

# Submitted Online Public Comments

Onslow County Shellfish Lease Hearing

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

6:00 PM - 6:50 PM



North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality  
Division of Marine Fisheries  
Habitat and Enhancement Section  
Shellfish Lease and Aquaculture Program

**Baker, Ashlee**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:35

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oysters significantly benefit the environment by acting as both water filterers and habitat creators. They filter vast amounts of water, improving water quality and clarity, and their reefs create a complex habitat for other marine life. Additionally, oyster reefs can help protect coastlines by absorbing wave energy, reducing erosion, and protecting vulnerable estuary water.. who wouldn't love oysters in our bay?

**Brodbeck, Molly**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 11:34

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

I support approving oyster leases and their extremely beneficial impact on the environment.

**Colonna, Matthew**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:45

Lease(s) Referenced:

**24-034BL/24-035WC**

As a close companion of "Middle Sound Mariculture, LLC, James M. Hargrove (24-034BL/24-035WC)" I can vouch that not only is this lease going to help grow a small family owned business but its going to improve the local community, vastly. I didn't even eat oysters until i had my first oyster from middle sound mariculture. I have multiple friends that were the same way. This has given us an appetite for oysters when we go out to eat. On top of the economic gain, there is also the environmental side of this. Oysters not only provide habitat for marine life but they also filter and clean the water! James has worked hard to get where he is, and knows more about oysters than anyone else I have ever met. He is a responsible and upstanding member of this community and there is no one more deserving of this lease!

**Connette, Andy**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:56

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-034BL/24-035WC**

I support the shellfish lease request for James Hargrove of Middlesound Mariculture. I have known James for years and am very familiar with his aquaculture operations. His advocacy and care for the protection of our natural resources is extraordinary. His knowledge, experience and education in marine biology give him an unsurpassed understanding of the marine environment he operates in. James also participates in reef restoration projects as well as shellfish research projects. When it comes to the protection of the marine environment, James is one of the most passionate people I know. Enough can't be said for the benefits of increasing oyster populations in our coastal waters. The millions of gallons of water filtered every day by one oyster farm make a difference for all of our marine life.

**Daniel, Butler**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:44

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-034BL/24-035WC**

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for James Hargrove of middle sound mariculture.

James cares deeply about his community, the environment, and the health of our marine fisheries. I have known him for many years and know him to be a conscientious oyster farmer. He is also a devoted husband and father and an all around quality person. Sincerely,

A.L. Butler Daniel, Esq.

**Doss, James**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 22:28

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

Shellfish leases are positive in every way. The oysters clean the water and provide a habitat for other organisms. In addition aquaculture shellfish are a sustainable fishery that positively impacts the NC economy and enhances our estuaries.

**Doss, Sarah**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 22:31

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

There are so many beneficial things about oysters, but my favorite fact is that one adult oyster filters up to 50 gallons of water per day. How cool is that?!

**Eaton, Amanda**

Virginia  
4/22/2025 11:04

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oyster Farms are beneficial for water quality, as well as, a wonderful sustainable seafood resource.

**Eaton, Todd**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 11:05

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oysters are good for the environment.

**Fuhr, Stephen**

North Carolina  
4/23/2025 9:58

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Hello, I would like to advocate more oyster leases along the coast, not only, is this horticulture beneficial to the business and growth within North Carolina, these businesses are also incredibly important to our ecosystem. Farmers all along the coast have replenished our oyster supply inland that has incredibly reduced the pollutants in our waterways. They are imperative now more so than ever to maintain clean Waters that will even more so expand revenue for the state. As more runoff increases within our waterways, more oyster beds help protect All other businesses that produce within our Coast. It is imperative we keep their production going. Thank you and I hope you see the benefits of expanding our oyster farms in North Carolina.

**Furr, Robert**

North Carolina  
3/24/2025 12:59

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

I am a full time resident in sneads ferry. There is an oyster lease directly out my back door and it currently does not impede any of my activities but I have concerns for the areas of Chadwick bay, alligator bay, fullard creek and Ellis cove as more leases are granted by the state. I'd like to understand if there is a cap limit on available leases and how much acreage is allotted to oyster leases within a given area. Onslow county waters are becoming inundated with white pilings and anchored pontoons.

**Hargrove, Carl**

North Carolina  
3/25/2025 10:54

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

The North Carolina Eastern oyster aquaculture industry is growing. The tidal water column is ideal for sustainable bivalve habitat. Oysters are filter feeders and filter 30 - 50 gallons of water daily. They remove excess nutrients (phytoplankton) and store them as nutrients building their shell and tissue. They then become part of the tide-to-table food source for local restaurants. The work to care for and harvest oysters provides employment for local people. This includes Ecotourism, farmers, and restaurants. Oysters do not require feed, they get 100% of their nutrients from the tidal column where they are farmed. The management of oysters is governed by federal, state, and local agencies which ensures that harvested oysters are safe to eat, regardless of the month in which they are harvested. Improved refrigeration and delivery times also ensures food that is safe to consume. North Carolina has a long tradition of producing locally sourced food that draws people from other regions and even other countries making the Old North State a food destination. According to the North Carolina Coastal Federation, the North Carolina coast is regarded as the Napa Valley of oysters.

**Hargrove, Crissy**

South Carolina  
3/24/2025 19:51

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I am so excited for an oyster farmer working in this waterway!

I imagine this lease will create localized employment opportunities, will not require unsightly construction materials/debris/or interruption to get operations going, will generate locally produced agriculture to enhance area restaurants' freshness, instill a sense of pride in regional ingredients, be assisting an American owned business, be a responsible boon to environmental stewardship and positive local area impacts, as well as increase waterway safety due to the farm boundaries themselves limiting unsafe boating speeds through the area.

The farm itself, primarily being underwater, will also not create unsightly visual impediment to the waterway's surrounding beauty/ views, and have virtually no adverse farm byproducts or runoff.

I cannot think of a better benefit to the local ecosystem than the oysters themselves naturally improving the water quality with rapidity.

**Hargrove, Margaret**

North Carolina  
3/25/2025 19:46

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

Water quality in the New River and in the Ocean is my main concern. It is my understanding that oysters filter the water by removing plankton and algae but way more importantly, they remove excess nitrogen and phosphorus. This lease seems to be beautifully situated to help clean the water at the mouth of the New River before it enters the Atlantic. Yes, please.

**Hargrove, Miranda**

North Carolina  
4/13/2025 12:52

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oyster farming is one of the only true green industries. Not only do oysters purify the water, but the cages used to grow them provide habitat for other marine life. I support oyster farmers and the new proposed leases.

**Hargrove, Paul**

Armed Forces  
(Canada, Europe, Africa,  
or Middle East)  
3/24/2025 18:45

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

I fully and emphatically support our local farms, on and off the water. Not only do we need more opportunities for shellfish production in this state to catch up with the markets to our north and to our south, we need to encourage every opportunity to harness the ecological-cleaning power of the oyster in our back yards.

As someone who loves clean water and fresh, local seafood I have to support this proposal. And I ask you do the same.

**Hilkert, Darrell**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:29

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

I support approving the leases. Oysters provide us with great health benefits and can boost our overall wellbeing.

**Jackson, Sheila**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 10:44

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oyster farming is a unique example of aquaculture that benefits the ecosystem. Oyster farms provide habitat, improve water quality, and contribute to marine health. I support the proposed leases in the New River.

**Jackson, Tim**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:39

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I in support of the proposed lease. The benefits of oysters farming for the natural cleaning of our coastal environment is beyond measure. From cleaning the water thru filtration, to providing habitat for other marine life, to protection from soil erosion. Please support this by granting this lease.

**Jernigan, Allen**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 23:47

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-019BL/24-020WC**  
**24-025WC**  
**24-034BL/24-035 WC**

I could not attend tonight.  
I'm not going to list all the leases in Ellis Cove or Sneads Creek by number. These locations will interfere with both recreational and commercial fishing activities. These locations are easy access for the kayak armada as they launch from the hwy 172 bridge. The leases in Ellis cove on the shoals are also a historically important flounder gigging and fishing area. This area has high traffic. If these leases were moved another 75-100 yards off I don't think you would have much problem. I don't understand why all these leases must go on top of the shoals restricting access when there is literally an entire bay they can go in which would not cause any issue.

24-019BL and 24-020Wc

I see no issue with this proposal as it is well off of the bank. I do recommend it be highly visible at night as it sits right in the edge of our traditional navigational channel across that shoal. If it is not very well marked at night it will get hit and someone will get hurt.

24-025 WC

This is one of the old franchise leases that went for years without being worked and it is a popular area for redfish especially around the abandoned and lost gear in the middle of the lease. It is also a popular gigging area. I can show you my multiple GPS tracks in this lease where the proposed WC is.

24-034BL and 24-035 WC



This proposed lease sits less than a mile from a public landing on a shoal that is used by recreational anglers, kayakers, commercial fisherman and flounder giggers. This is hard sand next to the expansive grass beds in the area that hold a variety of fish year round and scallops. Once again I don't understand why every lease has to go in on a productive shoal taking away access for everyone. Before long Sneads Ferry will look just like Stump Sound and all our wild oysters will be dead just like Stump Sound with the addition of all these cages.

**Jewell , Carson**

North Carolina  
4/23/2025 9:09

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-034BL/24-035WC**

Hello, I am in support of James Hargrove's application for a new oyster lease. I am the chef at Manna, a Wilmington restaurant. I've been working with Middle Sound Mariculture for three years now and I have been lucky to get to know James and his crew. James is a UNCW graduate with marine biology degrees. He is dedicated to the stewardship of our ocean and marshlands. Oyster cultivation is a helpful step in the filtration of our waters. It helps to make healthy marshes and creates habitats for many species. And it helps support local seafood restaurants obtain oysters without using trucks and planes for long distance travel.

**Kaplan, Tim**

North Carolina  
4/23/2025 8:50

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I believe the shellfish leases would be a benefit for all of our coastal areas , the Oysters are natural to the watershed and oyster reefs not only food for us but also bring jobs and revenue to the area while providing structures that serve as nurseries and spawning grounds for fish and crabs. Oysters filter algae and other particles from the water which will create cleaner water that supports the growth of plants that serve as food for fish. The structure of Oyster reefs provides areas for juvenile fish, crabs, and other smaller marine life protecting them from predators allowing them to grow. The Oysters are filter feeders and remove

excess nutrients and pollutants from the water leading to cleaner and healthier water conditions for us along with the fish and improve the water quality for the people in the area. By supporting the a habitat for fish, the oysters indirectly contribute by providing food sources for larger fish which will help some of our protected species rebound in population.

**Rowan, Caity**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 14:22

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I support the approval of new oyster leases in onslow county. Oyster farming is incredibly sustainable, beneficial to our aquatic ecosystems, and oysters improve our waterways through their incredible ability to filter large quantities of water daily.

**Segura, Michael**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:14

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

In approval of the leases due to the great benefits that oysters cans provide to the ecosystem!

**Severino, Chase**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:58

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I support approving the leases. Oysters are a superfood and also delicious.

**Sincavage, Keith**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 11:21

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I support the proposed oyster leases on the new river. Oysters are one of North Carolinas local delicacies, and I support the growth of the industry and small businesses. Thank you!

**Stevens, Amanda**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 9:29

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I wholeheartedly support the approval of new oyster farming leases in Onslow County. As someone who deeply values the health of our coastal ecosystems, I recognize how vital oysters are to our waterways. Not only do they naturally filter and clean the water, improving clarity and reducing excess nutrients, but they also create habitat for marine life and help stabilize our shorelines.

What makes oyster farming truly special is how sustainable it is. Oysters require no feed, no fertilizers, and no freshwater, they thrive in harmony with their environment. Supporting these leases isn't just about growing oysters; it's about investing in cleaner water, stronger coastlines, and a healthier future for our local communities.

**Tuttle, Justin**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 12:41

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I wanted to give a full endorsement for any farmers applying for oyster leases. These leases take immense pressure off wild stocks while providing cleaner water and structure for finfish.

**Walls, Keith**

North Carolina  
4/23/2025 7:57

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**Not Specified**

I would like to offer my support of this shellfish lease. This farm will provide habitat for recreationally and commercially important fisheries, while improving water quality through nutrient removal. We need more oysters in our waterways, and the gulch program and sanctuary program along with the wild fishery are not enough. The amount of coastal land use change that is taking place is adversely affecting water quality in our area, and oysters are a natural filter that counter those inputs and protect our water.

**Wells, Keith**

North Carolina  
4/19/2025 18:32

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

I fish these areas as a recreational fisherman. I have already lost two good spots to oyster farming. I think this is getting out of control way to quickly. I don't think anymore licenses should be given at this time. We need more studies to see what kind of impact it is having on fishing and on other resources. I don't like the idea that this is impacting 50 or so recreational fishermen for one family of oyster farming. Thank you.

**Willis, Chris**

North Carolina  
4/22/2025 10:53

Lease(s) Referenced:

**Not Specified**

Oysters are one of the best natural resources we have. Not only does it stimulate the local economy but it promotes our local environment and biodiversity.