



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Feb. 1, 2011

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Lowcountry Oyster Festival - A Shell of an Event!

CCA Oyster Recovery Team collects more than 35 tons of shell for habitat

Columbia, S.C. – For the fourth year in a row, the “CCA Oyster Recovery Team” sporting international orange t-shirts and vests, worked overtime to reclaim shells left over from the 28th Annual Lowcountry Oyster Festival at Boone Hall Plantation. A team of 44 CCA South Carolina members, volunteers, and partners gathered up almost 75,000 pounds of oyster shell last weekend that might otherwise have gone straight to a landfill. Thanks to their hard work, those shells are headed instead right back into the marshes and estuaries to create new marine habitat along the coast of South Carolina.

“This is not easy work, but it is at the very heart of conservation. This effort has a direct and tangible impact on the quality of our fisheries, and CCA members understand that link,” said Gary Keisler, CCA SC Topwater Action Campaign Coordinator. “We are grateful to the festival promoters, vendors, and attendees, for taking the time to understand what these simple oyster shells mean to our state’s marine resources.”

Each year, tens of thousands of bushels of oysters are harvested in South Carolina. In addition to being delicious, they are a vitally important species for our marine ecosystem as one mature oyster is capable of filtering up to 50 gallons of water per day. Usually found in clusters along the South Atlantic coast, oyster reefs provide habitat for more than 70 species of fish, shrimp, crabs, and other marine animals. The reefs also act as a natural barrier to habitat erosion along the many waterways of the Palmetto State.

However, many factors have combined over the past several decades to create a shortage of oyster shell for habitat purposes and shell has had to be purchased to supplement the state’s stock of shells. The shortages have limited the amount of habitat restoration work that the state is able to undertake. After identifying the problem, CCA South Carolina worked to be a part of a two-pronged solution. As a part of the Topwater Action Campaign, purchased shell was donated to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, but greater returns were soon realized simply by raising the public’s awareness of the importance of recycling shell for habitat.

“People want to do the right thing,” said Michael Smith, CCA SC State Chairman. “We just needed to make people aware how valuable all the shell that was going into dumpsters behind restaurants and at oyster festivals is to the future of our marine resources. We have some great volunteers who have gone out and spread the word, and the result this weekend is about 1,450 bushels of shell that will soon be at the heart of a reef attracting trout and redfish.”



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CCA South Carolina is proud to be celebrating 25 years as a steward of the state’s marine resources.