The SPAT Light

Welcome Note

Happy November Oyster Spat Folks! WELCOME to the first delicious issue of our Oyster Spat Monitoring project newsletter, *The SPAT Light*. This newsletter is a resource to update volunteers on oyster-related issues such as conservation and restoration, as well as upcoming events in the world of shellfish. With each issue, we will feature volunteers who have contributed to our program beyond the normal spat rack maintenance or volunteers who have contributed to other oyster-related efforts. The Statewide Oyster Spat Monitoring (SOSM) project currently has 26 active sites in six counties, with 30 adult volunteers and approximately 50 school students. Since 2007, our program has collected data from 43 sites along the North Carolina coast. This project would not be successful without **YOU**, so remember, recruiting volunteers is always an ongoing cause. **TELL A FRIEND!**

SPAT Bits

SOSM Active Sites

Brunswick County = 4 sites
Carteret County = 4 sites
Dare County = 1 site
New Hanover County = 7 sites
Onslow County = 2 sites
Pender County = 8 sites

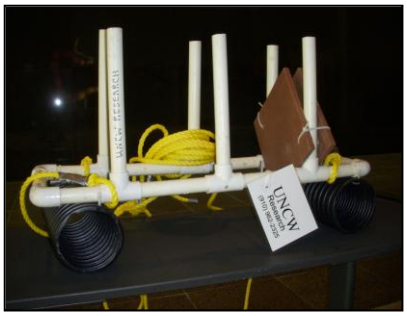
Events

November 7, 2009
Airlie Gardens Wilmington, NC
Joint Appreciation Lunch: NC Coastal Federation & Benthic Ecology Lab at UNCW. Event highlights are scheduled for our next quarterly newsletter. Share your comments with us!

Newsletter Articles

Contributed by Sharon A. Tatem and Megan E. Rudolf

In the SPAT Light – Dr. Eric Bolen and Dale Lockwood



Oyster Spat Rack Modification The oyster spat rack design works well for most sites in our program, except where high flow has the tendency to loosen the tiles and upset the rack position. Dr. Bolen modified our current rack design to handle the high flow rate present at his site, which is near the Carolina Beach Inlet on the Intracoastal Waterway. Dr. Bolen was consistently losing tiles and cable-ties due to the intense tidal flux. Therefore, using a ceramic drill, he drilled holes in opposite sides of each tile, rotated the tile set, then secured each sister tile to the other via cable-ties. This fine modification has served Dr. Bolen and his neighbor participant, Dale Lockwood, well, as their spat rack now remains intact, and they continue to collect and count numerous organisms on their tiles as a successful oyster spat team.

UNCW Background Dr. Bolen served as the first Dean of the UNCW Graduate School from 1988 to 1994. He then joined the faculty at UNCW in the Department of Biological Sciences, where he is now a professor emeritus. His teaching and research focus includes wildlife ecology and wildlife management. Dale Lockwood is the Compensation and Classification Analyst in the Department of Human Resources at UNCW.

Images Contributed by SOSM Southern and Data Coordinator, Sharon Tatem

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In the News

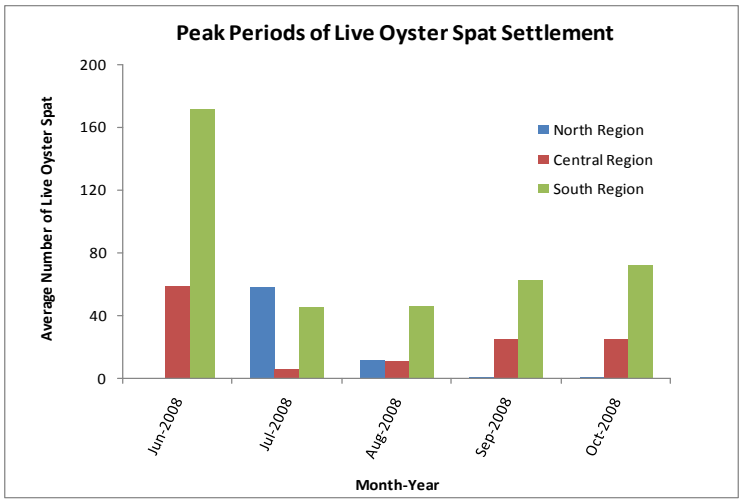
In August 2009, the SOSM project introduced a long-awaited website for volunteers and the general public at www.ncoystermonitoring.org. The oyster monitoring website is a great tool for volunteers and interested persons to learn more about shellfish and all things oyster, as well as view oyster spat program results, view images of common organisms on tiles, learn about other volunteers, and **ASK QUESTIONS**.

In October 2009, ground broke for the Shellfish Research Hatchery at the Center for Marine Science (UNCW). Research within the hatchery will focus on shellfish breeding and genetics to aid in managing resources for North Carolina conservation and restoration, as well as the aquaculture industry.

Image Contributed by Assistant Director, Fixed Operations & Planning at the Center for Marine Science (UNCW) and SOSM Volunteer, Paul Reinmann

In the Know

SOSM Project Summary of peak live oyster spat settlement in 2008. The regional values are based on the average number of oyster spat per rack for each site. Average number per rack is calculated via the average of 6 tiles, using the sum of each tile side (smooth + rough).



The North Carolina Shellfish Growers Association (NCSGA) is an independent group operated by shellfish farmers, hatchery operators, seafood dealers, educators, researchers, government regulators, and service providers. Founded in 1995, the main focus of the NCSGA is to improve and sustain a successful shellfish industry. The Shellfish Growers Association web address is located at www.agr.state.nc.us/markets/aquaculture/NCSG.html.

SPATacular Facts

The Eastern Oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, is a protandric species, which means the oyster alternates between genders depending on environmental factors and age. *Crassostrea virginica* also generally reproduces in warmer months when temperatures and suitable planktonic food availability enable rapid larvae growth and development.

Hewletts Creek in Wilmington, NC is one of several tidal creeks examined for *C. virginica* disease, condition, and reproduction by the Benthic Ecology Lab.

Facts from Kennedy, VS, Newell, RIE, Eble, AF, eds. The Eastern Oyster: *Crassostrea virginica*. Maryland Sea Grant College, 1996.

Images Contributed by Anne Markwith, Benthic Ecology Lab Graduate Student

SPATastic Cookin': Oyster & Clam Chowder

INGREDIENTS

- 3 large onions, finely diced
- 1 cup water
- 30 large or medium oysters, scrubbed well
- 40 small (2 inch) hard shelled clams (4 lbs) such as littlenecks, scrubbed well
- 3 slices bacon, cut crossways into 1/2 inch wide strips
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 5 celery sticks, finely diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 lbs baking (russet) potatoes, peeled-cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 1/2 cups bottled clam juice or water
- 1 cup half and half or cream
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne or to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat leaf (Italian) parsley (optional)

DIRECTIONS (also terrific with just oysters or just clams!)

- Bring 1 cup water to boil in a 5-quart heavy pot, then add clams and cook over moderately high heat, covered, until clams are fully open. Check every min after 5 min and transfer clams with a slotted spoon to a bowl as they fully open. Discard any clams that have not opened after 10 min. Pour cooking liquid through a fine-mesh sieve into another bowl.
- Roast oysters in 350° oven, in roasting pan, long enough for them to open, approximately 5-10 min. Discard any that do not open. Remove clams and oysters from shells, discard shells. Coarsely chop 1/2 of clams and transfer all clams to a bowl. Remove oysters from shells and transfer to another bowl. Pour reserved oyster liquor from roasting pan through fine mesh sieve into bowl. Refrigerate oysters, clams, and reserved liquid.
- Cook bacon in cleaned pot over moderate heat, stirring, until crisp, about 5 min, then transfer bacon with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain. Add butter to pot and when foam subsides, add onion, celery, and bay leaf. Cook at medium heat, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are softened, 10 to 15 min. Add wine to softened veggies and boil for 1-2 min, until reduced by half.
- Add peeled and cubed potatoes, clam cooking liquid, oyster liquid, and bottled clam juice. Potatoes should be fully covered with liquid. Simmer, covered, until potatoes are tender, 20-25 min. Cool slightly, then purée 2 cups soup in a blender until very smooth and return to pot. Can refrigerate for several hours.
- *Final steps, just before serving*: add half & half/cream, salt, pepper, Old Bay, and cayenne to pot with vegetables and potatoes and simmer on very low heat, stirring, until soup is heated through (*do not let boil*). Add clams and oysters, then cook, stirring, just until oysters begin to curl, 1-2 min. Remove from heat and discard bay leaf, then stir in parsley. Serve topped with crumbled bacon. Makes 8-10 main course servings.

Recipe Contributed by SOSM Volunteer, Allie Sheffield