



STAFF PHOTO BY DORI C. GURGANUS

**SHOWING OFF SOME of the bounty, Chris Ward of Bill's Seafood in Sunset Beach said that there are plenty of oysters to be found this year. However, he says news of disease among North Carolina shellfish is keeping some people from buying, though infections among oysters do not affect humans.**

## Local Oyster Harvest Said 'Best In Years'

**BY DORI C. GURGANUS**  
Though disease and overharvesting may be depleting the number of harvestable oysters in areas farther up the coast, Brunswick County shellfishermen are boasting of a better season in 1991 than they've experienced in quite some time.

"We've got more than we can handle," said Carson Varnam, a long-time oyster dealer near Lockwood Folly. "We've got more live oysters here than we know what to do with."

"I'm having to put limits on my men to how many bushels they bring in each day," he continued. "I think it's the best harvest in almost 10 years."

William Hogarth, director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries in

Morehead City, concurred. "Brunswick has indeed been doing better than other counties," he said. "Up in Pamlico and around there, they've got high infection rates of MFX and Dermo, plus all that mechanical dredging for the oysters has left them in pretty bad shape."

MFX and Dermo are parasitic diseases that affect oyster growth, but do not harm humans.

In Brunswick County, shellfishermen use primarily the hand-harvesting method, which Hogarth says doesn't harm future oyster supplies.

However, mechanical dredging, which is utilized around the Pamlico River area, leaves oyster beds clean, with no seed area to grow on the next year.

(See BEST, Page 2-A)

## NEW REST AREA OPENS FRIDAY DOT To Study Bypass Intersection

**BY DOUG RUTTER**  
A design study is under way that will help state officials decide if an overpass is needed where the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass crosses N.C. 130 West.

The N.C. Department of Transportation's design unit is conducting the study as a result of local response to a fatal wreck at the intersection, said N.C. Board of Transportation Member Marilyn Williams.

"They have responded to us in Raleigh," said Mrs. Williams of Wilmington, who represents Brunswick County on the state board. "It's not just talk. It is being done."

Shallotte businessman Steve Smith and West Brunswick High School student Misty Carmichael were killed in a Nov. 1 accident at the intersection.

A log truck traveling south on the bypass allegedly failed to stop for a red light and struck the Smith and Carmichael vehicles as they were crossing the bypass on N.C. 130.

There were no serious injuries in a similar accident at the site Dec. 9. Another log truck traveling south on the bypass reportedly ran a red light and struck the front end of a car headed east on N.C. 130.

State Rep. David Redwine said safety at the intersection has become the biggest transportation-related issue in Brunswick County.

"I think everyone has a concern about the intersection," he said at a meeting last week with Mrs. Williams and other state transportation officials.

"Since the unfortunate accident, there's been a

*"They have responded to us in Raleigh. It's not just talk. It is being done."*

—Marilyn Williams  
N.C. Board of Transportation

lot of conversation in the community about how to improve the situation," Redwine said.

The design study will investigate the need, impact and benefits of an overpass and include cost estimates for an overpass and land that would be needed to build it, said Doug Bowers, division engineer with the N.C. DOT.

Once the preliminary study is completed, it will be up to the board of transportation to determine if an overpass should be built and how it should be funded. Bowers estimated that an overpass would cost at least \$2 million.

Since the fatal accident, the state has made several improvements at the site in order to improve safety.

Flashing yellow lights and signs advising motorists to reduce their speed to 45 mph were installed on the bypass north and south of the intersection.

Strobe lights were added to the traffic light system, and rumble strips were built on N.C. 130 on both sides of the bypass.

"Our approach is going to be do whatever we

can to make it as safe as we can," Bowers said.

Bowers said design studies of highway intersections aren't too common, especially intersections that were built to modern standards and are less than a year old. The bypass opened in May.

"I'm certain that it's been done before," he said. "I think it's the exception rather than the rule."

An overpass at the site was discussed when the bypass was being designed, but the state never included it in plans because it would have been costly and caused a delay in construction of the bypass.

"The rest area really had no impact on the design of that intersection," Bowers said. "The fact that the rest area's there does not preclude an interchange from being there."

The new rest area just south of the intersection is scheduled to open Friday. Public restrooms will be open for motorists, but the visitors information center will not open until mid- or late-January.

Bowers said the rest area on U.S. 17 near Brunswick Community College at Supply will close early next year. A maintenance contract for the site expires Feb. 1.

N.C. DOT Traffic Engineer Roger Hawkins said people using the Shallotte bypass need to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others.

"With these rural intersections people expect to roll through them," he said. "It defies what we expect normally. I think it goes right back to driver expectation."

## STATE HOUSE, SENATE RACES ON HOLD

# Filing For Local Office Opens Jan. 6

**BY TERRY POPE**  
Candidates who want to run for the state House and Senate races must wait, but the Brunswick County Board of Elections plans to open filing for local offices on schedule—Monday, Jan. 6, at noon.

The U.S. Justice Department's rejection of a state redistricting plan for congressional, state House and Senate districts last week has thrown the 1992 election process in turmoil.

State officials have instructed local Boards of Elections to delay filing of House and Senate hopefuls until new district lines are approved, said Lynda Britt, Brunswick County Board of Elections supervisor.

The General Assembly will convene Monday, Dec. 30, to begin work on resolving the dispute and to get the spring election process underway.

"They will probably go right back to the drawing board," said Ms. Britt. "It's a possibility the primary might be delayed."

The spring primary is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5. Local filing closes Monday, Feb. 3, at noon.

Ms. Britt said on Friday that her office has not been instructed to delay filing for local seats. Locally, candidates can file for the Brunswick County Board of Education and Brunswick County Commissioner seats in Districts 1, 3 and 4, for the register of deeds and for county coroner.

Candidates for other state offices must file with the state elections board.

"Until we hear directly from the state telling us otherwise, filing begins Jan. 6 at noon," she said.

Although filing for state offices has been put on hold, candidates for local offices may begin filing Jan. 6 at the Brunswick County Board of Elections office.

Some dates in the primary schedule may change later, depending on how state officials resolve a dispute over legislative and congressional district lines.

- Mon., Jan. 6 .....Candidate Filing Opens At Noon
- Mon., Feb. 3 .....Candidate Filing Closes At Noon
- Mon., March 16 .....Absentee Ballots Available
- Mon., April 6 .....Voter Registration Closes
- Tues., April 7 .....One-Stop Absentee Voting Begins
- Tues., April 28 .....Last Day To Apply For Absentee Ballots
- Fri., May 1 .....One-Stop Absentee Voting Ends At 5 p.m.
- Mon., May 4 .....Absentee Ballots Due At Elections Office By 5 p.m.
- Tues., May 5 .....Primary Election Day
- Thurs., May 7 .....Election Canvass Held
- Tues., June 2 .....Second Primary—If Needed

A plan devised by the General Assembly this summer was rejected by the Justice Department last week, saying the new districts weaken minority voting strength as protected in the 1965 Voting Rights Act. New boundaries are drawn every 10 years to reflect population growth based on the U.S. Census.

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

# 1991: Tightening Belts, Doing What Had To Be Done

**BY THE NEWS STAFF**

Across Brunswick County, 1991 was the year to do what had to be done, despite an uncertain economy.

While tightening day-to-day operations, county and municipal leaders moved ahead in pursuit of the infrastructure needed to accommodate both steadily growing permanent and seasonal populations—roads, water, sewer, schools and improved services. They laid the groundwork for some projects and completed others, including some that had been deliberately put off or inadvertently delayed for as much as several years.

The state was busy along the same lines. Among the major projects completed in 1991 was the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass, a five-mile stretch of highway that had been on the state Department of Transportation's drawing board in one form or another since the early 1960s.

"I never thought I'd see it in my lifetime," Shallotte Mayor Sarah Tripp said just days before the long-awaited highway opened on May 22.

The four-lane bypass, built to relieve traffic congestion in downtown Shallotte, was a welcome sight to residents who had battled bumper-to-bumper traffic for years.

However, the route hasn't been without its pitfalls. The intersection at N.C. 130 near West Brunswick High School was the site of at least two accidents, including a double-fatality in November.

The deaths breathed new life into a community effort to get an overpass at the intersection, where a regional welcome center is expected to open in January.

State transportation officials added safety measures including rumble strips, strobe and flashing yellow lights at the intersection following the fatal wreck. But they've said an overpass would be too costly.

While the bypass was the talk of Shallotte, it was part of a larger effort, to complete the four-laning of U.S. 17 across Brunswick County and improve the flow of both recreational and commercial traffic. By year's end, work was under way simultaneously on segments from



BEACON FILE PHOTO

**OYSTER SEASON** opened at sunrise Oct. 15 with fishermen hoping to recover from several years of poor harvests; by mid-season they were reporting the most abundant harvest in recent years unlike their peers further up the Tar Heel coast.

the South Carolina line to Bell Swamp. Eventually a Northern Outer Loop around Wilmington is to link Interstate 40 to U.S. 17 north of Winnabow, but at year's end the exact route had not been decided.

Meanwhile the South Brunswick Islands and Southport-Oak Island Chambers of Commerce launched an I-40 Blitz across the state to focus attention on easier

access to local beaches. But tourism wasn't the only economic interest of the chamber this year; its focus broadened to include greater emphasis on public education and economic development.

Also, following the earlier example of the Southport-Oak Island community, the South Brunswick area launched a Committee of 100 to develop a broader eco-

nomie base, with the goal of seeking small- to mid-size businesses compatible with tourism.

Several major county employers announced layoffs at mid-year, including Pfizer Inc., following its purchase and reorganization by the Archer-Midland-Daniels conglomerate (ADM).

The county's Resources Development Commission saw mixed results in its economic development efforts, with the shut-down of several relatively new enterprises in the north end of the county and the start-up of others. During the 1990-91 fiscal year the office announced projects that would mean about 500 local jobs and capital representing increased tax base of about \$15 million.

### Money, Money

A tight economy and the state money crunch also put a damper on county government.

But even during a tight budget year, Brunswick County Commissioners kept major projects—water expansion and 911—funded.

The Department of Social Services moved into a new \$1.3 million building while the Brunswick County Jail was expanded. However, money woes diluted further growth at Bolivia's government center and made a \$1.8 million solid waste budget seem bleak.

State Rep. David Redwine warned of the largest budget deficit "since the Great Depression," but Chairman Kelly Holden guided commissioners through a difficult June, opting for major spending cuts to avoid a tax increase.

A 3-2 vote approved the county's \$35 million budget. "Unfortunately, I think the board's divided," noted District 3 Commissioner Gene Pinkerton. "We're not having any dialogue."

Hiring David Clegg as county attorney and county manager brought stability to county government. Clegg had served 14 months as interim county manager and was the unanimous choice to keep that title.

But the firing of several employees in June also an-

(See PROPERTY, Page 10-A)