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It's Time To Celebrate!

It's oyster season in the South Brunswick Islands, a time to make merry while paying homage to a favorite shellfish at the N.C. Oyster Festival, Oct. 21-22. Inside this week's issue you'll find a take-along, comprehensive guide to all festival activities, starting with a semi-formal dance Friday night, romping through the N.C. Oyster Shucking Championship on Saturday and into Sunday afternoon's gospel and bluegrass sing.



A BULLDOZER CREATES a dune out of piles of sand at the east end of Ocean Isle Beach Saturday in the area where federal officials authorized construction of an emergency berm. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Cathy Carlisle To Defend National Shucking Title

BY RAHN ADAMS

Cathy Carlisle's lightning-fast hands will be at the National Oyster Shucking Championship in Maryland Saturday, but her heart will be back home in Brunswick County, where her successor as state shucking champ will be chosen.

"I'm going to miss it," Ms. Carlisle said of the scheduling conflict that will keep her from making her fourth straight state title defense Saturday at the N.C. Oyster Festival. "Even if I couldn't compete in it, I'd like to be there just to watch."

Instead, she will be in Leonardtown, Md., this weekend, to defend her national women's crown and shuck for her second overall national championship at the St. Mary's County (Md.) Seafood Festival.

The Boones Neck resident won the overall national title in 1986, then represented the United States the following year at the World Oyster Opening Championship in Galway, Ireland, and finished eighth.

Last year, after winning her second national women's crown, she was narrowly defeated in a "show-down" with the men's champion, Archie Miller of Venice, Fla. Miller's adjusted time for shucking

and arranging 24 oysters was 2:58, compared to Ms. Carlisle's 3:09 mark.

She said last week that she is anxious to find out how well Miller performed in last month's world championship in Ireland.

According to officials, about 25,000 people attended the Maryland seafood festival last year. The grandstands overflowed with spectators during the popular shucking contest.

Ms. Carlisle won \$300 in cash for winning the women's competition and received an automatic bye into this year's women's final.

When interviewed Friday, Ms. Carlisle expressed uncertainty about her chances of repeating as women's champion, saying she has

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CARLISLE

Sign-Up Ends At 4 p.m. Saturday

The deadline to sign up for the N.C. Oyster Shucking Championship is 4 p.m. Saturday—one hour before the competition begins. Prior to the championship, judges will meet with contestants to review rules.

Entry fee is \$10. Contestants will compete for a first-place prize of \$100 and a trophy, and cash prizes of \$75, \$50 and \$25 for second through fourth places, respectively.

State Pledges Dollars For Dunes

BY DOUG RUTTER

The State of North Carolina will pick up the tab for at least part of the work involved in rebuilding dunes at local beach towns affected by Hurricane Hugo.

In an emergency move last week, the state pledged more than \$250,000 to fund berm construction at Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Long Beach and Yaupon Beach.

State emergency management officials were still working Tuesday to determine how much money would be set aside for Caswell Beach and Bald Head Island, said Renee Hoffman, deputy director of public affairs with the state Department of Crime Control and Public Safety.

The emergency money will cover the cost of berm construction along 28,660 feet of beach at the four local communities. The estimated cost of the work is \$258,120. Towns will pay for the berm construction upfront and be reimbursed later by the state.

Ocean Isle Beach will receive \$96,000 in state funds that will allow for berm construction along 4,080 feet of developed oceanfront. The totals for the other area beaches are as follows: Holden Beach, \$63,270, 11,400 feet; Long Beach, \$86,100, 11,480 feet; and Yaupon Beach, \$12,750, 1,700 feet.

Ms. Hoffman said the amount of

money pledged for each town depended on the size of the eligible area and the estimated cost to each town based on contractors the towns are using.

At Holden Beach, for instance, workers have been bulldozing sand already on the beach to build berms. On Ocean Isle, however, a more expensive approach has been taken with contractors dumping truck loads of sand on the beach and using bulldozers to shape the dunes.

The emergency funds came from several state divisions, said Ms. Hoffman. Whenever a disaster declaration is issued, she said state agencies transfer emergency funds to the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety to administer as needed.

News of the state assistance came about one week after local officials learned that less than one mile of the county's oceanfront qualified for emergency berm construction funded primarily by the federal government.

After surveying the beaches two weeks ago, emergency management officials found only 4,100 feet in the county eligible for the three-foot-high berm. That total included 2,400 feet at Long Beach, 1,200 feet at Ocean Isle and 500 feet at Holden Beach.

Federal officials said those areas qualified since they would be threatened by a five-year storm,

which has a 20 percent chance of occurring in any given year. To be eligible for the berm, officials had to find five houses in a row that would be endangered by such a storm.

As construction of those berms neared completion last week, officials in the three towns received word of the state funds that will enable construction of another 26,960 feet of berm along the oceanfront.

To be eligible for the state-funded berm, a home had to be within 20 feet of the vegetation line. Holden Beach Town Manager Gus Ulrich said the state will reimburse the towns for building five-foot-high berms on the beach to protect those erosion-threatened structures.

In announcing the additional assistance last week, Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy praised elected officials from State Rep. David Redwine to U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms for the roles they played in securing the funds.

"The system works. Your elected officials went to work," the mayor said at a town meeting last Friday. "If the system didn't work, we wouldn't have any state money. I'll tell you that right quick."

Conversely, Tandy criticized federal emergency management officials for the "inexperienced" and "judgmental" approach they had taken just one week earlier in finding that only 500 feet of the island

qualified for an emergency berm. "There wasn't a seriousness of purpose, but there is now."

Of the 76 lots that qualified for the state berm on Holden Beach, 13 are situated along Ocean Boulevard East, seven on Hillside Drive and the remaining 56 are on Ocean Boulevard West. The total includes six lots at Mace's Trailer Park.

Ulrich said workers with L.M. McLamb & Son Construction of Hickman's Crossroads would probably start work on the project Wednesday. The local firm was hired earlier to build the 500-foot berm authorized by the federal government and to fill holes in the frontal dune.

Though Ocean Isle and Long Beach had received more federal assistance than Holden Beach, officials at those towns were also grateful for the state's commitment of additional funds.

Ocean Isle Mayor Betty Williamson said there are an estimated 80 developed lots scattered along the oceanfront that qualify for state berm assistance. "I think everyone was disappointed with the amount that FEMA approved," she said. "So we were very pleased to get this extra help from the state."

She said town officials plan to meet with a representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers next Tuesday at 9 a.m. to discuss options for building a dune on the island.

Local Oyster Season Gets Off To Late Start

BY DOUG RUTTER

The local oyster season got off to a dismal start Sunday with almost all of the county's shellfishing waters closed to harvesting due to pollution.

But things were looking brighter for oystermen Tuesday when state officials announced that things would be getting back to normal Wednesday at sunrise.

"Everything in Brunswick County is going back to its normal closure lines in effect before Hurricane Hugo," Bob Benton, chief of the state's Shellfish Sanitation branch, said Tuesday.

The only exception, he noted, is that the lower section of Lockwood

Folly River, which was closed to harvesting before the storm, will be open. Waters south of a line extending from Genoes Point on the west bank of the river to the vicinity of Gore's Landing on the east side were opened to oyster harvesting Wednesday morning with the rest of the local waters.

"I think that kind of brightened everybody up," said Marlene Varnam, whose husband runs an oyster house near the Lockwood Folly's banks in Varnamtown. "At least they'll be able to get a few oysters."

She said she wasn't expecting much of an oyster harvest in Lockwood Folly River. "They didn't plant any oysters and when you

don't plant oysters there's not that many to harvest."

All of the county's shellfishing waters were closed to harvesting Sept. 22 due to the rainfall and stormwater runoff associated with Hugo. During periods of heavy rain, fecal coliform bacteria is transported to the river and commonly raises pollution levels making it unsafe to harvest shellfish.

Waters in the Cape Fear River and Elizabeth River near Southport were reopened to harvesting about two weeks ago. But due to high bacteria counts, officials were unable to reopen local waters for the start of oyster season Sunday.

Speaking of the water quality in local shellfish waters Tuesday,

Benton said, "It's not real good, but it meets the standards where we can open it. It's not pristine by any means."

With weather forecasters calling for rain this week, Benton said he wasn't sure how long the shellfishing waters would remain open. "I'm just hoping we don't get a bunch of rain with this cool front headed our way," he said.

Mrs. Varnam said business had been slow at the oyster house since the season opened Sunday. A few local fishermen traveled to the Cape Fear River area to harvest oysters, she said, but they didn't get many.

"It's been pretty slow," she said. "There's been nothing coming in and nothing going out."

SOS REQUESTS COUNTY HELP

EMC Backs Eastern Channel Dredging

BY DOUG RUTTER

A proposal to dredge the clogged Eastern Channel to fight pollution in Lockwood Folly River has gained the support of the N.C. Environmental Management Commission.

Meeting last Thursday in Raleigh, the commission voted unanimously to back a local plan to dredge the channel behind Long Beach as a means of improving flushing action in the river.

Though he was absent from last

week's meeting, Commissioner Jerry Lewis of Shallotte was the driving force behind the resolution, according to Deborah Crane, spokesperson for the state Division of Environmental Management.

Lewis could not be reached for comment last week or early this week. But in a recent interview regarding a water quality management plan adopted for lower Lockwood Folly River, Lewis said he believes dredging Eastern Channel

could be a part of helping the river overcome pollution problems.

Eastern Channel, located south of Sheep Island near the mouth of Lockwood Folly River, once served as the inlet between the river and ocean. When the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway was dredged, a new inlet was cut to the west of the channel.

Over the past decade, area residents have said the channel has become clogged with sand, and pollu-

tion in the river has gradually worsened. Due to the condition in the channel, they have argued that water flow in and out of the river has been restricted and that pollutants that get in the river are trapped there.

Since the idea was first proposed in March, a plan to dredge Eastern Channel has gained the support of a variety of county and state officials who think it may help flush pollu-

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Former Sunset Firefighter Arrested On Arson Charges

BY RAHN ADAMS

A former Sunset Beach volunteer firefighter has been accused of setting more than two dozen woods and dumpster fires in southwestern Brunswick County over the past 3 1/2 years.

John Devon Caison, 22, of Sea Trail, was arrested Saturday on 25 felony warrants including 16 counts of woods arson and nine counts of setting fire to county-owned solid waste collection boxes, said Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan.

Caison is the brother of Brunswick County Forest Ranger Miller Caison and Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy Shelton Caison. Logan said the arrest was "no reflection whatsoever on the family," because the suspect's brothers were not involved in the incidents or the investigation.

The fire marshal would not reveal how John Caison was identified as the suspect in the arsons. Logan said an investigation by his office, the N.C. Forest Service and the SBI has been underway for the past year. He also would not comment Caison's possible motive.

"Even though he's been arrest-

ed," Logan said, "the investigation is continuing."

Caison was released Monday from the Brunswick County Jail on a \$25,000 bond.

Caison was a member of the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department when the arson fires occurred, said Logan. Arrest warrants state that the 25 blazes occurred between Feb. 23, 1986, and Aug. 13, 1989.

However, Sunset Beach VFD Assistant Chief Eileen Potter indicated Monday that Caison was not a member of the department at the time of his arrest. Caison was placed on suspension about two months ago for missing meetings and training, and was later dropped from the department, she said.

According to arrest warrants, 14 of the woods fires were set on property off Old Georgetown Road, while the other two fires were set off the Sunset Beach Causeway and off Ash-Little River Road between U.S. 17 and Hickman's Crossroads.

Warrants state that seven dumpster fires were set at the Sea Trail solid waste collection site on N.C. 179. The other two fires were set at the Cawcaw Swamp dumpster site near Hickman's Crossroads.