



Musings from the Main Mollusk

This message to members is long overdue. The good news is that SMOCS Board has been extremely busy (and successful) in building our program throughout 2008. The bad news is that these efforts distracted me from keeping you informed about what we are trying to do to restore oysters to the Bay. This is the first of several newsletters that SMOCS will be sending out to you in coming months. This one will concentrate on bringing you up to date on what we have accomplished over the past year. Future newsletters will include articles detailing SMOC's plans for 2009, and for those members who are raising oysters at their docks, guidance on how to care for their growing brood and how you will be able to obtain the spat in the fall that will be the source of oysters that we will put on reefs in the autumn of 2010. Also, we will continue to keep you informed about the health of oysters in the Bay and the status of Maryland's efforts to develop a comprehensive oyster restoration policy.

In the meantime, our Board is planning on having SMOC's second annual general membership meeting at Oyster bay at 10:30 am on July 20, 2009. This will give us a chance to meet you again in person and update you on what we are doing and to give you all a chance to get involved in the work that needs to be done this year. In the meantime, I hope that you will feel free to contact me (410 326 0450 or MrOyster@SMOCS.org) if you have any questions about our program or the larger efforts to restore oysters to the Bay.

Len Zuza

Looking Back at 2008: An *Annus Mirabilis*

2008 was a wonderful year for SMOCS. Here are some of the highlights:

SMOCS Members Raising 300,000 Oysters With the support of our members, SMOCS was instrumental in distributing some 300,000 young oysters to host docks in Southern Maryland. These oysters will be transferred to test reefs in 2009.

Strong Increase in Members Over the past year, SMOCS grew from roughly 20 members last year to 51 today. While most of these are individuals, two are local communities, Solomons Landing and Oysters Bay. At both locations, the number of individuals interested in our program is larger than the registered members.

Vigorous Growth in Community Outreach and Education In April we showed an early version of the movie "Who Killed Crassostrea virginica?" to more than 80 individuals for our first membership meeting at the Calvert Marine Museum. We also deposited some 8,000 oysters on a reef at the Navy Recreation Facility in Solomons. SMOCS expanded our public outreach to educate local residents about the ecological value of oysters in presentations at a Washington Sewer and Sanitation Commission (WSSC) Employee Open House, the Patuxent Sojourn, the St. Mary's River Watershed Festival, and the Patuxent River Appreciation Days (PRAD) celebration. We are also providing technical support for a 4-H program in which young participants study the growth of oysters under different conditions.

State and Local Officials Informed of Oyster Restoration Requirements

In its public advocacy role, SMOCS was able to persuade the members of Md.'s Oyster Advisory Commission to acknowledge a role for community based oyster gardening organizations. SMOCS also helped organize the "Great Oyster Debate" at the Calvert Marine Museum during PRAD. SMOCS also urged the Maryland General Assembly to retain the 100% tax credit for oyster floats.

Salmon Join SMOCS Fight To Restore Oysters To Local Waters!

No, we haven't been sampling the local wines. We're talking about Isabella Salmon, a seventh grade student at Pyle Middle School in Bethesda, Maryland, her sister Michaela and their Mom Daisy.

The Salmons joined SMOCS in 2007. Although they live in Bethesda, they visit friends in Southern Maryland frequently. When Isabella learned that a supply of old oyster shells is one of the most important resources for restoring oyster reefs, she leapt into action. She contacted Blacks Restaurant, a raw bar in Bethesda and asked if they would be willing to allow her to collect their discarded shells. Isabella got right to work, providing buckets for the staff to use and retrieving the shells every week or so. Isabella has dedicated many hours to this project, and collected approximately 200 hundred gallons of shell!

SMOCS would like to thank Blacks for the shells, and Michaela and Dorothy for helping with this project (and for putting up with the smell of oyster shell in the garage!) And of course, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Isabella. Well done!



Isabella Salmon with some of the shell she collected in Bethesda.

Oyster Bay Maternity Ward Going Strong

Oyster Bay is a waterfront condominium community located on the Dowell Peninsula on Back Creek across from Solomon's Island. Oyster Bay SMOCS members love oysters and what oysters can do to help clean local waters. The Oyster Bay "Dockmeister" is John McHenry. He is the Chairperson of the Pier Committee and takes great pride in maintaining the docks that support over 160 slips. John says "I always wanted to do something to promote the health of the Bay; and, moving to Solomon's in 2005 opened the door. I didn't know where to start, but thanks to the internet 'oyster farming' pointed me in the right direction. I had some believers here at Oyster Bay, and we looked at several operations, but decided to wait until we could get a more in-depth look at the process before casting our lot. Palmer Esau [a member of the Oyster Bay Board of Directors] and I met Len Zuza in the parking lot of the Calvert Marine Museum one day and had a 'spat exchange'; and, that was the turning point. Palmer, who is an avid sailor said "I love the Bay and its tributaries and would like to see the water clean once again and that can only happen with the return of our oysters. We live in Oyster Bay Condominiums and the name of the place says a lot."

Shortly after the spat exchange, Len met with members of Oyster Bay to discuss the SMOCS Program; and, ten couples became SMOCS members and proud owners of 50,000 oyster spat. The SMOCS/Oyster Bay 'maternity ward' was opened in the fall of 2008. The oysters are growing in 10 SMOCS BOCS (Buoyant Oyster Cultivation System) that are submerged off the piers at Oyster Bay. These BOCS were designed, developed and produced by Jon Farrington, a SMOCS board member and oyster farmer. They will develop over the next year and upon maturity, will be transported to reefs in local waters.

John and Palmer are also two of the primary SMOCS Shell Collectors. Weekly, they pick up oyster shells from local restaurants - namely the Pier and Stoney's Kingfisher in Solomon's Island - and deposit the shells on the SMOCS shell pile on the Dowell Peninsula that is owned by Calvert Marina. The shells will be used for laying future oysters. SMOCS thanks John McHenry and Palmer Esau and the other Oyster Bay backup shell collectors including Joe Ludford (Oyster Bay Board of Directors President), Bill Wright, Jim Roberts, and Liza Denny Nova. SMOCS also thanks the Stones (owners of the Pier and Stoney's Kingfisher) and their managers Lindsey and Janel, plus the wait staffs for collecting the shells. Collectively, we hope to clean local waters...one oyster at a time.

SMOCS Annual Members Meeting: June 20th

Our Second Annual Members Meeting will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2009, in the Oyster Bay Community clubhouse from 10:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. All members are encouraged to attend. We hope to have a guest speaker or two, and the board will be there to address any suggestions or concerns of the members.



John McHenry and Palmer Esau of Oyster Bay building SMOCS' shell pile. Thanks to all who are helping out.

Financial Report for 2008

Here is a brief summary of our finances for 2008, as prepared by our (former) Treasurer, Jon Farrington:

Balance Forward From 2007	\$1,375.49
Income In 2008:	
Donations	\$ 2,615.00
Public Grants	\$ 0.00
Gov. Grants	\$ 0.00
Foundations	\$ 0.00
Special Events	\$ 0.00
Interest	\$ 0.00
In-kind Revenue	\$ <u>492.00</u>
Total Income:	\$ 3,107.00
Expenses 2008:	
Payroll/salaries	\$ 0.00
Services	\$ 800.00
Office Expenses	\$ 241.46
In-kind Expenses	\$ 492.00
Rent, Tel. & Equip.	\$ 0.00
Training	\$ 0.00
Insurance	\$ 0.00
Meetings	\$ 55.64
Marketing & Dev'l'mnt	\$ 480.40
Bank Charges	\$ <u>25.00</u>
Total Expenses:	\$1,133.70
Balance:	\$3348.79

A Request from the Secretary

Many of you get e-mails from me periodically regarding SMOCS. There are a few members for whom the e-mail address seems to be out-of-date. If you are reading this in hard copy and haven't gotten an e-mail from me regarding SMOCS in awhile, please send me an e-mail from your current e-mail address letting me know, and I will update my mailing list accordingly.

My e-mail address is mattregan@starpower.net.

Thanks - Matt Regan