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## City Begins Oyster Mitigation Project

*North Myrtle Beach, SC – May 11, 2018* – The City of North Myrtle Beach has begun work on the mitigation of oyster beds disturbed during the recent dredging of the Cherry Grove canals. As required by its U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredging permit, the City must reestablish oyster beds that were disturbed during dredging.

The oyster shells will be placed at various locations in the marsh, outside of any future dredge paths. The oyster shells will serve as the hard substrate to which developing oysters will attach themselves as they mature over several years.

Beginning this weekend, about half of the overflow parking lot at the Heritage Shores Nature Preserve at 53rd Avenue North will be closed so that trucks delivering the oyster shells can unload them on to barges that will ferry the shells to the locations where the new oyster beds will be created.



*A photo showing oyster eggs or "spat" attached to an oyster shell.*

It will take about 23,000 bushels or 1 million pounds of oyster shells to create the new oyster beds, which equates to about 50 barge trips.

The work must occur now because it synchronizes with the maturation time frame of oyster larvae.

### HOW OYSTERS DEVELOP

Fertilized oyster eggs drift in the water column undergoing cell division until they become juvenile larvae. Oyster larvae live in the water column for about two weeks maturing through different stages. Larvae swim in the water currents in order to follow the phytoplankton, their source of food. Larvae are not capable of swimming horizontally, but they can move vertically. Once the larvae are about two weeks old and in the pediveliger stage (larva with a foot), they begin to concentrate at the bottom of a water system to search for a hard substrate. The larvae utilize an appendage that they grow called a foot. This foot helps them crawl around on the bottom to find a suitable substrate for them to attach to. Once they have successfully located a suitable location, usually an oyster shell, they begin to attach to the shell by secreting a glue. The larvae then undergo a complete metamorphosis of internal anatomy and

become what we call a spat. From there, they develop over time into a full-grown oyster. -- *Source: University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Horn Point Oyster Hatchery*

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