

COAST WATCH

Photo by Scott Taylor



Beaufort's restoration draws boaters and tourists from all over the world

Rediscovering the waterfront

The waterfront. For many coastal North Carolina towns and cities it has been a resource long neglected. Once the hub of commerce and travel, many waterfronts and their accompanying downtown areas fell into disrepair because of the decline in commercial water traffic, the lack of industry, the pull of suburbia and other urban plights.

But there has been a change of attitude. Local officials and residents have discovered a newfound

respect for their watery borders. They've learned that with some spit and polish, the waterfront can be a lifeline that pulls people back into downtown.

To date, Beaufort is North Carolina's most successful waterfront resurrection (see stories, pages 3 and 5). But other coastal towns and cities also are joining the revitalization bandwagon. In a survey of these cities and towns, here's what *Coastwatch* learned.

Wilmington—Local residents and tourists have rediscovered downtown Wilmington and its waterfront. Using federal, state and local money, the city of Wilmington has built a riverfront park along the Cape Fear River about one block from the heart of downtown. The revitalization was spurred by a combination of private investment (the renovation of the Cotton Exchange and Chandler's Wharf) and by the realization that the city had turned its back on a unique resource, says Michael Hargett, project director for the Riverwalk.

In addition to the park, city officials used federal funds to provide low-interest loans to downtown businesses for facade renovations and local funds to make street improvements—brick streets, special lighting and trees.

Wilmington's most recent efforts stem from a report, "Wilmington Looks to the River." The city is building a riverwalk to tie together public and private development. In addition, city officials are planning to build mini-parks or pocket parks along the 1½-mile-long riverwalk.

Hargett says private investors are responding to the city's new look. "We had one two-block area that was like a ghost town," he says. "Now that area is at least 50 percent occupied."

New Bern—If two is better than one, then New Bern should be a step ahead of the pack. It has two waterfronts—one along the Trent River and another along the Neuse River. To take on the task of revitalizing two waterfronts, New Bern citizens formed Swiss Bear Inc., a private redevelopment corporation. This group acted as a catalyst for the city's revitalization efforts, says Brad Bass, director of planning and community development.

In initial revitalization efforts, federal funds were used to leverage private money for a hotel and mini-convention center on the Trent River, Bass says. In a

second project, a river study area, called Union Point, is being developed at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse rivers. The city sponsored a design competition and selected a plan for this project. Now they are pursuing financing, Bass says.

Along the Neuse waterfront, plans call for a rehabilitation of the Holiday Inn using a combination of public and private funds. Officials are awaiting word on funding applications for this project.

Elizabeth City—Some folks say the best way to come to Elizabeth City is by boat. The city has capitalized on its waterfront by building 14 slips for visiting boaters. Called Mariners Wharf, the docks were funded by the Committee of 100, an economic development committee of local citizens. The slips, which were designed to attract boaters traveling the Intracoastal Waterway, provide 48 hours of free dockage, says Jerry Allen, the director of parks and recreation in Elizabeth City.

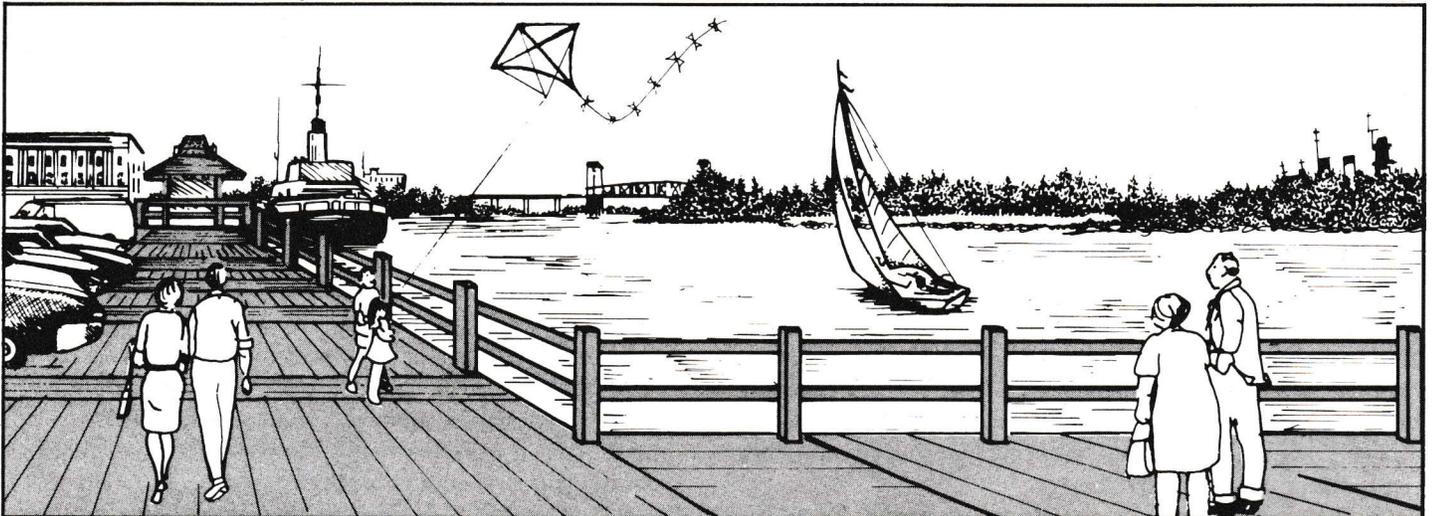
Senior volunteers for the parks and recreation department meet each visiting craft with a rose for the lady of the boat and the offer of transportation to laundries and grocery stores. Allen says the project has been extremely successful. The boaters enjoy their stay and townspeople have returned to the waterfront.

"Almost every city or town in the United States is trying to revitalize, but most of them don't have a river to work with," he says. "We feel the river is our greatest asset."

The city is also interested in developing a park area along the waterfront. Rich Novak, Sea Grant's area specialist in Manteo, is providing technical assistance to city officials planning this area.

Morehead City—Mayor Edward S. "Bud" Dixon says Morehead City will soon complete the first phase of its revitalization plan—spiffing up an

Illustration courtesy of Riverwalk Improvements Plan



Wilmington's waterfront improvements tie together public and private development

Illustration courtesy of Riverwalk Improvements Plan



Wilmington's plans include a riverwalk

area between 3rd and 6th streets. Using state and local funds, the city has put in new sidewalks, added parking spaces, put in a new lighting system and landscaped the area. The efforts have met with the approval and assistance of Morehead City's famous restaurant row, Dixon says.

In the second phase, Dixon says the city will center its efforts between 6th and 10th streets if funding is available. In addition to city plans, two private condominium projects are planned for the waterfront.

Washington—Washington has combined revitalization and restoration into a formula that has increased its population and attracted tourists. Using urban renewal money, the city of Washington tore down the warehouses that lined its waterfront and replaced them with a driving parkway along the Pamlico River in the 1960s. Since then, the city has worked with downtown businesses and residents located near the waterfront to restore the town's historic character, says Louis Taylor, director of planning and development. New plans call for the conversion of the Old Seaboard Coastline Station and warehouse into a civic center.

Edenton—Edenton, once a busy port, has settled into a peaceful town brimming with history. Today, instead of wharfs bustling with river traffic, visitors can find tranquility in one of the town's waterfront parks or a glimpse of history on a guided walking tour of some of the town's restored homes.

—Kathy Hart

Pride whips town into shipshape

About 25 years ago, an alarm sounded in the sleepy little town of Beaufort. No one can remember its sound, but it opened residents' eyes. What they saw was a dying village. What they did was resuscitate it.

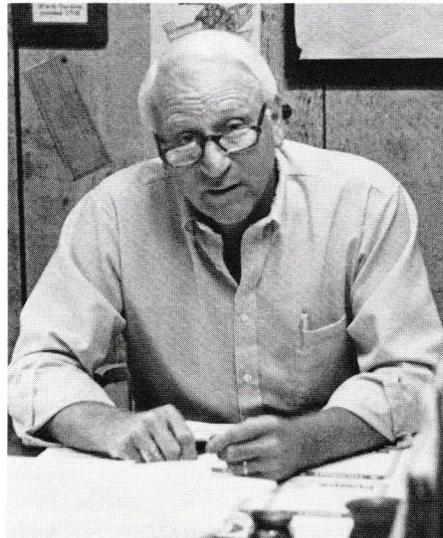
Town officials sought federal funds and raised local monies to spiff up its holdings on the waterfront. Meanwhile, private organizations spurred restoration and preservation on the homefront. The result? A thriving town that tastefully combines restoration and revitalization.

Kathryn Cloud, a member of the local historic association, thinks it was magic. Her co-worker Betty Shannon says it was hard work and love. Yet most of Beaufort's residents know it was 20 years of community effort and lots of money that changed their dilapidated town into a prosperous seaport.

In the 1950s, North Carolina's third oldest town looked its age. It had lost most of its charm to the Depression and bigger cities. The town was like a rusty antique clock stashed in the attic and forgotten.

Beaufort native Piggy Potter was mayor of the town then. He tells a story that describes the town's state: "We put up street lights on Front Street and somebody asked me why," says Potter. "I told them, 'So you can see the rats running across the street.'"

Photo by Sarah Friday



A.C. Blankenship

Empty stores lined the harbor, 200-year-old houses and historical landmarks sat in disrepair and people moved away. At the docks, natives saw only half a dozen ships.

"The whole town was deteriorating," says A.C. Blankenship, town administrator and a resident of Beaufort for about 40 years. "The business district had deteriorated. The tax base had dwindled away . . . The town went for years and couldn't pay their debts." In 1963, Beaufort was \$10 million in debt.

But a small group of concerned citizens recognized the value of their prized clock and set about removing it from storage, buying it new parts and shining it up a bit. The group, now the Beaufort Historical Association, realized something needed to be done if the town's unique history were to be preserved and if their children were to stay there, says Mayor Joyce P. Fulford.

The Beaufort Historical Association began its efforts during the town's 250th anniversary. For the celebra-

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tion, the association opened several of the older homes that were in good condition for tour. And to increase community pride, they established a plaque program, giving historical markers to restored homes 100 or more years old. After the town's anniversary, the group raised money to improve other houses and buildings now on display in the Historical Complex area of Beaufort.

"Since then it has been a going thing," Fulford says. "As the years have progressed, as people see things come about, the people want to get involved."

Preservationists, administrators, women's clubs, the Beaufort Jaycees and the Garden Club were a few who got involved. Beaufort was in the process of getting back on its feet in 1963, says Blankenship, when it began a major thrust of its revitalization campaign—urban renewal.

Most of the citizens and the commission wanted to bring in new businesses that would help the county. Because they justified the improvement would bolster the economy, Beaufort received a federal grant for more than \$1.2 million. And in 1968, the town approved a \$250,000 bond referendum to aid in the urban renewal.

The commission originally planned to rebuild 18 blocks near the waterfront. However, federal funds were cut during President Richard Nixon's administration, and the area was reduced to two blocks on the south side of the main street, Front Street.

The revitalization was a joint effort between the historical association and the urban renewal project, says Blankenship. The association worked with the commission to devise an area that would complement the town's historic, friendly atmosphere.

"In the beginning, when we had the referendum, there was some opposition," says Blankenship. "Since that time, since the project has been implemented, the majority of those people that were against it are not now."

By 1976, five tracts of land were cleared for the businesses that the commission agreed would be appropriate. Construction began for the new bulkhead and boardwalk, and areas were designated for paving and parking.

In addition, Beaufort later qualified for an additional \$1 million community development block grant as a

result of receiving the urban renewal grant. With this money, new water and sewer lines were put in a blighted area of town, and funds were made available to homeowners for renovation.

Today, most residents and visitors agree the changes have been good ones. The historical association has opened 10 structures for tour and awarded more than 100 plaques throughout Beaufort. The downtown project brings in sailors from all over the world and new developers to the outskirts of the town. Apartments, shopping centers, subdivisions, inns and new businesses have located in the county, helping to bring the 1983 tax base to \$75 million.

Waterfront revitalization proves to be a solution for many dying coastal towns and cities. But Beaufort's story reads like a fairy tale, say Cloud and Shannon. "The magic ingredients just happened to come together," boasts Cloud.

Nearly 4,500 people live in Beaufort now, and about 1 million visit it annually. As in the past, natives and sailors are lured to the port's good fishing, safe harbor, stately homes and quaint shops along the waterfront.

Blankenship and Fulford believe the growth and development has leveled off. "I feel we've accomplished a lot of goals," says Fulford. "We can just

grow so much. I think we've just about reached our potential."

Besides, says Cloud, "Beaufort is off the beaten path. People want it to be small, quaint and quiet. It's part of the charm."

— Sarah Friday

Photo by Sarah Friday

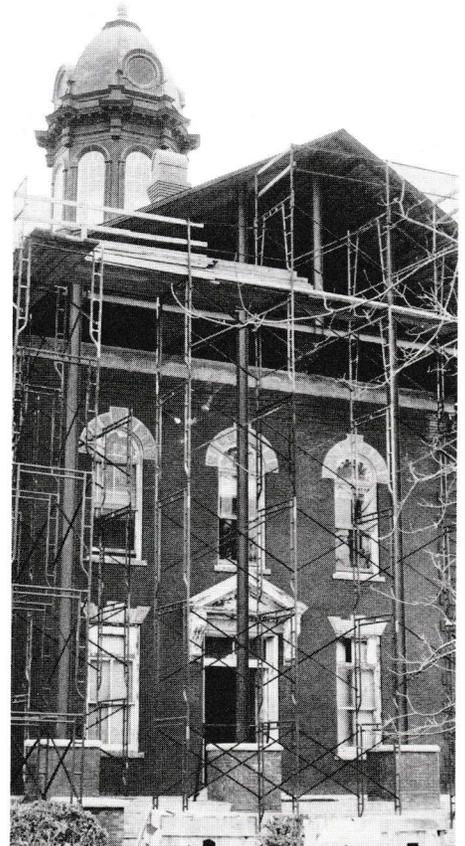


Photo by Tabbie Nance



Above, Beaufort courthouse; below, tourists peek at the past in the town's Historical Complex

“Old Beaufort by the Sea”

A pinch of old, a dash of new

The double-decker bus pulls away from the curb, and 85-year-old Grayden Paul begins his spiel. It's all about how Beaufort's name used to be Fishtown, changed to Hungry Town after the Tuscarora Massacre, then to Paradise, and finally settled on Beaufort, after the Duke of Beaufort in England.

By this time, the English bus has reached the Old Cemetery. Soldiers from the Revolutionary and Civil Wars are buried there, he's proud to tell you.

The tour continues. It's the same lecture Paul has given for nearly 50 years to one group or another. Sometimes his audiences are summer tourists. Other times, it's a chartered group that has called with a special request for a tour. Paul is always glad to oblige. He is as much a part of Beaufort history as the centuries-old houses he describes.

But as Paul winds his tour through the historic streets, the visitor notices a contrast. Across the road from Beaufort's historic district, a spanking-new building houses a collection of specialty shops and blocks the view of Taylor's Creek and nearby Carrot Island. Tourists stroll down a freshly-planked boardwalk that stretches for several blocks along the city docks. Where they once would have seen the rusty steel hulls of menhaden vessels, tourists now gaze at 50-foot sailboats and yachts.

For 276 years “Old Beaufort by the Sea” was a fishing village. When it was founded in 1709, it served as a haven for whale fishermen. Centuries later, the menhaden industry kept the town thriving.

In 1985, this waterfront village is a mix of the quaint and the cosmopolitan. The old and the new stand side by side, integrated into what has become one of the biggest successes in waterfront revitalization on the East Coast.

The Beaufort that has emerged is attracting new businesses, new residents and an influx of tourists. Charles McNeill, curator of the N.C. Maritime Museum, has watched Beaufort's

Photo by Tabbie Nance



Grayden Paul aboard double-decker tour bus

progress. He attributes the success of the revitalization to the town's geographic location. From here, it's a quick hop to the Virgin Islands, or sailors can go north through Pamlico Sound and avoid the infamous Graveyard of the Atlantic.

That prime geographic location has replaced the 80-some menhaden boats that used to dock on the waterfront with the masts of 150 to 200 sailboats. They come in search of protected anchorage and quick access to the sea lanes. Within 10 minutes, a boat can

be in the open sea, says McNeill.

A logbook at the Maritime Museum is testimony to the popularity of Beaufort as a layover for boats. Sailors passing through sign their names, identify their boats and state their destinations. The list reads like scenes from an exotic travelogue. Places like Quebec, Canada; Stockholm, Sweden; Sydney, Australia; Wimbledon, England. And if that's not enough to impress you, famous newsman Walter Cronkite once anchored here, and Jacques

Continued on next page

Cousteau made Beaufort a port of call.

The restoration has even attracted a luxury passenger service vessel—a mini-Love Boat of sorts. The cruises of about 100 passengers travel the Intracoastal Waterway, stopping off in Beaufort for a day of sightseeing.

Inevitably, some of those just passing through have decided to make Beaufort their home, leaving fewer and fewer residents who are as native to the area as Grayden Paul.

Nancy and Mike Barton are two transplants to Beaufort. They moved here last year after four years of traveling and living on a boat. When they decided it was time to return to land, they faced a decision. They wanted to open a business; but where?

They narrowed the choice down to an area around the Chesapeake or Beaufort. Nancy says Beaufort won hands down. They had sailed through the town before and found it “quaint and unspoiled.”

The Bartons, along with several other business partners, are renovating one of Beaufort’s oldest homes into a country inn.

Beaufort natives praise and curse the town’s restoration. Yes, times have changed, says Grayden Paul. But he’s pleased with the progress. If it means more folks get to see his beloved town, it’s all right by him.

Since he moved there from Davis in 1922, Paul has watched Beaufort make a complete circle, from thriving fishing village to ghost town and back to vibrant seaport.

Through the changes, the boardwalk has remained the social center of the community, says Paul. “In 1912 Front Street was paved. The tide came right up over the road to the houses.” Paul says residents walked uptown via the

boardwalk that was built over the street because the rising tide often covered the road.

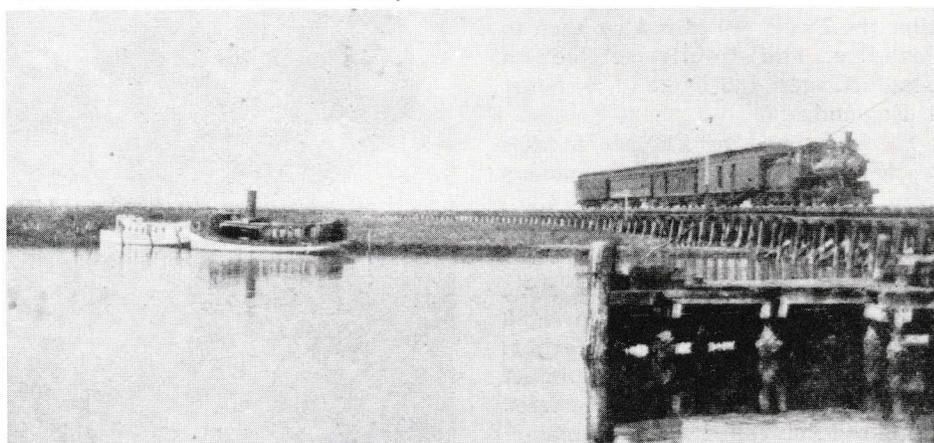
In those days, the men of the town gathered around the pot-belly stoves in the waterfront stores. “All the fishermen and the hunters would sit around and talk until late,” says Paul. “Even the barbershops stayed open til 12:00 on Friday and Saturday nights. Now they stay open six or eight hours

a day and charge you \$5 a haircut.” Times have changed in Beaufort.

Today it is a modern historic village. A contradiction in terms, perhaps, but a successful contradiction. The town’s ability to shove some of its past aside while retaining much of its beginnings has resulted in a combination that may keep Beaufort alive for three more centuries.

— Nancy Davis

Photos from N.C. Division of Archives and History



Turn-of-the-century photos of Beaufort’s railway and waterfront

Coastwatch is a free newsletter. If you’d like to be added to the mailing list, fill out this form and send it to Sea Grant, NCSU, Box 8605, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-8605.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Mass media |
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Coastal property owner yes no Boat owner yes no

THE BACK PAGE

"The Back Page" is an update on Sea Grant activities — on research, marine education and advisory services. It's also a good place to find out about meetings, workshops and new publications. For more information on any of the projects described, contact the Sea Grant offices in Raleigh (919/737-2454). For copies of publications, write UNC Sea Grant, NCSU, Box 8605, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-8605.



In November 1983, *Coastwatch* reported that marine advisory agent Jim Bahen was experimenting with a shrimp trap. Now, after gathering a season's worth of data, the results are not encouraging, says Bahen.

With the help of two graduate students from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, Bahen began testing the devices during the brown shrimp season and completed his experiments during the white shrimp season. Similar to miniature crab pots, the shrimp traps are 16-inch cubes made of fine wire mesh, with two side openings, a central bait well and two passages to the main body of the trap.

The researchers wanted to find out if the traps would catch shrimp, where they would be most effective, which bait attracted the most shrimp, and what size wire mesh would allow smaller shrimp and fish to escape.

Bahen reports that the quantities of shrimp harvested during the test period did not prove the traps to be economically feasible. Changes in wire mesh size, location and time of sets, and baits made little difference.

In one experiment, the researchers placed a trap in a 250-gallon aquarium to test the behavior of the shrimp. They found the shrimp were able to go in and out of the large-mesh traps at will. The 1/2-inch mesh seemed to work best at retaining shrimp.

However, if the shrimp were left in the trap for more than three hours, they eventually found their way out.

Bahen says he will run additional tests on the shrimp traps during the 1985 season. If his results vary, *Coastwatch* will let you know.



What's outselling books by former U.S. Senator Sam Ervin and NCSU basketball coach Jim Valvano? Well, in one Raleigh bookstore, it's a book about fish.

Fisherman's Guide: Fishes of the Southeastern United States by Charles Manooch III, a research biologist with the National Marine Fisheries Service's Beaufort Laboratory, is on the bestseller list for recreational and commercial fishermen alike. The book includes over 250 species of freshwater and saltwater fish from Delaware through Florida and color paintings of 150 of those most often caught by recreational and commercial fishermen.

Fisherman's Guide explains how to identify the fish, provides life history, habitat and distribution information, and presents methods of catching and preparing the fish. The 362-page book is published by the N.C. State Museum of Natural History with collaboration from the International Game Fish Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the N.C. Wildlife Federation and the Sport Fishing Institute. The cost is \$24.95.

For a copy, write the N.C. State Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 27637, Raleigh, N.C. 27611. Or call 733-7450.

Lundie Spence, UNC Sea Grant's marine education specialist, is offering to conduct in-service training programs for teachers or other educators using her new Sea Grant publication, *Coastal Capers*. The 76-page booklet provides educators with marine-related, interdisciplinary ac-

tivities for lower elementary students and youth groups such as 4-H or scouts. It is illustrated with reproducible art that can be used with the capers—"Let's go fishing," "Fishy fun," "What bird are you," and more.

To arrange a training program, write Spence at UNC Sea Grant, Box 8605, NCSU, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-8605. Or call 919/737-2454. For a copy of the booklet, write UNC Sea Grant. Ask for UNC-SG-84-05. The cost is \$3.50.

If you're planning a beach trip this spring, you'll want to know which seafoods are in season. If crabs and scallops are your favorites, you'll be in luck in April. But if you prefer oysters, you'll have to wait until October or November.

To help make your selection, Joyce Taylor, Sea Grant's marine advisory agent at the NCSU Seafood Laboratory in Morehead City, prepared a colorful 17-by-22-inch poster depicting the seasonal availability of North Carolina seafoods. The chart is based on North Carolina commercial landing statistics and is intended as a guide for buying fresh fish and shellfish. For a single free copy of the poster, write Sea Grant. Ask for UNC-SG-84-04.



Harold the Lobster's days at the N.C. Marine Resources Center on Roanoke Island are numbered. Sometime this summer, probably in May, the 17-pound lobster will leave his home of over a year and make his permanent residence at the Virginia Museum of Marine Sciences.

Harold's capture last year off the Virginia coast spurred a petition to save the lobster from the pot. In the wake of the protest to commute Harold's sentence, the seafood company's owners agreed to donate the giant lobster to the Virginia Museum of Marine Sciences. Since the facility

Continued on next page

wouldn't be ready until this summer, Marine Resources Center Director Rhett White offered the crustacean refuge there.

Probably the largest and oldest lobster in captivity, Harold has been a major attraction at the center since his arrival. If you want to catch Harold's show before he moves on, visit the center located on Airport Road north of Manteo on Roanoke Island. Center hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekends, 1 to 5 p.m.

King mackerel won't take the only prizes at this year's Scotts Hill King Mackerel Tournament. The largest amberjack, a traditionally underutilized species, will also earn a prize.

As part of his National Marine Fisheries Service grant to increase the use of underutilized species by recreational anglers, Marine Advisory Services Director Jim Murray will offer samples of cooked amberjack to tournament participants.

The tournament is scheduled for May 30 through June 1 at the Scotts Hill Marina in Scotts Hill, N.C. For entry rules, write the marina at Rt. 1, Box 541 AC, Wilmington, N.C. 28405.

To help fishermen avoid costly hangs that can destroy nets and waste precious fishing time, UNC Sea Grant offers *Hangs and Obstructions to Trawl Fishing*. The book was com-

plied from the records of trawler captains, who were willing to share their hang logs with others. It lists hangs by loran headings and covers waters off the Atlantic Coast from Cape Cod to Florida.

For a copy of the book, write UNC Sea Grant. Ask for UNC-SG-83-01. The cost is \$2.



Crab shedding has become a booming seasonal business in coastal North Carolina. But before setting up your shedders, read UNC Sea Grant's latest blueprint, *Estimating Cash Flow Generated by Crab Shedding Enterprises*. In this blueprint, Jim Easley, an extension economist at North Carolina State University, shows fishermen, in a step-by-step manner, how to estimate net cash flow for two types of shedding systems—floating and flow-through. Floating systems use cages in a natural body of water to hold peelers during shedding. Flow-through systems are onshore shedding facilities that pump natural water through tanks and return it to its source.

This blueprint is a supplement to *A Guide to Soft Shell Crabbing*, a UNC Sea Grant publication written by marine advisory specialist Wayne Wescott. For a free copy of the blueprint, write UNC Sea Grant. Ask

for UNC-SG-BP-85-2. For a free copy of *A Guide to Soft Shell Crabbing*, ask for UNC-SG-84-01.

The N.C. Marine Resources Center at Bogue Banks has the right touch when it comes to kids. There, children of all ages can learn about marine life firsthand with two new touch tanks scheduled to open in April.

The tanks will model North Carolina's rock jetties and the animals that are found near them. Horseshoe crabs, sea urchins, starfish, spider crabs, toadfish and other fish will be swimming and crawling in the tanks, says Mark Joyner, aquarium specialist with the N.C. Office of Marine Affairs. And with each tank about three feet deep, says Joyner, there will be a lot of creatures to see and touch.

The official dedication of the tanks will be May 30 at 7:30 p.m. at the center.

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