



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, North Carolina 28570 | Web: <http://www.nccoast.org>

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oyster Reef Restoration – Myrtle Grove Sound, Wilmington

Wilmington, NC - On Wednesday, April 25, the North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF), in partnership with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), the N.C. Coastal Reserve Program, and Airlie Gardens, will create three acres of oyster reef habitat behind Masonboro Island near Wilmington.

When: Wednesday, April 25 at approximately 3:30. Please call NCCF in advance to reserve boat space and to determine the precise launch time.

What: Using NCDMF barges and power hoses, placing approximately 14,000 bushels of oyster shell into Myrtle Grove Sound behind Masonboro Island to create a new oyster reef.

Where: Media representatives can meet NCCF staff at the Wildlife Resources Commission boat ramp in Snows Cut for a high tide launch. Please call NCCF staff (Tracy Skrabal or Mike Giles) at 910-790-3275 if you plan to attend, if you need directions to the boat ramp at Snows Cut, to determine the precise launch time, and to reserve space on NCCF's boat.

Who: NCCF, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, University of North Carolina Wilmington, the N.C. Coastal Reserve Program, and Airlie Gardens.

Background: Oysters are a vital component of fish habitat; they also represent an important commercial and recreational fishery in N.C. Over 300 species of aquatic animals depend on the habitat and food provided by oyster reefs, including animals important to North Carolina's commercial fisheries and seafood lovers, such as flounder, shrimp and crabs.

The presence of healthy oyster reefs is also linked to healthy water quality. Oysters are capable of helping to clean out pollutants in N.C. estuaries by filtering up to 15-35 gallons of water per day.

The many benefits that oysters provide are in danger of disappearing. Oyster populations in N.C. and elsewhere have declined by an estimated 90% since the year 1900. Destruction of habitat, declining water quality, disease, and overharvesting are all factors affecting the national decline in oyster populations and oyster habitat. Wednesday's tour will highlight one effort will create new reef habitat and then seed it with hatchery-spawned native oysters.

Through funding from Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program, NCCF is working

with DMF barges to deploy approximately 14,000 bushels of oyster shells into the waters behind Masonboro Island. The oyster shell is being placed into mounds and then seeded with hatchery-spawned native oysters to create new oyster reefs.

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***About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:
“Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast”***

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state’s only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration and preservation. 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 NCCF also operates regional offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF’s website at www.nccoast.org