



SPRING

2008

NEWSLETTER

Twelfth Annual Oyster Fair May 17, 2008

Mark May 17, 2008 on your calendars and plan to attend TOGA's Twelfth Annual Oyster Fair. This Fair will have something for every interest level. So take advantage of the event as a recruiting tool to jump start new gardening activity in your immediate water community. Come and bring a neighbor. This year's fair will take place in Marston Hall at Christchurch School on Route 33 in Saluda. It is set up as an entirely indoor event designed to eliminate any threat of inclement weather.

The education component of this year's fair includes two very exciting presentations on subjects of interest to all oyster gardeners:

Dr. Stan Allen, Professor of Marine Science and Director of the Aquaculture Technology Breeding Center at VIMS will be discussing **"Oyster Restoration Using Spat on Shell: What, Why, How."** His presentation will include the current efforts and techniques of placing clean shell in tanks containing oyster larvae that are ready to strike. The shell, with baby oysters attached, are then used for aquaculture or to improve natural oyster grounds.

Ms. Karen Forget, Director of Lynnhaven River Now, will discuss **"Water Quality Restoration in the Lynnhaven"**. Her organization's "Together we can make a difference" approach has played a significant role in the reopening of the river to commercial oyster harvesting. It very

well may be the water quality restoration model for many of Virginia's rivers.

Seed suppliers and vendors of oyster gardening supplies have been invited and will have for sale their latest offerings from booths in Marston Hall. If you are interested in purchasing seed at the Fair, please place your orders with Middle Peninsula Aquaculture in advance. (See **Spring Spat Order Form** at the end of this Newsletter.) The State Health Department's Division of Shell Fish Sanitation, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and the Department of Environmental Quality have also been invited to exhibit.

A **Registration Form** is included at the end of this newsletter and at www.oystergardener.org. Please complete and mail it with the appropriate fee to TOGA, 8218 Hell Neck Road, Gloucester, VA 23061 by **May 10**. The registration fee is \$5.00 for TOGA Members and \$8.00 for Non-members. The vendor fee is \$40.00 and includes approximately 100 square feet of Exhibit Space, a 30" X 72" table and two chairs plus a one year membership. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at the door. Fair activities start at 9:00 a.m. and end at 12:00 noon. Morning coffee is available free of charge and break refreshments are included. Any questions? Call Chan Chandler at (804) 725-5898, or Jackie Partin at (804) 694-4407.

Remember, all TOGA events are designed to support our vision of a Chesapeake Bay repopulated with sufficient oysters to improve water quality and sustain a viable Oyster Industry. Our mission is to motivate citizens to

help the Bay by growing oysters. We do this through education, hands on support, and participation in oyster research projects. Our slogan is: "Growing Oysters for a Cleaner Bay". So come to the Fair and bring a neighbor, one interested in doing the same.

NNOGA/TOGA Joint Meeting Scheduled

A joint meeting of the Northern Neck Oyster Gardeners Association and the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association will be held on Saturday, April 26th, at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. (The church is the last building on the west side of VA 200 as you drive north out of Kilmarnock across from Bluff Point Road.) Vendors will be available at 9:00 a.m. with diploid and triploid seed. The meeting will commence at 10:00 a.m. Guest speakers will be Dr. Stan Allen from VIMS who will speak on "Oyster Restoration Using Spat-On-Shell: What, Why, How"; and A.J. Erskine from Cowart Seafood Corp. and Bevans Oyster Co. who will speak on "Aquaculture in the Northern Neck and Progress Toward a Hatchery".

Oyster Hatchery Proposed for Northern Neck

The Northern Neck Planning District Commission (www.nnpdc17.state.va.us . Click on the Oyster Hatchery Project) is promoting the establishment of a new oyster hatchery in order to provide more spat for several initiatives. Some of the seed oysters would be destined for aquaculture in floats or bottom cages. But perhaps more important, programs to "strike" oyster larvae on clean oyster shell would be initiated, and the "spat-on-shell" would be released on both public and private grounds.

The envisioned hatchery would take brood stock (parents), spawn them and then rear the larvae to oyster seed stage in climate-controlled conditions. Healthy live algae would be cultured and grown to feed the larvae for two to three weeks until they are ready to settle. The process is not without potential problems, so clean facilities capable of providing filtered seawater, and managed by professionals, will be needed. It

is envisioned that the hatchery would produce billions of larvae set on shells and tens of millions of oyster seed destined for natural reefs or protective cages. Planning and design costs are estimated at about \$120,000, and the actual construction is currently estimated to cost about \$500,000. The benefits from a rejuvenated industry obviously depend on the success achieved, but the benefits are almost certain to far outweigh the costs.

TOGA hopes that its members will stay informed about this effort and support it. And remember, "spat-on-shell" requires clean shell, so save your shell in a pile onshore in preparation for the day when it can be used by the hatchery to provide you, or public oyster grounds, with the means to begin to revive natural reefs.

Volunteers Needed for 2008 Oyster Garden Mapping Project

TOGA has been recommended by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund Advisory Committee to receive funds to expand the 2007 Oyster Garden Mapping Project. (Please see "Results from the 2007 Oyster Garden Location and Salinity Monitoring Project" at <http://www.oystergardener.org/>) Assuming the Virginia General Assembly approves the budget, the expanded project will run from Spring 2008 through June 2009. Volunteers need access to some type of power boat, kayak or canoe and will be asked to survey approximately 10 miles of shoreline. TOGA will furnish a GPS receiver (for fixing location), a refractometer for measuring salinity and reimbursement for boat gas (up to \$100). In 2008, we would like to add to the geographical area that was surveyed in 2007 (see Figure 1 in the above referenced report). If you would like to participate, please contact Vic Spain at (804) 642-6764 or email at vspai@earthlink.net. Many thanks to the returning 2007 volunteers and the new participants who have already volunteered for 2008.

Oyster Restoration at Christ Church School

Oyster Restoration is growing at Christchurch School. "Cans for Oyster" is a new program at Christchurch devoted to the recycling of aluminum cans and other metals. The cans are taken to Middlesex Metals and the money earned is used to buy oyster seed and equipment from Chesapeake Bay Oyster Company. Christchurch is in the final stages of leasing bottom from the VMRC to use for oyster grounds in the Rappahannock River. Christchurch students and teachers will be working hard April 22nd on Earth Day to continue the restoration efforts and start the first stages of a reef-building project. Members of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation will be attending the Earth Day celebration to help bag 200 bags of shell for a "spat-on-shell" project in the fall. The larvae for the project will be bought from a generous \$1,200 donation from TOGA. The shell will sit over the summer and will be placed in Christchurch's tank when the students return from summer vacation. After the larvae have had time to set on the shell, the bags will be handled by a large group of students in a bucket brigade fashion to release the shell on a reef site at the Christchurch waterfront. The students will monitor the area in the years to follow. --Will Smiley

47 Oyster Gardeners Brave Threatening Snowstorm to Attend 2008 Annual Meeting

The 47 oyster gardeners who braved a threatening mid-winter snow storm on January 19, 2008 got a real information treat in the form

of an update on the status of Virginia's natural oyster stocks by Dr. Jim Wesson of VMRC and a research report on the evaluation of performance and reproductive stage using diploid and tetraploid native oysters by Karen Hudson of the VIMS Aquaculture Technology Breeding Center.

Dr. Wesson's presentation also included the current status of the Lower Rappahannock River Management Plan recommended by the Blue Ribbon Oyster Panel and implemented by VMRC. Dr. Mark Luckenbach, Director of the VIMS Eastern Shore Laboratory gave a most informative recap of the beginnings of oyster gardening in Virginia. His presentation culminated with the presentation of a plaque to Don Beard of the Northern Neck Oyster Gardeners Association citing Don as a pioneer oyster gardener.

During the business session of the meeting, the following slate of officers and board members were elected unanimously by those present:

Chan Chandler, President
 Vic Spain, Vice President
 Sammie Joplin, Secretary
 Lyn Layer, Treasurer
 Ray Hook, Past President
 Steve Wann, Board Member At Large
 Lynton Land, Board Member At Large
 Stuart Kramer, Board Member At Large
 Grady Wesson, Board Member At Large
 Jackie Partin, President Emeritus

President Chan Chandler cited the following statistics (vital signs) of TOGA's viability:

VITAL SIGN	January 1, 2007	January 1, 2008
Assets	\$13,556.24	\$36,100.43
Membership	149	270
Oyster Fair Attendance	80 (2006)	81 (2007)
Float Workshop	15 Floats (2006)	10 Floats (2007)
	100,000 Spat Sales	125,000 Spat Sales

TOGA Outreach Programs during 2007 included working with the Environmental Science Class at Middlesex High School to place 600 oysters in six floats in Urbanna Creek for a one year observation period. TOGA (Julian Cox) was active in developing an Oyster Project Course Module for the Poquoson High School Alternative Education Program. Rolf Zierow worked with the Mathews County Extension Office in an attempt to establish a 4H Oyster

Project in partnership with the high school Biology Program. And last, but by no means least, Vic Spain gave an exciting report on the status of the Salinity/Oyster Gardening Location Site Mapping Project sponsored and funded by TOGA. The initial data set is available on our website www.oystergardener.org. Based on this initial TOGA Outreach Program we are expecting additional money from the License Plate Fund to continue the project this year.

Board Announces 2008 Outreach Schedule

The TOGA Executive Board announced a 2008 outreach schedule to staff an information booth at the following events. The schedule is very similar to last year's. A notable exception is that we can staff two events on the same day now that we have two complete information exhibits. As always volunteers are needed. If you are available to staff the exhibit for three hours at any of the following events please give Chan Chandler a call at (804) 725-5898.

EVENT	DATE	EVENT	DATE
NNOGA Kilmarnock Spring Event Lynton Land	April 26	Mathews Market Days Rolf Zierow	Sept 5, 6
TOGA Oyster Fair Christchurch School Chan Chandler	May 17	Hampton Bay Days Julian Cox	Sept 6, 7
Earth /Arbor Day Fort Monroe Chan Chandler, Vic Spain	May 22	TOGA Float Workshop VIMS Steve Wann	Sept 13
Beaver dam Park Eco-Expo Gloucester Jim Renner	June 3, 4	National Estuaries Day York River Park Chan Chandler	Sept 27
Gwynns Island Festival Mathews Jim Renner	June 28	Oyster Gardening Workshop Fisherman's Museum Reedville Lynton Land	Sept 27

For additional information on oyster gardening activities:

www.oystergardener.org



OYSTER FAIR REGISTRATION

TOGA MEMBER (2008 DUES PAID) - \$5.00
 NON-MEMBER - \$8.00
 VENDOR/COMPANY - \$40.00
 (Check Appropriate Box)

Name/Company: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Amt. Enclosed: \$ _____

Make checks payable to TOGA and return registration to:

TIDEWATER OYSTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION
 8218 Hell Neck Road
 Gloucester, VA 23061
 (804) 694-4407



SPRING SPAT ORDERS

In order to avoid some of the disappointments of past years and still take advantage of the “TOGA discount”, Ken Kurkowski is asking all gardeners who wish to purchase spat from Middle Peninsula Aquaculture to preorder by mail prior to April 23 for delivery at Kilmarnock on April 26 and prior to May 14 for delivery to Christchurch School on May 17. Please mail the following form in adequate time to insure that your spat is ready for pickup at Christchurch or Kilmarnock.



OYSTER SEED (SPAT) ORDER FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Bag(s) Low salinity Diploid @ \$25.00 ea (will spawn when mature)
 Bag(s) DeBy Diploid @ \$25.00 ea (will spawn when mature)
 Bag(s) Triploid @ \$30.00 ea (sterile, will not spawn)
 (Each bag contains approximately 1,000 spat)

Will pick up at: Kilmarnock _____ Christchurch _____ (check one)
Order closing date: April 23, 2008 May 14, 2008

Make check payable to Middle Peninsula Aquaculture (MPA) or pay at pick up.
 Mail order to: Middle Peninsula Aquaculture; P.O. Box 769; North, VA 23128