

## Aid Offered To Red Tide Victims

BY DOUG RUTTER

Several forms of aid are available to local victims of the "red tide" through federal, state and local organizations.

All businesses or individuals affected by the infestation are entitled to low-interest loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration.

According to Dennis Moffett, recovery coordinator for the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, the SBA will bring loan applications to Brunswick County starting Feb. 1. Local sites were not determined as of Tuesday.

This economic injury disaster loan program offers loans of up to \$500,000 at four percent interest for a maximum term of 30 years. Moffett said they are available to everyone from shellfishermen to restaurant owners, hotel operators to charter boat captains.

Those wishing to have a loan application mailed to them may call the SBA Disaster Assistance Office in Atlanta toll free at 1-800-334-0309. The office is open weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Another form of relief may come through the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries oyster relay program, which is currently underway in New Hanover and Pender County. This program has been proposed for Brunswick County.

According to Fritz Rohde, biological coordinator for the Wilmington region of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, "We have been discussing starting it down there, but we're snowed under with the other two

we have right now."

He said if the program were started in Brunswick County, it would not be in the "immediate future."

Through the state program, shellfishermen earn \$1 per bushel and up to \$100 per day by transferring oysters from waters permanently closed to pollution to areas currently infested by the "red tide." Once the algae lifts and the oysters cleanse themselves, they will be suitable for harvesting.

Although Brunswick County may have to wait for a local relay program, Rohde said area shellfishermen are eligible to participate in the northern programs. Those interested in working in this program can contact the Division of Marine Fisheries toll free at 1-800-682-2632.

Rohde noted that there has also been talk of starting a similar program for the transfer of clams.

Under the state's management program, Brunswick County shellfishermen have participated for three years in a similar hand-relay program intended to increase the volume of the local shellfish harvest.

On the local level, the Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center is offering food for "red tide" victims from the shellfishing community of Varnamtown.

Starting this week, meals are being served each Tuesday and Friday at the Gospel Center Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Varnamtown from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Persons interested in donating food or other items can contact the VIC Center in Bolivia at 253-4441.



CLERK OF COURT Diana Morgan (left) talks with Carolina Shores residents Curly Anzich (right) and Bud Knapp (center) following last Wednesday's judicial hearing on the proposed reactivation of the Cawcaw Drainage District.

## Clegg Says Questions About Cawcaw District Are 'Valid'

Brunswick County Attorney David Clegg has until Feb. 25 to answer legal questions raised last week by Clerk of Court Diana Morgan about the proposed reactivation of the Cawcaw Drainage District.

"I'm glad that she's looking at it in a logical format and is putting it in a framework that we can give it in a coherent presentation," Clegg said last week. "I think (the questions) are valid."

Brunswick County Soil and Water District Chairman James Bellamy agreed with Ms. Morgan's handling of the case so far.

"I sympathize with her, and I can't argue with her questions," Bellamy said. "I think they should be answered."

With about 10 people present, Ms. Morgan conducted a hearing last Wednesday morning in Bolivia to consider a motion by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners and the county Soil and Water Conservation District Board to "set aside" an order that dissolved the drainage district in 1976.

The current motion, which was filed jointly by the two boards last month, also asks that Ms. Morgan appoint three drainage district commissioners.

During the 10-minute proceeding last Wednesday, she asked Clegg to later prepare and submit a brief in response to three legal questions she has about the case.

A fundamental issue, she said, was whether or not the motion was filed within a "reasonable time," as re-

quired by the N.C. Rules of Civil Procedure.

"Does 'reasonable time,' as set forth in Rule 60, constitute a period of 12 years between the entry of an order and a challenge to that order?" Ms. Morgan asked Clegg. "That is the most serious question I have about taking any kind of affirmative action on your motion."

After the hearing, Clegg commented on the "reasonable time" issue. "That's a discretionary ruling based on facts and circumstances," Clegg said, "and I think when you look at the facts and circumstances, Rule 60 will apply and the reasonable time factor will be allowed."

Mrs. Morgan also questioned both boards' standings in the motion, since "neither was a party to the original action in which this motion was made."

In addition, she asked Clegg to present "any case law or precedent" that would answer whether or not drainage easements in the abandoned district still exist.

After stating her questions, she gave Clegg the option of addressing the issues either during the hearing or later in a brief. The county attorney said he preferred to "make all of our arguments in written form."

Bellamy, however, told Ms. Morgan that the Soil and Water Conservation Board was involved in the original action involving the drainage district.

"We did all the work... We were the ones to sponsor it," Bellamy said. Ms. Morgan responded, "You might have been the moving

force... but you (the soil and water board) were not named as a petitioner."

Following the hearing, Clegg said he felt that both boards had standing before the court.

"I think that Mr. Bellamy certainly raised one issue as to the Soil and Water Conservation District's activities in it," Clegg said. "As far as Brunswick County's standing, if you read the 1976 order, it is replete with references to Brunswick County, which was not given an opportunity to appear at that hearing."

"An order was entered that affects us greatly, and we were not given an opportunity at that point to be represented, or so it does not appear. And I think that we definitely had standing."

The drainage district, which is located in southwestern Brunswick County, was first established in 1959. Construction of its more than 16 miles of canals was begun in 1963 and completed in 1967.

The canals were designed to drain approximately 40,000 acres of farmland. However, much of the affected area now includes valuable residential and commercial properties—much of it now open to flooding due to poor drainage in the overgrown, neglected canal system.

The district was dissolved by the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office in 1976.

At a Nov. 6 public hearing in Calabash, residents of the area in and around the drainage district supported its reactivation.

## Red Tide Drifts Into Local Waters

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hardships to almost all businesses which are remotely connected to shellfishing.

Norman Gunther, owner of Reaves Fish Camp at Holden Beach, said the winter has been generally poor for business, but he could not say for sure whether the "red tide" is the reason.

In an effort to drum up more business, however, Gunther recently resorted to non-local seafood and has publicized it on a sign in front of his property.

"I know how people are," he said. "I figure maybe it would help them be less afraid to eat if they knew it wasn't from around here."

Trawler's Restaurant owner Peggy Christy of Calabash said she has continued to have normal January business despite the infestation of shellfish.

"So far it hasn't hurt our business at all," said Ms. Christy. She said the news media have done a good job of informing the public that only shellfish are affected by the algae bloom.

Although Trawler's has had to postpone any oyster roasts, she said, "People understand that and they just order something else."

Shalotte Point seafood dealer Larry Holden, who depends mainly on oysters and clams during the winter

months, has felt "terrible" effects from the recent infestation.

"It's just about closed us down," he said. "It's just about stopped."

He said area fishermen are confused and frustrated by the "red tide."

"Most of them are just baffled by it just like the biologists," explained Holden. "Everybody just don't know what to think."

He could not provide any figures concerning the "substantial" financial loss he is facing.

Varnamtown oyster and clam dealer Carson Varnum said, "It's really putting a hurting on the commercial fishermen. It's put everyone out of work."

Varnum, who has been a shellfish dealer for about 30 years, said he has never experienced anything which has hurt business more than the "red tide."

He said most area shellfishermen have little hope that the tide will clear up anytime soon. He said despite the snow and cold, it lasted longer than anyone thought it would up north.

"We don't have any hope for the rest of oyster season," he said. "We can only hope it clears up for next year."

## Bank Robberies Believed Linked

BY RAHN ADAMS

The FBI and Brunswick County Sheriff's Department are continuing to investigate a bank robbery last month in Calabash that may be linked to four other holdups across the Southeast.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Lindsey Walton said Tuesday that five bank robberies "of a similar description and the same type method" have occurred in the past six to eight weeks.

In addition to Calabash, holdups were reported in Statesville, Myrtle Beach, S.C., Savannah, Ga., and Williamsburg, Va., Walton said.

A fake bomb was used in each robbery. Also, the general descriptions of the robber match, he added.

"At this point, we're trying to pool all of our information and work it as a joint effort," Walton said Tuesday. "We're working under the assumption

that the five bank robberies are connected."

Wilmington FBI Agent Fred Beasley Tuesday declined to comment on any connection between the robberies, although he confirmed that they were similar.

"They seem to bear some similarities," Beasley said, "but nobody really knows until we get down to the bottom line."

"There are some developments, but I'm not at liberty to comment on them," he said.

The Calabash robbery occurred Dec. 15 around 12:30 p.m. at United Carolina Bank on Ivey High Street. An undisclosed amount of cash was taken. No one was injured.

The robber, who was armed with a small handgun, fled on foot after leaving behind a package that he said was a bomb. The package kept investigators at bay for three hours until a Wilmington Police Department

bomb squad determined that the device was not an explosive.

The suspect was described as a white male, 40 to 50 years old, with brown hair and of stocky build. He was wearing a tan jacket, brown trousers, glasses and a dark golf cap.

## Lawmen Probe Teen's Death

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department Tuesday was continuing its investigation of an apparently self-inflicted shooting that claimed the life of a Leland area teen-ager last week.

Paul Allen Thomas, 14, of Lanvale Road, was found dead by his parents Friday at 5:20 p.m. at the family's residence in Brunswick Mobile Home Park, according to Sheriff's Capt. Phil Perry.

Brunswick County Coroner Greg White said an autopsy done Monday morning in Jacksonville determined that the teen died from a "close contact" .22-caliber gunshot wound to the head.

"We're investigating the death," Perry said. "Up to this point, there's a possibility it's suicide, but we're not ruling out anything."

Perry said a rifle was found next to the boy's body. There was no evidence that a struggle had occurred, he added.

## Peterson Challenges Redwine

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perience in other political campaigns will be beneficial. He was campaign manager for former 14th District state Rep. Tom B. Rabon Jr. in 1978 and 1982 and was county coordinator for U.S. Sen. Terry Sanford during Sanford's 1986 campaign.

"I'm going to have very seasoned political veterans that are going to be giving me advice and that have already given me a lot of advice about things that I need to do and people I need to see," Peterson said last Thursday. "And while I do know some of these things from past campaigns, things have changed, and they're always changing, and people are different. As a result, you can't necessarily rely on your own experience. I hope that will provide a very good common sense instinct by which I can judge how to proceed in the campaign."

Peterson has hired Independent

Opinion Research, a Wrightsville Beach consulting firm, to assist in his campaign.

Redwine's campaign co-chairmen are Southport attorney Steve Yount and Shalotte businessman Rusty Russ.

Peterson, a native of Leland, is a partner in the Southport law firm of Prevatte, Prevatte, Peterson and Campbell. He serves as attorney for Brunswick Community College and the Brunswick County Board of Education.

Redwine is vice president of Coastal Insurance & Realty Inc. in Shalotte. He is a native of Shalotte.

## Temperatures To Dip Below Normal, With Some Rainfall

Residents of the South Brunswick Islands area can expect temperatures a little below normal and near-normal rainfall during the coming week.

Shalotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday he anticipates temperatures ranging from the lower 30s at night into the lower 50s during the daytime, with about one-half inch of rainfall.

For the period Jan. 19-25, he

recorded a maximum high of 66 degrees on the 20th and a minimum low temperature of 28 degrees, on the 24th.

Average daily high of 56 degrees and an average daily low of 41 degrees combined for a daily average temperature of 48 degrees, which Canady said was about two degrees above normal.

He recorded just over 1 1/2 inches of rain, 1.51 inches.

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