

# Brunswick Clammers Win Battle Against Mechanical Harvesting

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County fishermen were rewarded last week for their traditionally strong support of hand clamming when the state Marine Fisheries Commission decided to keep mechanical harvesters out of local waters.

Meeting last Thursday and Friday in Morehead City, the commission decided to limit mechanical clam harvesting to those areas where it has been permitted within the past 11 years.

The ruling, effective Sept. 1, will permit mechanical harvesting in Core Sound, Bogue Sound, North Newport River, White Oak River, New River and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway north of Topsail Beach.

The decision, which was made in accordance with a state Division of Marine Fisheries recommendation, was a compromise of sorts between two other proposals before the commission last week. One proposal was to open all state waters to mechanical harvesting, while the other was to ban clam dredging statewide.

Included in the adopted ruling is a provision to allow

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—William Hogarth  
Director of Marine Fisheries

clam dredging in state-regulated areas of the Atlantic Ocean. The state controls ocean waters up to three miles offshore.

William Hogarth, director of the state Division of Marine Fisheries, said the commission decided to open the ocean to mechanical harvesting, something which hasn't been permitted for the past decade, because there are signs of clam populations developing offshore. He added that the environmental impact of using clam dredges in the ocean would be "minimal."

The decision to limit mechanical harvesting to

Carteret and Onslow counties followed seven public hearings held throughout the coastal region. The first such hearing, held May 9, brought about 300 to Bolivia to shout down the proposal to allow mechanical clamming statewide.

"Most people were opposed to mechanical harvesting," said Hogarth, who attended all of the hearings. "Nobody wanted any new areas open. It was pretty obvious."

Mechanical clam harvesting, which is much more efficient than the traditional hand method, is permitted four months out of the year while hand clamming is permitted year-round.

Although there are about 14,000 hand clammers in the state and only 350 mechanical harvesters, the annual harvest is almost evenly split between the two factions. This economic inequality and the fact that mechanical clam harvesting is known to have harmful effects on various types of marine life has created friction between the two groups.

Annie Smigel of Varnamtown, who spoke out at last month's public hearing and has been active in trying to protect local waters from additional pollution, said the decision will certainly bring relief to a lot of local shellfishermen.

"Our concern is keeping our waters just as they are," she said. "If the other counties is willing to let them go in and ruin their bottoms, that's up to them. But we don't want 'em here."

In addition to voicing opposition to mechanical clam harvesting during last month's public hearing, local fishermen also complained about the frequency of the meetings. Some said they were tired of driving to Bolivia every time the state proposed opening the area to clam dredging.

"I really think it's settled this time," said Hogarth. Unless something happens to the clam population or the state commission is convinced that the environmental impact of mechanical harvesting warrants permanent closure, he said the issue should be laid to rest.

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### Numbers Required By Sept. 1

Business operators in downtown Shallotte last week began tacking, pasting and otherwise attaching street addresses to the facades of their establishments as the town's house numbering project shifted into high gear.

The activity came in response to a large batch of letters mailed June 10 that informed residents and business owners of the house numbering ordinance.

Mayor Jerry Jones said he was pleased to put numbers on the front of his building, in what is expected to be the last address change ever in Shallotte. His new business address, 3613 Main Street, was posted last Friday, while his residence at Shallotte Estates has sported its new address for several weeks.

"Most people have been real receptive to house numbering," said Jones. "We think they were ready for it."

Apparently most residents and business owners were prepared for the letter they received, which spells out the town ordinance requiring house numbers at least 3 3/4 inches tall and no taller than seven inches be placed on the front of every building in town no later than Sept. 1.

Town Clerk Cynthia Long said there have been very few phone calls to town hall about the house numbering system and apparently very little confusion.

The first group of letters informing property owners of the system was



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER  
SHALLOTTE MAYOR JERRY JONES pastes the new address over the front door of his downtown business last week. All houses and businesses in Shallotte are to display the numbers by the first of September.

mailed about a month ago, she said, and Brierwood Estates is the only area of town which has not received its letters. Residents of that subdivision should be receiving their number assignments within the next few weeks.

The house numbering system, which the town board of aldermen adopted in March, was developed by the town planning board in conjunction with the Brunswick County Planning Department.

(See SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)

### Commissioners Continue To Wrestle With County Budget

BY RAHN ADAMS

After rehashing various budget matters for 2 1/2 hours Tuesday night, Brunswick County Commissioners were no closer to adopting a 1988-89 county budget than they were when work on it began last month.

The work session, which began Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. and ended at 10:45 p.m., was interrupted by a 1 1/4-hour "break" while Commissioner Frankie Rabon attended a Brunswick County Board of Health meeting, also at the county complex in Bolivia.

Commissioners were scheduled to hold another work session—their fifth—Wednesday night (June 21). County school system administrators and Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan were to appear before the board to discuss budget requests, including partial funding for a 911 emergency telephone system.

The commission has until the end of June to adopt its 1988-89 budget. Chairman Grace Beasley gave no indication Tuesday whether or not the budget would be voted on the following night.

As requested by commissioners

earlier this month, County Manager John T. Smith on Tuesday presented commissioners with a revised budget proposal which reflects no increase in the county's current 50 1/2-cent property tax rate.

Smith's revised budget amounts to \$26.2 million—some \$5.6 million less than his original \$31.8 million proposal. His original budget included a 16 1/2-cent tax rate increase.

The county manager said his proposed cuts come from changes in the county's group insurance package and elimination of both the 911 system and a proposed anti-litter department.

Other cuts come in the operating budget of the county's 30 departments, he said. Also, only 10 of 40 new county positions are figured into Smith's revised proposal. Smith said he allotted \$3.1 million from the capital reserve contingency fund and \$387,495 from the unappropriated fund balance for operational services.

"I think they (county departments) can get by with whatever we do," Smith told the board. "Our problem is we cannot increase services if there's an increase in demand."

Commissioners took no action on Smith's revised budget.

Responding to a question from Ms. Beasley, Smith said the county would face a 12-cent to 14-cent tax increase in 1989-90 if commissioners don't raise the tax rate this year.

Smith again explained that this year's budget problems are caused by a shortfall in revenue, because commissioners allocated \$4.6 million for operational services from the county's fund balance in the 1987-88 amended budget.

He compared using the fund balance—monies which are carried over from the previous year—to buying with a credit card. "You've got to pay it back sometime," he said.

Commissioners Tuesday heard budget requests from representatives of Brunswick Community College including President Mike Reaves and Business Manager Ben DeBlois (see related story).

Also, Brunswick County Fire and Rescue Association President Gene Sellers and seven members of the Pilot Club of South Brunswick Islands attended the work session to voice their support of the 911 system.

### No Action Taken At Mystery Meet

After meeting behind closed doors Tuesday night for 2 1/2 hours regarding an undisclosed "personnel" matter, Brunswick County Board of Health members took no action in open session.

"We talked about the same problems and the same personnel as last time," he said, making available no specifics. "I think we got it worked out. I think everything will be fine."

Rabon said he had scheduled Tuesday's special meeting last Friday afternoon. However, the local press was not notified by the health department's staff until Monday afternoon.

The state Open Meetings law provides that for special meetings, "written notice is required to be given of the time and purpose of all special meetings

(except emergency meetings) at least 48 hours in advance" by posting at the public body's meeting place or principal bulletin board, and by mail or delivery to the media or others who have made written request of such.

At its June 13 regular meeting, the board met lengthily in executive session on the same personnel issue it discussed Tuesday, also taking no action when it returned to public session.

Rabon said board members debated continuing the June 13 discussion until their July meeting, but decided to go ahead and settle the matter.

At its July 11 meeting, he added, the board will have two months' work to do, since little regular business has been taken care of in June.

### Clerk Of Court Appoints Drainage District Commissioners

BY RAHN ADAMS

Following a four-month selection process, Brunswick County Clerk of Court Diana Morgan this week appointed three "experienced" drainage commissioners to oversee reactivation of the Cawcaw Drainage District.

On Tuesday afternoon, Ms. Morgan announced the appointments of O. Kendall Bellamy and Wendell Bennett, both of Hickman's Crossroads, and Jennings Edge of Thomasboro. She also appointed Bellamy to serve as chairman of the drainage district board.

Bellamy and Bennett were drainage commissioners when the board was dissolved in 1976. Edge is also a former drainage commissioner.

"I waited as long as I could for people to express an interest in it," Ms. Morgan said. "I chose them (Bellamy, Bennett and Edge) because they were experienced."

She added that only three or four other individuals expressed interest in serving on the drainage board. The three commissioners will serve staggered terms on the board, with vacancies to be filled by the clerk of court's office, Ms. Morgan said. Bellamy will serve three years; Edge, two years; and Bennett one year.

The next step is for them to have

an organizational meeting and decide what they're going to do from there," Ms. Morgan said. "It's pretty much up to them."

She explained that the drainage commissioners must decide how to reactivate the district and how to finance any work that is done.

The drainage board also will have to define the district's boundaries, according to Brunswick County Soil and Water Conservation District Board Chairman James Bellamy.

"We'll work with them (the commissioners)," Bellamy said Tuesday. "Anybody that's there, we'll do all we can to work with them."

County Commissioner Chris Chappell, who represents the area which includes the drainage district, said Tuesday he was pleased that the selections had been made.

"I think they're all fine folks," Chappell said. "I hope they'll be progressive... I want to see it get moving and see the potential problems alleviated as soon as possible."

Chappell added that about 1 1/2 months ago he contacted state and federal legislators who represent this area to request funding for the drainage district. Although he has received no formal responses from any of the legislators, informal comments from the state lawmakers have been "very positive," he said.

The Cawcaw Drainage

District—formally called Brunswick County Drainage District 1—was established in 1959. Construction of approximately 16.5 miles of canals began in 1963 and was completed in 1967. The district was originally designed to drain about 40,000 acres of farmland.

But much of the affected area now includes valuable residential and commercial property. Flooding is common due to poor drainage in the overgrown, neglected canal system.

In December 1976 the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office dissolved the drainage district, although opinions issued by the N.C. Attorney General's office in 1977 and 1987 stated that the dissolution was improper.

Renewed discussion of reactivating the district began last October by local, state and federal soil and water conservation officials. Also, about 175 residents of the area in and around the drainage district supported its reactivation at a public hearing held Nov. 6 in Calabash.

On Feb. 29, Ms. Morgan cleared the way for reactivation of the district by setting aside the 1976 order which dissolved it. Her action was in response to a request made last December by the county commissioners and the soil and water conservation board.