Oysters Make Comeback

(Continued From Page 1-A)

of "red tide" hurt local shellfishing in 1988. Parasites known as Dermo and MSX have infested and killed many oysters along the North Carolina coast the last two years.

Those environmental problems coupled with overharvesting have resulted in poor oysters harvests the last three seasons. Fishermen gathered only 52,000 bushels last year, which was less than half the average harvest.

But oyster dealers and state officials say they're hopeful that conditions may be turning around for local oystermen.

'This year started out poorly, but things have improved since Christmas," said Rich Carpenter, district manager with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

Toni Chadwick, owner of Chadwick Seafood at Shell Point, agreed with Carpenter, saying this season was "a whole lot better" than last season.

"The start of the season was slow. The oysters were scarce, but the last part of the season it picked up," she said. "They've grown a right good bit this year."

Carpenter attributes the growth to unusually warm weather since the start of the year. Some oysters that were under the three-inch minimum size at the beginning of the season grew to legal size during the winter.

Varnam, who has been involved in oystering more than 30 years, said this season was much better than the last two seasons, when parasites killed as many as half of the oysters in Lockwood Folly.

Carpenter said biological samples taken in the fall showed that the Dermo infestations weren't as concentrated as they were last season.

"Down this way it didn't appear to be as prevalent as it was last year," he said. "The mortalities that we saw last year, fortunately, we didn't see this year to that degree."

Varnam said he didn't hear anything about dead oysters this season. In fact, he said the Lockwood Folly oysters have grown a lot this

season, and things are looking bright for next season.

This was the first year the state limited fishermen to seven bushels per day and 14 bushels per boat. The old limit was 50 bushels per boat.

Carpenter said the limit allowed the state to keep the season open through the end of March. Due in part to overharvesting, the state closed oyster season in mid-February last year.

"It allowed the harvest to go on longer," Carpenter said. "I feel like that was a pretty reasonable limit."

Ms. Chadwick, who runs the seafood house on the Shallotte River, said she thinks the seven-bushel limit worked out well. "It'll leave more in there for the following years," she said.

Varnam also favors the new limit because he thinks it will help ensure good oyster supply in the future and won't really hurt the fishermen.

With dealers paying \$17 to \$19 per bushel, Varnam said an oysterman can make a good day's wages if he harvests seven bushels.

Varnam said the limit didn't hold anyone back this season. One fisherman harvested seven bushels opening day, and the rest got three to five bushels.

Without a limit, Varnam said fishermen tend to overharvest an area, which leaves nothing to harvest the following week and gluts the market. Varnam said an oysterman will harvest the best quality oysters if there is a limit.

Despite the improvements seen this season, seafood dealers say there still are problems with the local oyster industry.

Varnam said shellfish dealers can't market as many oysters as they used to. With oysters retailing for \$22 to \$25 per bushel, the number of people who can afford the shellfish is shrinking.

Ms. Chadwick said the Shallotte River was off limits to shellfishermen about one-third of the season due to pollution. "The river's been closed more this year than it's ever been," she said.



HOTO BY DOUG RUTTER A BRUSH FIRE threatened at least two homes last Thursday evening in the High Hill subdivision near Shallotte. Pictured fighting the blaze are Civietown volunteer firemen Glenn Leonard (left) and Timmy Hewett. The woods fire, one of a number in the county during the past week, started when a resident of the neighborhood lost control of a fire in a barrel.

NO BAN YET ON AREA BURNING **Dry Weather Sparks Area Fires**

BY TERRY POPE

Weather forecasts call for showers by the weekend, a ray of hope that weary firefighters were clinging to Tuesday.

Rain should help reduce the threat of forest fires, seven of which have been fought in Brunswick County since last Friday. Investigators say two of those fires were set near Boiling Spring Lakes by an arsonist.

As of Tuesday morning no fires were in progress, but Brunswick County was placed on Stage 5 in fire readiness by the N.C. Forest Service, said County Fire Ranger Miller Caison. Stage 7 is the highest level of forest fire alert.

"We haven't reached a maximum yet, but it's as high as we've been this year," Caison said.

The largest forest fire burned approximately 423 acres near the Maco community in northern Brunswick County Friday afternoon, Caison said. Other fires have burned 20 acres or less.

County Emergency Management Brunswick Coordinator Cecil Logan said two fires between Boiling Spring Lakes and Bolivia, each burning about 16 acres along the old C.C.C. Road, were intentionally set. Logan said investigators have a suspect in that case and he expects to make an arrest by Friday.

Brisk winds, low humidity and warm temperatures during the past week have produced ideal conditions for woods fires in Brunswick County, Logan said.

A ban has been placed on burning in South Carolina, but so far no ban is in effect in North Carolina. Approximately 184 fires burned across the state over the weekend.

'They're talking about scattered showers on Friday," said Caison. "If we don't get some rain soon it's going to get pretty bad. If it doesn't rain, it won't be too long before we see a ban."

Shallotte Point Meterologist Jackson Canady said the weather outlook offers "a bad scenario for possible fires." The area forecast calls for average temperatures

No rain was recorded for all of last week, he said.

Topsoil has become dry and debris has had an opportunity to dry out in what was an overall warm winter, Canady said.

"If this trend continues," he added, "it could be a very bad fire season, at least for the next four to six weeks. I would love to be surprised."

Caison said a cause has not been determined for the fire that burned 423 acres in the Hooper Hill area near Maco Friday.

That fire took seven hours to bring under control and came within 100 feet of homes along Hooper Hill Road and Dogwood Road in northern Brunswick County. Firefighters from Leland, Navassa, Acme-Delco-Riegelwood and Boiling Spring Lakes fire departments joined the Forest Service in bringing the fire under control. A Forest Service helicopter with a water bucket was brought in from Bear Pen landing strip in Brunswick County to help drop water on the flames.

Other free-burning fires have spread from trash fires or debris burnings that have gotten away from residents.

"People need to be really careful because the woods have gotten very dry," Caison said.

Calabash and Sunset Beach volunteer firemen responded to a brush fire on N.C. 179 and Georgetown Road near Calabash over the weekend, Logan said. That fire was started when someone burning trash allowed flames to spread to the nearby woods.

"We haven't had any rain and the winds are up," Logan warned. "If people would just stay with their fires and have a water hose nearby the fires would not get away from them."

Another woods fire Monday burned about eight acres near Shallotte, Logan said.

Tuesday morning firefighters were resting from a long weekend, Logan said.

"So far, so good," he added. "I just hope it stays that

Former County **Employee Placed On House Arrest** (Continued From Page 1-A)

strapped to the ankle at all times. The transmitter sends a signal to a receiver, which is attached to a telephone line in the defendant's home. The receiver is monitored 24 hours a day by staff members in Raleigh.

Probationers must consent voluntarily to be placed on the system. A person is allowed to leave home during work hours only and must remain at home all other times or be charged with violating their probation.

In February, Lewis was also charged with two counts of breaking and entering and larceny by Brunswick County sheriff's detectives.

He is accused of breaking into the Leland True Value Hardware Store where three vacuum cleaners valued at \$305 were taken.

Lewis was also charged with a break-in at Lee's Little World Day Care Center in Leland where a television set, record player and cassette player, all valued at \$230, were taken on Feb. 9.

A trial date has not been set on those charges.

Accidents (Continued From Page 1-A)

Regional Medical Center.

Passengers injured were Zulma Chevas, 19, of Fayetteville, Jennifer Maris, 18, of Greensboro, and Brian Schrum, 19, of Greensboro.

The van came to rest with its left rear tire smashed through the rear windshield of the Miller car. Leland volunteer firefighters used mechanical jaws to free two passengers from the Ford.

Damage was listed at \$5,000 to the Alexander van and \$3,000 to the Miller car.

In another accident early Saturday, a Shallotte man was charged with driving while impaired, driving left of center and carrying a concealed weapon after his car ran into a ditch on N.C. 904 a half mile from Sunset Beach.

Eric Lamar Schilz, 23, was charged by Trooper Barnhardt after the 1:30 a.m. accident.

According to Barnhardt, Schilz's 1976 station wagon was traveling west on N.C. 904 when it crossed the center line, traveled across the castbound lane and came to rest in the ditch.

Schilz was taken to The Brunswick Hospital in Supply with serious injuries. Damage was estimated at \$600.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY

Church Services Celebrate

(Continued From Page 1-A) The Easter vigil begins Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Easter Sunday Masses are scheduled at 8 a.m., 10:15 a.m. and at noon, said Flo O'Shea, liturgy chairman

St. Brendan's is located approximately 1 1/2 miles south of Shallotte on U.S. 17.

St. Luke's

St. Luke's Lutheran Church will conduct a worship service Maundy Thursday (today) at 7 p.m. at the parsonage. It will include Holy Communion.

The church holds its regular services at Shallotte Middle School.

Church will hold three celebrations a.m. and 11 a.m. Easter.

All services will be held in the social hall, since construction is taking place on the new, expanded sanctuary, said Mary Cobb, spokesman.

The Maundy Thursday communion service begins at 7 p.m. and will be conducted by the pastor, the Rev. Franklin Hartsell. **New Britton**

New Britton Baptist Church of Ash will present the Easter play Is It 1? Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the church, said spokesman I bra Young New Britton is located on Kingtown Road.

Little River UMC

Little River United Methodist of the resurrection at 8 a.m., 9:30

For more information, call 754-7816.

Calabash Presbyterian

Members and friends of Calabash Presbyterian Church will share Communion Maundy Thursday (today) in the home of Horst and Edith Burkert, 44 Ridgewood Drive, Ocean Forest, Calabash, at 7 p.m.

"Meeting in a home is not only appropriate as we remember the setting of the first Lord's supper, but also necessary," said the Rev. Fran-cis M. Womack Jr., pastor.

The newly organized church holds Sunday worship at 9:30 a.m. in the Calabash VFW Hall, with plans to build a permanent facility on Georgetown Road.

Shell Point Baptist

Shell Point Baptist Church will hold its Easter sunrise service at 6 p.m., followed by a continental breakfast.

Sunday school begins at 10 a.m. During the 11 a.m. worship service the choir will present The Lamb of Promise, said spokesman Frances Sweatt.

Oceanview Pentecostal

Oceanview Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church will celebrate the resurrection with a 6:30 p.m. service that includes a film and youth participation.

On Good Friday, the focus of a special 7:30 p.m. service will be on Jesus' crucifixion and death.

Dixon Chapel

Dixon Chapel United Methodist Church at Varnamtown will present an Easter musical drama Friday, March 29, at 7:30 p.m.

A sunrise service is planned Easter at 6 a.m., with a week of revival services to begin Sunday at 7:30 p.m.

Sabbath Home

Weather permitting, Sabbath Home Baptist Church will hold its Easter sunrise service outside at 6 a.m.

The church is located on Sabbath Home Church Road near the Holden Beach Causeway.

Zion UMC

Zion United Methodist Church at Town Creek will celebrate with a sunrise service at 6:30 a.m., followed by Sunday school at 9:45 a.m. and worship service at 11 a.m. A Maundy Thursday communion

service will be held today at 7 p.m. An egg hunt for the children of the church is planned Saturday at 10 a.m.

The church is located on Zion Church Road off U.S. 17 north of Winnabow.

Pistols Stolen From Pawn Shop

Shallotte Police are investigating the theft of approximately 13 pistols from a pawn shop that was broken into Saturday night.

Chief Rodney Gause said Tuesday afternoon that the department had suspects but had not made any arrests.

Ken's Pawn Shop, located on U.S. 17 at the north end of town, was broken into Saturday around 8:30 p.m. Gause said a cinder block was thrown through glass in the front of the building.

The break-in occurred while several police officers were playing in a benefit basketball game at West Brunswick High School.

Gause said the highway north of Holden Beach Road had been closed due to a detour at the time of the break-in, so traffic in front of the pawn shop was light.

Closings Noted

Most area businesses and government offices will be closed Easter Monday or Good Friday, but U.S. post offices will be open both days.

Specific closings are as follows:
Holden Beach Town Hall Monday
Shallotte Town Hall
Ocean Isle Town HallOpen
CalabashMonday
Sunset BeachMonday
County Complex
County Schools April 1-5
BanksFriday

with less than half an inch of rain expected this week. way.

Warm, Dry Weather Expected **Over Long Holiday Weekend**

A week of springtime weather peaked Palm Sunday when temperatures climbed to a high of 87 degrees.

More warm weather is in store for the South Brunswick Islands as the Easter holiday weekend approaches, with the forecast calling for above-average temperatures.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said he expects temperatures to range from around 50 degrees at night to around 70 degrees during the day, with only about a half inch of rainfall, less than average.

The combination of warmer temperatures and lower

rainfall, he said, poses "a bad scenario for possible fires" if the trend continues as expected over the next few weeks.

For the period March 19-25, Canady recorded a minimum low of 34 degrees, which occurred on the 20th

A daily average high of 74 degrees and a nightly average low of 50 degrees combined for an average daily temperature of 62 degrees, which Canady said is about 6 degrees above average.

He recorded no rainfall for the week.

EIGHTH ANNUAL EASTER BUFFET NOON-8 PM, SUNDAY, MARCH 31

MERU

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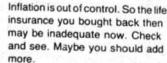
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