



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oyster Farmer, Biologist to Discuss Oysters, Reef Restoration

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH - Jay Styron, owner of Carolina Mariculture Co., and Ted Wilgis, oyster restoration specialist for the N.C. Coastal Federation, will discuss oyster mariculture and reef restoration efforts in North Carolina. The presentation is open to the public, and it will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. at the federation's Fred and Alice Stanback Coastal Education Center in Wrightsville Beach.

Styron, who runs a small, family-owned oyster farm in Cedar Island, Carteret County, will share stories and tips on growing oysters. Wilgis, an oyster biologist, will provide background on restoration efforts and why oysters are critical to the health of our estuaries. They will also lead a hands-on lesson in opening and tasting our native oysters, that is sure to be a treat.

Oysters and the reefs that they form provide important habitat, are a critical link in the estuarine food chain, help to control erosion along shorelines, filter water and are an important fishery. As a keystone species in the estuary, the health of the oyster reflects the health of the coastal ecosystem. Since the harvest peak in the early 1900s, North Carolina's oyster harvests declined from an unsustainable high of 800,000 bushels a year to a low of 35,000 bushels in 1994. A number of efforts by state agencies, universities and conservation organizations, including the federation, are underway to restore oyster habitat and protect water quality.

The public is invited to the presentation. People can find more information and register at the federation's education center, 309 W. Salisbury St. in the Historic Square at Wrightsville Beach, or at www.nccoast.org. The event is free for federation members, and a suggested \$10 donation for non-members. Registration can be made on the night of the event or in advance.

The federation opened the Coastal Education Center with the goal of providing coastal education programs to the public. The speaker series runs from January to November and will feature a variety of experts bringing to life their coastal experiences, passions and pursuits.

Additional programs that will be offered at the education center this year include:

- A Coastal Adventures series that features special guests who will provide hands-on, engaging opportunities to learn about the coast, critters and hands-on instruction with simple "do-it-yourself" coastal restoration and water quality protection projects.
- Touch Tank Tuesdays, which involve an interactive education session for all ages with coastal critters from nearby tidal creeks and salt marsh habitats.
- A variety of special events with local artists, writers and coastal experts.

You can find out more about these programs on the federation's Events Calendar on the group's web site www.nccoast.org. You can also come by the center, call 910.509.2838 or email nccf@nccoast.org.

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About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:
"Working Together for a Healthy Coast"

The N.C. Coastal Federation is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration and preservation. The federation's headquarters office is located at 3609 N.C. 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The

federation also operates field offices in Wrightsville Beach and Manteo. For more information call 252.393.8185 or check our website at www.nccoast.org.

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