

# Pfizer Offers Boilers To Improve Local Reef

BY SUSAN USHER

An artificial reef project off Lockwood Folly Inlet could soon get a significant boost through the combined efforts of the 500-plus members of the Brunswick County Fishing Club, local industry and county government.

Approximately eight club members and Jim Brown of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries appeared before the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Monday seeking financial support for improving a reef established by the club a number of years ago about 4.1 miles offshore. Commissioners expressed interest in the project, but delayed making any commitment until the club submits a request for a specific sum of money.

Brown said that Pfizer Chemical Division in Southport has offered to donate two 60-ton boilers to drop on the reef, but that the club needs money to provide insurance coverage during the transport and drop. The cost of the insurance depends on whether the club must borrow barges for transport or is donated several that can be sunk with the boilers rather than returned to dock, and the distance the barges must travel.

The boilers would provide "beautiful material for reefs," he said. Pfizer Inc. and some of the approximately 40 fishing club members who work at the chemical plant have offered to help cut down the boilers so that they can be transported and to modify them for use on the reef.

Col. Warren Kirchner of the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point has also offered that facility's assistance, including flatbed transport to the dock and use of a crane for loading and a tugboat. If necessary, Brown said, loan of two terminal barges could also probably be arranged. The club would prefer obtaining one or two barges that are still seaworthy enough to transport the boilers, but that can be sunk with them to enlarge the reef's profile.

The club already has the required permit to make a drop on the reef. Dale McDowell, reef committee chairman for the fishing club, said the club's long-term goal is to establish several artificial reefs offshore along the county.

"It would be better if we all worked together," he told Chairman Chris Chappell when told of a group working to locate a reef off Shallotte Point.



JIM BROWN Seeks Reef Support

Working alone, the project would be cost-prohibitive for any one party, Brown added, but would be possible through a cooperative effort.

Brunswick County, largely through the efforts of the fishing club, was one of the first counties to become involved in the state's artificial reef program. "But after that early start," he added, "Brunswick County has fallen way behind."

Part of the reason has been a lack of available material in the past, he said.

Most coastal counties, he suggested while citing examples in New Hanover and Onslow counties, are actively contributing to artificial reef programs.

An artificial reef imitates nature, providing a "live bottom," a habitat for feeding, reproduction and living/shelter.

Flounder are among the fish that "love reefs," Brown said while showing slides of the difference an artificial reef can make at every depth. By doubling the size of a reef, for instance, he said the number of fish it attracts more than quadruples.

Dr. David Lindquist, an associate professor of biological sciences at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, said that modifications to the boilers would include creating more open space so that fish can live inside and move about freely and to allow currents to flow through.

This is likely to attract surface-water fish such as king mackerel, which are apparently attracted to

disturbances in the lee currents, he added. The reef would also provide opportunities for research into why certain species are attracted to specific types of reefs. Lindquist supervises graduate student research at UNC-W in reef development.

According to Brown, a combination of more and better-equipped sports and commercial fishermen are reducing the size of the state's fishery, leaving two choices: "We either have to live with less or take steps to improve our resources."

Artificial reefs are intended for sports fishermen which, according to a study prepared for the Lockwood Folly River Inlet Stabilization and Erosion Control Committee, contribute about \$1.5 million to the local economy each year.

They also attract commercial fishermen to their fringes and to date this has not caused a problem in the state, Brown said, though the state has the authority to keep commercial fishermen from the reefs.

He said Brunswick County is about the only area in the state where commercial fishermen have objected to an artificial reef. That, he added, was because of a single incident where a trawler crossed onto a reef and was damaged.

Use of Loran equipment to more accurately place buoys marking the reef should decrease the possibility of any further incidents, he suggested.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

## Heading For The Flats

These shellfishermen were among the last to put out from Varnumtown last Wednesday morning after the Galloway Flats area of Lockwood Folly River opened to oystering. Handseeded by the fishermen in a cooperative program last year, the rocks yielded as much as 1,000 bushels Wednesday and almost that much Thursday, Marine Resources Enforcement Officer Glenn Gibbs estimated. "There may still be a few

left," he added Monday, "but not many." He and Officer Dale Hewett were on the rocks about 7 a.m. Wednesday, just ahead of a fleet of small boats. "I wish you could have seen it," he said. Local harvesters were "very, very excited" about how the project turned out, he added, and there is widespread interest in expanding the program to the Shallotte, Seaside and Calabash areas if sufficient money can be obtained.

## Area Closed To Shellfishing

Approximately 4,500 acres of water in the Cape Fear River area were closed to shellfishing by the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development Thursday because of pollution.

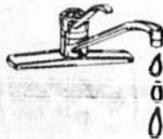
The area includes waters north and

west of a line beginning at Federal Point and running west-northwesterly to Flashing Beacon 16, then southwesterly to Flashing Beacon 14A then to a point near Fort

Caswell. It also includes waters in the Intracoastal Waterway, Elizabeth River, Dutchman Creek and certain other tributaries in the area.

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## Tree Distribution Set

Brunswick County homeowners may choose from eight different species of seedlings during the annual county tree day distribution Friday, Feb. 8.

Tree distribution for homeowners will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Brunswick County Agricultural Extension office in Bolivia, said Extension Chairman Milton Coleman.

Seedlings to be distributed include dogwoods, sugar maples, red maples, live oaks, red cedars, loblolly pines, slash pines and long leaf pines, Coleman said.

"There will be approximately 10,000 seedlings available in this year's program," Coleman said. "Homeowners are encouraged to bring wrapping materials such as newspapers or paperbags to protect the roots of the seedlings from drying

out until they can be planted."

The time between distribution and planting is a critical stage in the survival of a seedling, he added.

Civic organizations and beautification committees that are working on community projects may submit plans for acquiring additional seedlings. Those groups are requested to call the AES office in Bolivia for more information, 253-4425.

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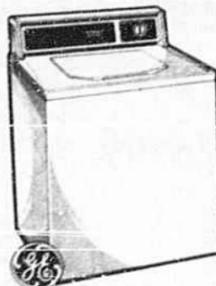


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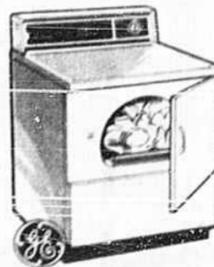
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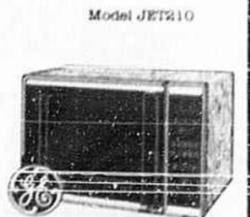
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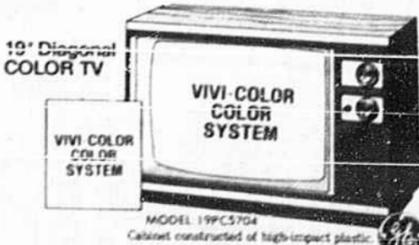
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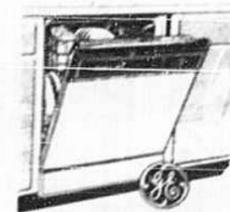
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