities, displays, and round-robin talks by scientists. A box lunch will be followed by field trips to a living shoreline and planted oyster bed, an oyster reef built by conservationists, and a natural oyster bed on Hatteras Island. Boats will be used, weather permitting.

At each forum information will be available about the life and reproduction of oysters, the problems that have caused NC’s oysters to dwindle, and efforts by partner organizations to build new reefs and clean up coastal waters, with the aim of restoring the state’s oyster population to healthy numbers. State biologists and conservationists will also be on hand to talk about oyster gardening and new efforts to recycle oyster shells, rather than throwing them in landfills.

There is no charge for the forums, but registration is required. To register and sign up for a field trip, call the NC Coastal Federation main office at (252) 393-8185 or visit NCCF on line at www.nccoast.org. Registrations must be received by 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 22.

Please register early. Field trip space will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

All events will be held rain or shine. Please dress for the outdoors.

The forums are being organized by North Carolina Sea Grant, the NC Aquariums, the NC Coastal Federation, The Nature Conservancy, the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources, NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuarine Program, Duke University Marine Lab, Environmental Defense, and the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve, among others.

About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:

“Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast”

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's largest nonprofit organization working to restore and protect the coast. NCCF headquarters are located at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 pm.

The headquarters include NCCF's main offices, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper office, a gift shop, Nature Library, Weber Seashell Exhibit, ShoreKeeper Learning Center, and adjoining nature trail. The NCCF also operates field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at www.nccoast.org