



Celebrate The Oyster!
It's festival time again in the South Brunswick Islands. A supplement inside is your guide to the 10th annual N.C. Oyster Festival at Seaside this Saturday and Sunday.

The Pelican's It

A pelican in flight dominates the new town flag and logo design adopted on a split vote Monday by Holden Beach commissioners, who had different ideas about how the bird should look. The story and more Holden Beach news are on Page 7-A.

Trick Or Treat!

Halloween's just around the corner, offering the young and young-at-heart an excuse to have fun. You'll find tips for safe trick-or-treating and a round-up of Halloween-related activities across the county on Page 4-B.



Grab Your Pole!

Junior Keller of Holden Beach pulled these spottailed drum from the surf Monday, while local piers reported good catches of spots over the weekend. For the details, turn to the Fishing Report on Page 8-B.

Links To The Desert

A forum on the crisis in the Middle East and local efforts to boost the morale of military personnel there are keen reminders that Operation Desert Shield is on the hearts and minds of local residents. The stories are on Page 12-B.

Beaches Kept Eye Out For Hurricane Lili

BY DOUG RUTTER
Brunswick County and beach town officials kept a close eye on Hurricane Lili as it spun toward the North Carolina coast last week, and they let out a collective sigh of relief when it turned away.
"It was so good to wake up this morning and see the sunshine and the beach in such good shape," Holden Beach Commissioner Gay Atkins said Saturday. "We really didn't need another hurricane."
Lili, a minimal-strength hurricane, was moving steadily toward the North Carolina coast until last Friday, when its forward progress slowed and it veered to the north.
All of coastal North Carolina had been put under a hurricane watch last Thursday night, as Lili moved west toward Cape Hatteras packing winds of about 75 mph.
If it had continued toward North Carolina, the hurricane was expected to make landfall late Friday or early Saturday and possibly force evacuation of the local barrier islands.
Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said he kept in constant contact with the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla., throughout the emergency.
"I continuously kept checking the status board to make sure it wasn't going to sneak up on us," Logan said.
An emergency operations center was set up at the county government center in Bolivia. Logan said the emergency operations team and county commissioners met there Friday and Saturday before they determined that the storm would not threaten Brunswick County.
"With a category 1 storm you've got just enough wind to cause damage, but you don't have to evacuate as far inland as you would with a (See BEACHES, Page 2-A)

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Hand Harvests Are Slim As Oyster Season Opens

BY DOUG RUTTER
It was slim pickings when fishermen took to the local rivers for the opening day of oyster season Monday, but the modest harvests didn't come as a surprise to anybody.

"It's about like it was last year," said Toni Chadwick of Shell Point's Chadwick Seafood on the Shallotte River. "There ain't very many oysters."

Most commercial shellfishermen picked up 1-1/2 or 2 bushels apiece during the first two days of the season, she said. "What's there is pretty oysters, but there just ain't many there and it seems like it gets less each year."

Commercial oyster harvests have been below average for three straight years in Brunswick County, and the outlook for this season isn't any better. State fisheries officials blame overharvesting, oyster-killing parasites and the closure of local waters to pollution.

To protect the oyster resource, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries this season is limiting commercial fishermen to seven bushels of oysters per day and 14 bushels per boat.

But the new daily limits haven't

held back any local fishermen, who said they had to work their hardest opening day just to find three or four bushels.

"The best oystermen have been getting three to four bushels a day," Larry Holden of Holden Seafood at Shallotte Point said Tuesday. "That's about top of the line."

Lindsay Simmons of Varnamtown, who was among the crowd in Lockwood Folly River opening day, said he's glad he runs a tug boat and doesn't collect oysters for a living.

"There ain't no oysters down there," Simmons said after returning to the Varnamtown boat landing Monday afternoon. "You can pick around and find one or two. There ain't enough to make a living."

He was working with two other people in a johnboat and they harvested about 2-1/2 bushels in three hours. "We was a scratching the whole time we was down there."

Simmons said he saw a lot of dead oysters in the river. "What it is is those clambers down there digging on the rock. They turn over the oysters and kill them."

To keep clambers away from oysters that were relayed in the spring from polluted waters to clean shellfish waters, the Division of

Marine Fisheries has closed shellfish management areas in Shallotte and Lockwood Folly rivers to clamming.

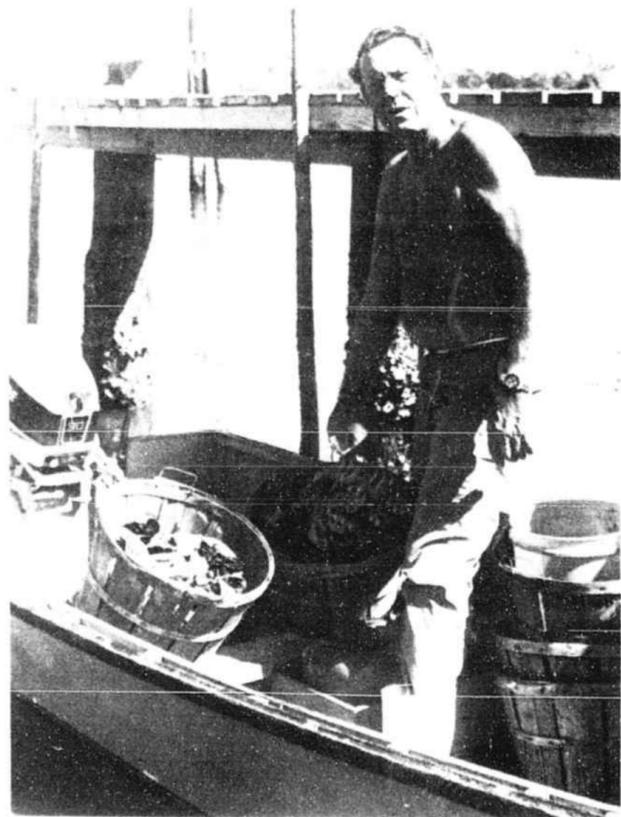
Besides dropping the daily harvest limit from 50 bushels per boat to 14 bushels this season, the state also has closed commercial oyster harvests on weekends. All fishermen will be limited to one bushel per person and two bushels per boat on Saturdays and Sundays.

Oyster season usually runs through the middle of March. Marine Fisheries officials have said they will decide early next year when to close the hand harvest season after evaluating commercial landings and shellfish populations.

Ms. Chadwick said the local oyster population probably won't hold up for the full five-month season.

"The way it's going, they probably won't last a couple of months if they last that long," she said. "It seems like they just ain't growing."

Dredging Shallotte Inlet probably would help the oysters grow, she said. Opening up the inlet between the Shallotte River and Atlantic Ocean would help because it would allow marine life into the river for the oysters to feed on.



LINDSAY SIMMONS of Varnamtown unloads oysters harvested on opening day from the Lockwood Folly River.

PROJECT AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

Shallotte Bypass To Open By Memorial Day

BY DOUG RUTTER

Mark your calendars. Traffic should be flowing freely on the long-awaited U.S. 17 bypass around Shallotte by Memorial Day 1991.

Construction is ahead of schedule thanks in part to good weather, and the road will be open by next spring, said Joe Blair, division construction engineer with the N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) in Wilmington.

The five-mile bypass was scheduled to open by Aug. 1, 1991, but Blair said work on the four-lane road around Shallotte has been moving along at a good pace.

"I'm tickled to death," Shallotte Mayor Jerry Jones said. "I was hoping and thinking that construction was going along pretty well."

Jones received a letter from the state last

week saying that the bypass is projected to open no later than May 27, 1991.

Charles Parrish, special assistant to the secretary of transportation, wrote in the Oct. 4 letter that the project scheduled for completion near the end of the 1991 tourist season will open at least two months early.

"The contractor will still have some work to do on the project after that date before his work is totally complete; however, the traffic switch will relieve the congestion," Parrish wrote.

The South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce is among the groups that have been pushing the state to get the bypass open before the next tourist season begins.

For years, summer visitors to the South Brunswick Islands and points south have faced heavy traffic in and around Shallotte. The bypass around the north side of town is

expected to relieve some of the problem.

"We're really pleased about it because we felt Shallotte suffered a great deal last summer with all of the traffic," said Annette Odom, president of the chamber of commerce. "We're really happy that the Department of Transportation is helping meet our need."

Blair said the paving contractor, Propst Construction Co. of Concord, has stayed ahead of schedule because it has pursued the project with an adequate amount of manpower and equipment. Nice weather also has helped.

"The contract is ahead of schedule so we don't anticipate any problems meeting that Memorial Day deadline," Blair said.

The bypass project is about 65 percent complete. Blair said the actual opening date will depend to some extent on the weather

over the next several months.

Once the road is open for traffic, Blair said the paving contractor will complete the road shoulders, seed the entire area and clean up before final inspection in August 1991.

The Shallotte bypass is part of a comprehensive four-laning project on U.S. 17 from the South Carolina state line to the existing four-lane section at Winnabow.

Grading work on the southern half of the bypass started in the fall of 1987, with work on the northern section beginning in the summer of 1988. The contract to pave the entire 4.8-mile roadway was awarded in December 1989.

Blair said construction of a welcome center near the intersection of the Shallotte bypass and N.C. 130 West is scheduled to begin in November and be completed by Jan. 15, 1992.

FIRES FORCE DEER HUNTERS FROM WOODS

Sparks From Tire Rim Set Swamp Ablaze

BY SUSAN USHER

The crackle of wildfire in the Green Swamp cut the first day of deer season short for some hunters Monday afternoon as more than 50 small fires blazed along N.C. 211 north of Supply.

Brunswick County Emergency Management Director Cecil Logan said the fires started around mid-afternoon when a woman had a flat tire as she drove along N.C. 211 toward Bolton. Headed home from a visit to Holden Beach, she continued to drive for several miles after the tire separated from the rim.

Whiteville District Forest Service Field Investigator Willard Lane determined Tuesday that the sparks from the wheel started at least 51 individual small fires. The fires were along a 5.6-mile stretch of N.C. 211 from north of Supply to just beyond the Juniper Creek Bridge, said Greg Pate, a Columbus County assistant ranger serving as public information officer on the fire.

The name of the driver will not be released unless the state decides to take law enforcement action, he said, and that decision had not been made as of Tuesday.

No homes or other structures were threatened, as the fire was in an uninhabited area. Damage estimates to the pine plantations were not available Tuesday.

The fires spread quickly, fueled by dry weather conditions and low humidity. A change in wind direction from a passing cold front was expected to aid firefighting efforts Tuesday, forcing the remains of the fire "back on itself," said Pate.

As of Tuesday evening state officials were describing the fire as "contained" with fire lines, but not under control because of the high potential for ground fires in the organic soils of the swamp and for spot-overs.

From an estimated 65 to 70 acres at dusk Monday, by Tuesday morn- (See SPARKS, Page 2-A)



THICK SMOKE BILLOWS above the Green Swamp along N.C. 211 Monday afternoon as volunteer firefighters from Shallotte, Supply and 11 other county departments help contain wildfires that raged across more than 600 acres of pine plantations and conservancy lands before containment. Mop-up and control efforts were to continue at least through Wednesday.

Former Building Inspector Indicted For Embezzlement

BY TERRY POPE

The former head of the Brunswick County Building Inspection Department has been indicted on one count of embezzling money from the county, and another county employee was indicted on a drug charge.

Julius Drake "Buddy" Lewis of Leland was indicted Monday by a Brunswick County Grand Jury for embezzling money paid for a county building permit that was never officially issued.

According to the indictment, Lewis allegedly converted to his own use a check belonging to the county drawn on the account of

Faith Original Freewill Baptist Church of Leland. The \$125 check was written for a county building inspection and left blank.

Allegedly, Lewis had asked the church to leave the check blank so he could use a departmental stamp, but instead the check was made out to and cashed by Lewis, county officials later discovered.

At the church site on Village Road in Leland, a placard displaying the building permit had been erected, and church officials were able to produce a check dated April 4 which, Interim County Manager David Clegg said, was "purportedly" used for the permit.

The county did not uncover the problem until the church requested a plumbing inspection and the staff discovered there was no building permit on record for the church project, Clegg said.

Last month, Clegg asked that Brunswick County Sheriff's Detectives investigate the case. Chief of Detectives Phil Perry turned all evidence over to the district attorney's office, which presented its case to the grand jury Monday.

Lewis resigned as interim head of the Building Inspection Department in August. Another county employee was indicted

Monday for possessing with intent to sell and deliver crack cocaine.

Dolphus Lee Bryant, 40, of Route 3, Supply, was employed by the Brunswick County Water Department when the incident allegedly occurred July 15, according to the warrant filed by Officer G.J. Samek of the Shallotte Police Department.

Bryant is alleged to have had in his possession six rocks of crack cocaine, the warrant states. He was suspended from his job without pay on July 19, said County Personnel Director Stacey Grissett. No other action had (See OTHER, Page 2-A)