Ocracoke Oyster Restoration

Planning Began May 2008
Production of Barge October 2009
First Planting planned after April 2010

Project Director: Gene Ballance

History Ocracoke Island is surrounded by oyster reefs, which were major producers for the New Bern market at the end of the 19th century. However, over-harvesting stopped regeneration and the region has seen very little or no oyster production for many years. New limits on catch and mechanical harvest laws should allow the oysters to thrive once beds are supplemented with more cultch. Thriving oyster beds will provide fresh seafood and help the surrounding habitat.

Project Goal To restore historic oyster beds surrounding Ocracoke and educate the public on importance of these efforts.

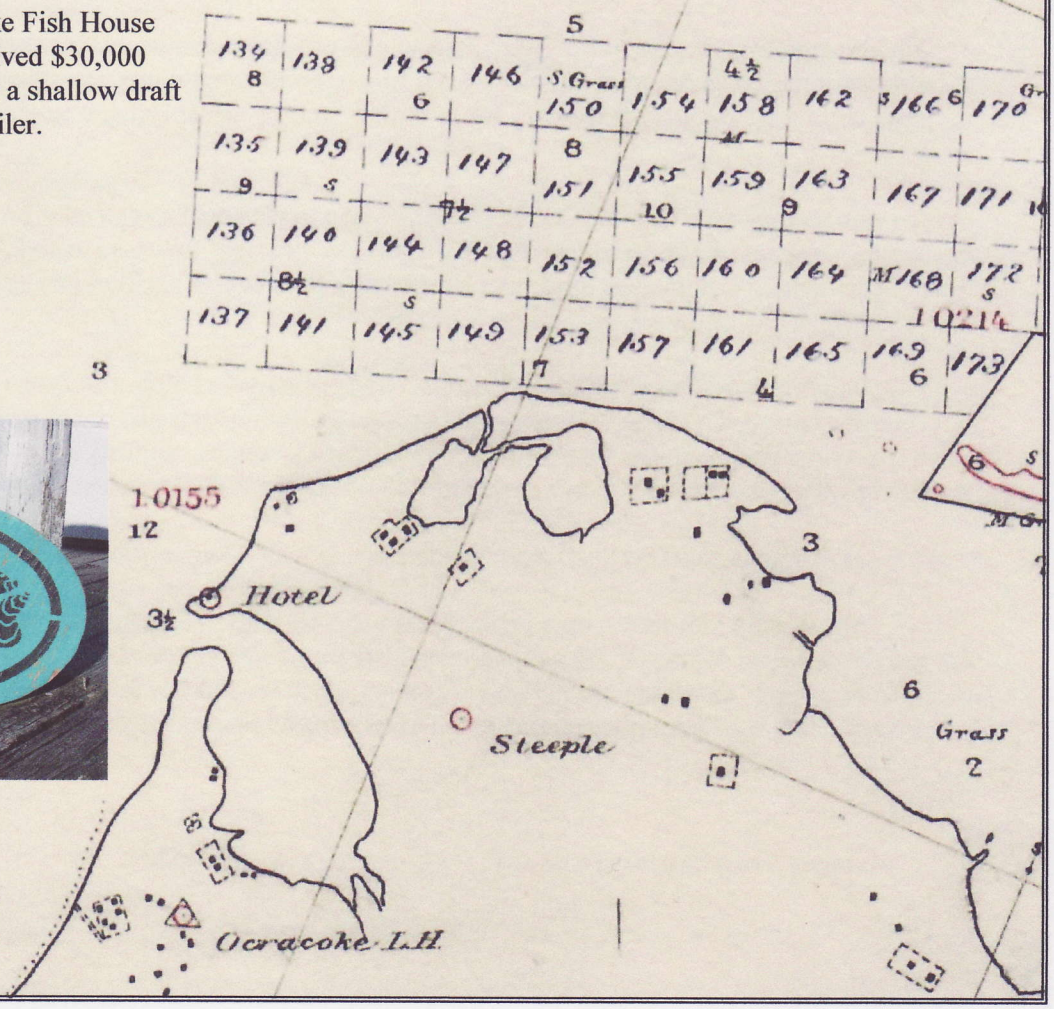
Description There are six planned experimental oyster reefs, each approximately 100 feet square and located between the Outer Banks and its parallel barrier reef in the Pamlico Sound. The Ocracoke Foundation's shallow draft barge will transport cultch and marl rip-rap to the reefs from the two transfer sites, located at the Ocracoke North End Hatteras Ferry Terminal, and the Oyster Creek Canal on the south end. The project will be monitored and information will be supplied to NC Division of Marine Fisheries.

Research The oyster team hopes to combine the concepts of the marl rip-rap oyster spawning sanctuary and the shell cultch plantings of the NC Division of Marine Fisheries. The area is legally hand harvest only, and so the reefs will be constructed using rip rap mounds interspaced with cultch plantings to deter mechanical harvest. The mounds will also be constructed to determine longevity at different depths.

Education The proposed project will be a featured educational display at the Ocracoke Working Watermen's Exhibit, located on the docks at the Community Square. The traveling public will learn about the importance of restoring oyster reefs through printed materials, seminars, hands-on educational activities and display of all maps and technical information.

Cost As part of the Ocracoke Fish House Project, the Ocracoke Foundation received $30,000 from the Golden LEAF Foundation for a shallow draft barge, 40 tons cultch, fuel, tags and trailer.

Project Partners
Ocracoke Foundation
Ocracoke Watermen
Golden Leaf Foundation
N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries



Lieut. Francis Winslow II
1887 Oyster Survey Map