

Division of Marine Fisheries

Shellfish Rehabilitation Program

2011 Annual Legislative Report



Each year, the Division of Marine Fisheries is required to report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations on the purchases and expenditures of the state's Shellfish Rehabilitation Program. Following is a report covering the 2010 activities.

Cultch Planting Activities - Oyster shell and marl are "planted" in coastal waters identified as prime shellfish-growing areas to promote oyster growth and enhance habitat. Continued competition for oyster shells reduced the amount of shell procured for the 2010 season. The request to purchase #4 limestone marl was delayed and shipment of 154,222 bushels of marl did not arrive until after the 2010 planting season. This marl is being used in the 2011 planting season.

• Cultch Material (purchase and transportation)	\$ 233,618.72
• Salaries and personnel	\$ 855,044.08
• Operations, support equipment, and sampling programs	\$1,154,429.01
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$2,243,091.81
• Purchased oyster shells	153,480 bushels
• Recycled oyster shells	9,145 bushels
TOTAL CULTCH PLANTED	162,625 BUSHELS

Oyster Sanctuaries – Sanctuaries are created by building reefs on previously viable oyster producing sites. Reefs are constructed with a combination of natural oyster shell and/or Class B rip-rap marl. These reefs serve as habitat that attract native oyster larvae, as well as clams, juvenile finfish, crabs and marine organisms, which in turn attract larger fish, enhancing hook-and-line fishing. Harvest of oysters and the use of bottom disturbing gear are prohibited in the sanctuaries, allowing a brood stock of oysters to develop. Spawn from this brood stock is carried by tides throughout North Carolina's coastal waters, enhancing oyster populations.

Currently, 10 oyster sanctuaries are located in estuarine waters from Dare to Carteret counties. This is the third year of operation under the Oyster Sanctuary Program. The program is supported by an appropriation by the General Assembly each year.

In 2009, the Marine Fisheries and Wildlife Resources commissions approved a Coastal Recreational Fishing License Grant to build a Coastal Fishing Reef/Oyster Sanctuary to enhance recreational fishing opportunities in the Pamlico Sound.

• Purchase 9,000 tons Class B rip rap	\$ 339,750.00
• Deployments Dec. 2009	4 mounds
• Deployments in 2010	58 mounds

Oyster Shell Recycling – The division collects oyster shells from individuals, businesses and festivals and places them into oyster sanctuaries and hand-harvest areas to help rebuild oyster stocks. These shells, which historically were considered garbage, or were used for landscaping purposes, now go back into our coastal waters to help produce more oysters.

• Restaurant donations (79 participating businesses)	13,002 bushels
• Public donations (131 recycle locations)	8,645 bushels

• Festivals	2,087 bushels
TOTAL SHELLS COLLECTED	23,734 BUSHELS
• 2010 Tax Credits (55 businesses/five individuals)	15,229 bushels
• Public outreach and education	\$11,428.07
• Operations	\$21,410.08
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$32,838.15

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act - Approximately \$5 million in stimulus funds were obtained by the N.C. Coastal Federation to enhance division oyster sanctuaries and cultch planting sites. Fishermen were paid \$2 per bushel to transport and plant 41,700 bushels of shell to division-selected sites. Fishermen earned \$83,400 for this work.

• Crab Hole Oyster Sanctuary	144 mounds built by contractors
• Clam Shoal Oyster Sanctuary	209 mounds built by contractors

2011 Operations - The proposed enhancement activities will continue to incorporate the recommendations of the Oyster Fishery Management Plan as follows:

- The division will continue to hold and encourage participation in cultch planting meetings and incorporate input into enhancement activities to minimize effects of management actions. Efforts are underway to establish expanded hand-harvest areas.
- The existing policy to limit the number of new planting sites to 30 per year in the northern area has been formalized and will continue to be used.
- The Oyster Shell Recycling Program will continue to expand to inland counties.
- The Oyster Sanctuary Program will continue by making deployments on existing and new oyster sanctuaries, monitoring existing sanctuary structures, and investigating new locations for program expansion.

FY 2011-12 Budget Reductions:

• Oyster Sanctuary Program	\$1,451,778
Loss of expanded appropriated funds received in FY 2007-08 in operations, along with five temporary positions. Operations are now dependent on grants and other funding sources.	
• Shellfish Rehabilitation Program	\$ 266,356
Reduction in materials, equipment and operations	

Projected 2011 Expenditures:

• Materials:	
• Cultch 294,900 bushels	\$ 435,554
• Rip rap 9,000 tons (CRFL-Funded)	\$ 371,800
• Salaries and personnel	\$1,032,347
• Operations	\$2,605,971
PROJECTED TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$4,445,672