



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federation, Director Receive National Award from NOAA

HATTERAS – Just in time for Earth Day, the N.C. Coastal Federation and its director, Todd Miller, were honored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for years of dedicated and effective work restoring the state’s degraded coastal habitats.

John Gray, NOAA’s director of legislative and government affairs, presented Miller with the agency’s Excellence in Restoration Award on April 19 aboard the *Miss Hatteras*. It was one of five similar awards that the agency gave to groups nationwide.

The federation’s award was part of a celebration to recognize an oyster restoration project that the federation and its partners are doing with a \$5 million federal Recovery Act grant. The project is putting local residents to work rebuilding almost 50 acres of oyster reefs in the Pamlico Sound and around coastal North Carolina.

“NOAA honors Todd Miller and the North Carolina Coastal Federation as a dedicated and effective force for coastal habitat restoration and stewardship of the local community,” Gray said. “This award celebrates the federation’s achievements, including this successful Recovery Act oyster habitat restoration project.”

The federation has worked with local communities to protect and restore the state’s valuable coastal resources since 1982. Projects range throughout the coast and include working with farmers on large-scale hydrologic restoration of farm land in Hyde and Carteret counties, oyster restoration projects large and small, advocating for better enforcement of coastal laws and regulations and putting students to work restoring marshes.

“This award honors not only our work, but that of our many partners, including those here today,” Miller said. “We don’t go it alone—that doesn’t work. We live where we work, and take on projects and issues that

the communities value. That's the only way we can make a difference, as we did with our Recovery Act project.”

The federation could capitalize on that opportunity with a well-conceived plan because it had been working with others on oyster restoration for many years, Miller said.

“This project has allowed us to prove that industrial-scale oyster habitat restoration can be done, and the need to continue to supplement ongoing efforts is great,” he said. “We all want to see this work, and the long-term economic and environmental benefits it will have, continue. There is plenty more that can be done.”

The project is employing truckers, quarry workers, barge operators, tugboat captains, scientists and fisheries technicians to help create new oyster reefs in Pamlico Sound. Commercial fishermen are also supplementing their incomes by using their boats to place 41,000 bushels of oyster shells in the waters of Hyde, Carteret, Pender and New Hanover counties.

The limestone used to build reefs in Pamlico Sound and the oyster shells provide a hard surface on which baby oysters can grow. Each mature oyster can filter pollutants up to 50 gallons of water a day.

Partners in the project include the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, N.C. State University, North Carolina Sea Grant, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and several contractors.

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Photo caption: John Gray, right, gives Todd Miller and the N.C. Coastal Federation NOAA's Excellence in Restoration Award, recognizing the federation's years of dedicated and effective conservation work.