

# Controversial Pet Crematory Gets State Air Permit

BY TERRY POPE

Southeastern Pet Cremation has received an air quality control permit to build and to operate a crematory in a residential area near Town Creek, but with several restrictions.

N.C. Division of Environmental Management Director George Everett awarded the permit Oct. 3, but he noted three changes in the application submitted by Ron Currie.

Currie will be allowed to burn only dog and cat carcasses, must have refrigeration for on-site carcass storage and will be required to perform air tests within 90 days of operation to check for "particulate and visible emissions," said DEM spokesperson Debbie Crane.

Results of the tests will be sent to DEM for review. The permit is effective immediately and will expire Aug. 1, 1996.

Town Creek residents have fought the controversial crematory, saying they did not want it built in a residential neighborhood. They voiced their concerns before Brunswick County Commissioners and at a DEM public hearing in April.

Residents told commissioners in August that they would appeal DEM's decision to a Wake County Superior Court judge if a permit is awarded. They said they are concerned about possible damage to air and water quality should an incinerator be built there.

Currie, New Hanover County's animal control supervisor, has purchased land on Town Creek Road about two miles west of U.S. 17 to build the incinerator. Brunswick County does not have a zoning ordinance for its unincorporated areas that would restrict crematoriums from residential areas.

He told DEM officials at the public hearing that he planned to operate the incinerator to burn animals that veterinarians and pet owners would like to have cremated.

The application indicated Southeastern Pet Cremation would be allowed to cremate cats and dogs and also burn carcasses from research laboratories, slaughterhouses, animal pounds and similar sources.

However, the permit has been trimmed to the burning of dog and cat carcasses only, said Ms. Crane.

Limits on the permit, allowing a maximum of 75 pounds of waste per hour or 78 tons yearly to be burned, were not altered, she said.

Concerns raised at the public hearing brought about the requirement for refrigeration and initial air control tests, said Ms. Crane.

Persons must reapply for air permits every five years, she said. Sometimes public hearings are also held for renewals.

"It depends on what comes up," said Ms. Crane. "We have had public hearings on renewals. It depends on the situation."

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## Station On Schedule

Work on the new South Brunswick postal station on N.C. 904 is progressing on schedule, with completion due in early February, according to a spokesman for Robert G. Snyder, general contractor. The facility, which will serve southwestern Brunswick County, is the first post office in the area to be owned by the federal government rather than leased.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

## Officers Continue Search For Body

BY TERRY POPE

An extensive search of the Ash community has come up short as investigators try to find the body of a woman they believe is buried in the area.

Rhonda Diane Keeler, 29, missing from her home since Aug. 17, is believed to have been murdered by her husband, Timothy James Keeler, 31, who is still at large.

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department brought in special dogs last week to help search a wooded area near the home and to sniff the Waccamaw River and area creeks for possible clues.

Officers from the Fayetteville Police Department used two K-9 dogs trained to search for dead bodies, but during two days of searching the area they came up empty-handed.

"These dogs have located bodies before," said Brunswick County Sheriff's Lt. Donnell Marlowe. "If they're in an area where the body's at, they'll find it."

Investigators have recovered a finger from behind the Keeler residence they believe belongs to the missing woman. Upon the discovery, District Attorney Rex Gore issued warrants for arrest charging Keeler with first-degree murder and flight.

SBI agents spent two days searching the woods near the Keeler

home, hoping to find the body.

Keeler was last seen Sept. 16, the day detectives contacted him to ask if he would take a polygraph test relating to his wife's disappearance. When officers drove to Ash to pick him up he was gone. He has not been seen since.

Detectives thought they had a break in the case Monday morning when two hunters stumbled upon some bones scattered from a shallow grave just off of N.C. 130 west of Shallotte.

"It was a dog," said Sheriff John Carr Davis. "Somebody had evidently buried a dog there. But I'm glad they called us."

SBI agents were notified of the discovery but were radioed not to respond after detectives determined that an animal had found and dug the carcass from the grave.

Waccamaw Fire and Rescue units have also aided in the search, helping investigators drag the Waccamaw River last Wednesday and Thursday.

The cadaver dogs boarded small boats with their trainers, Chuck Campbell and Darryl Smith of the Fayetteville Police Department, who instructed them to sniff the water.

Sheriff's Department divers searched areas where the dogs indicated they smelled something. The

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## OYSTER SEASON OPENS TUESDAY

# Fishermen Expecting Fair Harvest

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County shellfishermen don't have much hope for a great oyster season, but they're still anxiously awaiting opening day next Tuesday.

Local fishermen and state officials think the 1991-92 season will be pretty much like the last one—which was nothing to write home about.

The county's commercial fishermen harvested 37,633 pounds of oysters last year, which was poor compared to the 81,917 pounds collected in 1989.

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries estimated the value of last year's harvest at \$131,902, which means local fishermen brought in only half as much money as they did the previous year.

Even with the small take last year and steadily declining harvests along the North Carolina coast, Varnamtown oyster dealer Ernie Galloway can hardly wait for the first day of oyster season.

"We're looking forward to it cause I love to eat 'em," Galloway said. "I love to sell 'em, but I love to eat 'em too."

Marine Fisheries officers will enforce the same harvest limits as last season when waters open Oct. 15. Commercial fishermen can gather up to seven bushels per day or 14 bushels per boat during the week.

Weekend limits for commercial fishermen are one bushel per person and two bushels per boat. Those limits apply seven days a week for anyone without a commercial li-

cense.

Rich Carpenter, district manager with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, said the size of this year's oyster harvest will depend in part on the effects of an oyster-killing parasite known as Dermo.

"If the Dermo holds off, things look pretty fair right now," Carpenter said last week. "We've got some areas that look decent and some areas that don't look too good."

State officials detected the parasite in 1988, when the state's first documented case of "red tide" brought an abrupt halt to shellfishing in most of North Carolina, including Brunswick County.

Dermo and another parasite, MSX, were blamed for killing lots of oysters in 1989. The parasites were not as much of a problem last year along the Brunswick County coast.

But Carpenter said Dermo—which thrives in warm, dry weather—could cause more oyster mortality this season.

"We've got pretty high incidence of Dermo throughout the state right now," he said. "We are finding it everywhere that we've sampled."

Galloway, who has spent most of his life gathering oysters in Lockwood Folly River, expects this season to be about the same as last year.

He said he's noticed a lot of oysters under the three-inch minimum size limit while clamming.

"What I've seen this year is just a small percentage that's large and the rest of it won't take long to grow out," Galloway said.



BEACON FILE PHOTO

TENTIS DIXON gathers oysters in Lockwood Folly River last season. The 1991-92 season opens Oct. 15.

Opening day's success will depend to some extent on how much of the Lockwood Folly River is open to harvesting.

"Right now it's open about like it should be," Galloway said last week. "That's about the standard line for the river."

However, state officials closed lower sections of the Lockwood Folly and Shallotte rivers Sunday following heavy rainfall and runoff on Saturday.

Brunswick County fishermen are allowed to harvest oysters from sunrise to sunset. They can unload oysters from their boats up to two hours after sunset.

Carpenter said state officials haven't decided when oyster season will close, but it usually ends in mid-March. "A lot will depend on how the season goes," he said.

## Area Sewer System Study To Be Discuss

Officials from three South Brunswick Islands towns and the county, major landholders and developers were to gather Wednesday, Oct. 9, to consider a study to assess the potential of a regional sewer system for southwestern Brunswick County.

Fryda Bluestein of the N.C. Institute of Government at Chapel Hill and Institute retiree Warren "Jake" Wicker were scheduled to speak to the group. The Dutch-tree luncheon and discussion session was to begin at 11:30 a.m. at the Jones-Byrd Clubhouse at Sea Trail Plantation, Sunset Beach.

Powell & Associates, a North Myrtle Beach, S.C., engineering firm, is hosting the meeting. The company has been hired as a consultant by the towns of Calabash and Sunset Beach to study sewer system alternatives and funding avenues.

## Sunset Bridge Will Open For More King Fishermen

Once again, the Sunset Beach Bridge schedule is changing to accommodate participants in an area fishing tournament.

The bridge over the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway will open periodically today (Thursday) and Friday, Oct. 10 and 11, for boat traffic related to the Arthur Smith King Mackerel Tournament at North Myrtle Beach, S.C.

In the Smith event, boats may check out of Lockwood Folly Inlet in North Carolina or Little River, Murrell's Inlet or Georgetown in South Carolina.

According to a notice from the N.C. Department of Transportation, the Sunset Beach Bridge will open both days at 6:30 a.m., 7 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m., 4 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. if any boats are waiting passage.

The bridge is to remain open no more than 15 minutes at a time to allow the boats to proceed through.

If there are no boats waiting, the bridge will not open, the notice states.

Confusion regarding the bridge opening schedule resulted in angry motorists last month during the South Brunswick Islands King Mackerel Tournament. During some bridge openings not a single boat passed through, while motorists waited on the island and mainland to cross.

Bridgetenders said they were notified in writing and orally to open the bridge for 15 minutes at a time, with no exceptions specified.

The written notice to the tenders did not instruct them to leave the bridge closed if no boats were waiting, or to close it sooner if all waiting boats had passed before the 15 minutes were up.

# Festival By The Sea Will Salute Desert Storm Veterans

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS

Don't be surprised to see yellow ribbons and lots of red, white and blue flying at Holden Beach the weekend of Oct. 25-27.

The 1991 N.C. Festival By The Sea will honor veterans of the Persian Gulf War, adding a military flair to an event that more typically reflects its coastal setting and the proximity of Halloween. Saturday's parade will set the tone, with Linda Jones, an American Red Cross worker who served in the Persian Gulf War, as its grand marshal.

A tradition in varying forms since 1980, the festival should offer something to please everyone who participates.

A festival tradition continues with the Halloween carnival kick-off at 6:30 p.m. at Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department on Sabbath Home Road. It will feature costume contests for all age groups, as well as carnival activities for the kids that include a haunted house, snacks and plenty of games.

Saturday will dawn early for those planning to run in

the festival's one mile, 5K and 10K races. The one mile race begins at 8 a.m., and will have four overall winners for men and women. The 5K (3.1 miles) and 10K (6.2 miles) races will begin at 8:30 a.m. and will offer trophies to the top finishers for men and women in specific age categories.

For the runner to receive a race T-shirt, entry must be received, in the mail or in person, no later than Friday, Oct. 25, to Johnny Craig, 842-2777. The fee is \$8 with T-shirt and \$5 without T-shirt. Late entries will be accepted the morning of the race for \$6, but no T-shirts will be available. The races will start at the Tri-Beach VFD Sub Station on Ocean Boulevard West.

Arts and crafts booths will open at 9 a.m. and close at 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, offering original works such as paintings, blown glass, jewelry and decorative household goods. Booths can be reserved until Friday, Oct. 18, by delivering an application and \$25 fee (\$5 extra if electric hook-up is needed) to Jim Lowell, 842-7380.

Lowell, organizer of the show, said more than 100

entries have been reserved, with 20 set aside for foods ranging from authentic Thai cuisine to ice cream. Food stands will remain open during the street dance Saturday.

At 10:30 a.m. Saturday, the festival parade will wind its way along a three-quarter mile route from Sea Trace subdivision to the foot of the Holden Beach bridge. The more than 100 entries will also include Miss Brunswick County Lisa Dale Young, the Sudan Temple Thunderbolts minicars and an array of floats. The deadline to enter is Saturday, Oct. 12, and entry is free of charge. Entrants should call Sabrina Stephens, 842-4701, or Connie Boyd, 842-6940, before the deadline.

Saturday afternoon will warm up with some serious, but fun, sporting competition on and off the island.

Horseshoe pitching will begin with doubles competition at 1 p.m. at the water tower on Brunswick Avenue, followed by singles, said Ben Tonking, coordinator. Both the 1990 men's and women's singles champions expected to defend their titles. The entry fee is \$1.

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FESTIVAL BY THE SEA  
OCTOBER 25 26 27 1991  
HOLDEN BEACH, N.C.