Report: Shell-planting program increasing oyster population

Samples show the recent oil spill has not contaminated oysters in the Delaware Bay.

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On the same day that samples showed no oil spill contamination of Delaware Bay oysters, a new report detailed how last year's shell-planting program doubled oyster recruitment in the bay.

Rutgers University biologist Eric Powell's report to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, released Tuesday, detailed the specific successes and weaknesses of the effort to restore oyster stock throughout the Delaware Bay.

Federal and state money paid for clean surf clam, ocean quahog and Maryland oyster shell to be dumped in New Jersey and Delaware waters to increase oyster recruitment, or the process of oyster larvae attaching to shells to grow to maturity. Biologists have spoken about the project's efforts before, but Powell's report was the first analysis of the work.

"Oyster recruitment doubled in the target areas of the bay, which is a big success," said Powell, head of Rutgers's Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory.

"The 2005 program could lead, in three years, to a 50 percent increase in the number of oysters that could be harvested."

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary released the report, which Powell provided on behalf of the Oyster Group, a collection of New Jersey and Delaware government agencies and Rutgers' Haskin lab.

The report came the same day that the U.S. Coast Guard said last week's oil spill... See Oysters, Page C5

Oysters

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"We need more activities than just sports," she said. She also wanted a family eatery, such as Olive Garden, and a sporting goods store in the new plaza.

Director of Public Works Patrice Basada of St. Mary Magdalen wanted cleaner streets and no stagnant water pools that are breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Basada said she was nervous, but enjoyed sitting in the commissioner's seat.

An audience full of proud parents, relatives and friends watched, hoping to one day see their children grow into those seats.

Carl and Hope File were there to support their son, Director of Public Safety Carl File of Mount Pleasant School.

"I was just excited, youth week is a really big event in this town. For our son to be picked out of all the fifth-graders at his school to do this, we were just really proud," Carl File, the father, said.

"He is a natural leader," Hope File said of her son, who one day hopes to go into professional football.

The event ended when Mayor Deckert closed the meeting, after which plaques were given to the students from their corresponding commissioners.

The rest of the students selected this year included Juana Lloa of Bacon School, Julia Piekarek of Holly Heights School, Edward Hasenpat of R.D. Wood School and Ashli Weems of Silver Run School.

During the regularly scheduled meeting, an ordinance amending the Municipal Code regarding private water and septic tanks was dropped.

A group of residents on Cedar Street and Buckshutem Road, lead by Lois Hall, pushed law makers to change an ordinance that stated homeowners within 200 feet of a main utility line must abandon private septic and water tanks and hook up to the city.

After two commission meetings, a second draft was hammered out during a closed session to allow residents living near city mains to keep their wells and sewer systems. The water wells would have to be tested every three years and the septic tanks every five years.

Hall asked the city clerk to drop the first reading of the ordinance after receiving a copy of the new ordinance before Tuesday's meeting.

She said there was a change made requiring homeowners to pay two to three times as much for county and state standard testing than they would with local testing standards.

Hall asked the city to schedule another meeting session to go over the changes made to the previously agreed upon ordinance.

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