

# Submitted Online Public Comments

Dare County Shellfish Lease Hearing

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

6:00 PM – 6:15 PM



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

**Ballance, Mallory**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 12:59

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed lease approval for **\*\*Herring Shoal Shellfish Company\*\***. This oyster farm represents an important step toward sustainable aquaculture that benefits both our local environment and economy.

Oyster farming is a regenerative practice that naturally improves water quality through filter feeding, helping to clean our ocean and restore ecological balance. In addition, the structures provided by the farm create habitat that supports a wide range of marine life, including crabs, fish, and algae food sources vital to wild birds and local fisheries.

Beyond its environmental benefits, this lease will contribute to our regional economy by supplying high-quality, locally grown oysters. This not only supports local jobs but also enhances the tourism and culinary appeal of our area, which increasingly values sustainably sourced seafood.

Herring Shoal's operation is low-impact and has minimal disruption to the surrounding environment and existing wildlife blinds. It's a thoughtful and responsible use of our coastal resources that aligns with long-term ecological and economic goals.

I urge you to approve this lease and support a model of coastal development that prioritizes restoration, sustainability, and local vitality.

Sincerely,  
Mallory Hopkins Ballance

**Bell, Quentin**

North Carolina  
5/5/2025 23:04

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed oyster lease on the shoal located near Oregon Inlet. On this same shoal, I maintain a registered duck blind, identified as Blind #50, which My family and I have utilized for waterfowl hunting since the 1950s.

The establishment of an oyster farm in this location would, significantly and negatively impact waterfowl hunting activities in the area. My primary concern lies with the anticipated increase in boat traffic associated with the operation and maintenance of the commercial oyster farm.

This increased vessel presence on and around the shoal would likely disrupt the natural feeding patterns of waterfowl that frequent this area. Waterfowl are sensitive to disturbance, and a consistent increase in boat activity would undoubtedly deter them from utilizing the shoal as a feeding and rest area. The increased boat traffic would negatively alter established waterfowl flight paths during the hunting season and alter recreational fishing and clamming areas during the spring, summer and fall months, that many local fisherman have enjoyed for years.

I respectfully request that decline the the proposed oyster lease due to negative impacts to waterfowl habitats and recreational hunting and fishing around the proposed area that so many local hunters and fisherman have come to enjoy.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,  
A. Quentin Bell

**Bell, Stuart**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 15:04

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am writing this email to you due to my opposition to a proposed oyster lease coming to my attention in the Oregon Inlet area. The proposed lease referenced above from my research lies North of Blue Pete Island and stretches 3 acres in total area. This puts its location about 1000 yards South from Dare County duck blind #50, which has been in my family for over 75 years. That shoal already accommodates another Oyster lease about 1000 yards to the West of the blind, which is owned by Savage Inlet LLC. This lease is much closer to the deeper water, which is much better from an ingress and egress standpoint for all concerned. The placement of an additional Oyster lease on the same shoal is not advisable from many aspects, including aesthetically, the sight of hundreds of black drums floating in the shallow water does not add to the natural beauty of the area. That shoal has just started to have aquatic grasses begin to grow on the shoal again after a hurricane covered the grasses completely several years ago. Oyster Farms do not want aquatic grasses in the perimeter of the farms, my understanding is they prefer barren sand. I think your study says the grasses are no longer on this shoal. If there is no grass in this section that makes it ideal natural clam habitat.

That area including the shoal in question is and has been a duck hunting area for 100's of years from October to January each year. The shallows are full of clams and many tourists recreationally clam on that part of the shoal that the proposed lease will be located every day during the summer. The shoal has natural sloughs that run across it for great fishing and during the summer recreational fishing boats are scattered on it as well. With all the shoals in and around the Oregon Inlet area, I can see no reason to have a concentration of oyster processing farms on this one shoal that is currently used recreationally by so many people.

I would strongly urge you to deny this particular lease request for the reasons stated above.

I am currently a board member of a North Carolina Department of Commerce Authority called the NC Marine Industrial Park Authority. I am not speaking for or on their behalf, I am speaking just as a citizen that has enjoyed the recreational aspects of the shoal itself for many years. Please call me with any questions at my contact below. Thank You.

Sincerely,

Stuart L. Bell  
2522029116

**Bristow, Carrie**

Virginia  
5/6/2025 13:36

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

While we are no longer residents of Dare County, my husband and I still drive to Wanchese to stock up on locally grown and/or caught crabs, fish, shrimp, clams and oysters. We only eat seafood we catch ourselves or that we buy from Wanchese. We fully support Herring Shoal Shellfish Co in their quest to enlarge the area in which to produce quality oysters. We can attest to just how amazingly good they are! Maybe you've eaten them too! Oysters are amazing creatures in how they can filter and clean our waters, let alone, how nutritious and they are and what they provide for our bodies. Please approve this request. It's a win-win!

**Clower, James**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 12:31

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

As half owner of Herring Shoal Shellfish Co. with Aaron Hopkins, I speak on behalf of Aaron and our company. We are looking to diversify our crop and location with this application. We are looking to diversify for the following reasons. To help bring back a native clam population at the applied location, this location is one of the northern most spots in the state to provide habitat for our native clam that can thrive in the shallow location of the lease. The other reason is to have an opportunity to grow our oyster and clam in a location optimal for growth and flavor, within the rules and boundaries of the state. We aim to respect the local waterman, duck hunters and public.

At our current location, we have had zero problems with duck hunters, waterman, or public patrons using the public waterway. If anything we have heard great reports from the fisherman and the increase in finding Finnish populations more frequently within close proximity our lease. We have also heard of the close duck blinds having a great past couple seasons, no bad effects from our lease have been reported. We also left a 15 ft wide channel through the lease in case people would like to access the middle of the water body if they choose not to use the channels on either side. It's been a great experience.

For the new location there has been concern from the water patrol of a blind 251 feet away and a slough that similarly runs across the shoal at a full tide. There is navigable channels going around all sides of the shoals, and through. If one decides to access the water or a sand island to the west of us, there is a 20-30 feet of a slough that is accessible for the public to navigate if they choose this route. This location will not alter any waterfowl fly ways, by my knowledge. If anything it will help foster and

increase habitat for the species with increased biomass allowing for more food and safe harbor. This is a win for all parties involved.

We are willing to work with everyone to make sure all parties feel respected. We are willing to do what we did with our current lease and provide a channel within the west side of the lease in case one would like to also navigate through our lease with ease. We are looking forward to being great stewards to our waterbody and estuary and provide a local flavor from a sustainable resource that our community can be proud of and stand behind.

Thanks to the DMF and people of North Carolina for allowing us to share our input.

**Dilworth , Johnny**

North Carolina  
5/5/2025 10:34

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

I am in favor for leasing for aquaculture and the farming of oysters, clams in our waterways. There are great benefits environmentally to the existence of these farms.

**Eddie, Uncle**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 16:03

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

Aquaculture operations are essential sources of high quality seafood products. The applicants in this case are seeking to produce highly nutritious seafood for consumption by residents of (and visitors to) the great State of North Carolina. Any competing uses of the estuarine environment that could potentially arise in this case can be readily mitigated through cordial discussion and coordinated planning between the applicants and those engaged (or potentially engaged) in other

uses of adjacent marine areas. Importantly, domestic production of high quality seafood products, as undertaken and planned by the applicants, is directly in line with 2020 Executive Order 13921 ("Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth"), and 2025 Executive Order 14276 (Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness"). Both EOs call for heightened domestic production of seafood products from both wild-capture fisheries and marine aquaculture. There is no doubt that the applicants will produce and deliver, in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner, high-quality North Carolina seafood to the benefit of the American public. The project should be advanced in an expeditious manner.

**Hall, Stephanie**  
North Carolina  
5/6/2025 9:36

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

I support shellfish leases in Dare County as they lead to cleaner waters and boost the health of the ecosystem. They would provide more locally sourced seafood that is fresh, reliable, and sustainable. Ecotourism opportunities, job creation, reduced pressure on wild stocks are also possible benefits from having more farms in the future if managed appropriately.

**Harrell, Bobby**  
North Carolina  
5/6/2025 10:23

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

re: Herring Shoal Shellfish Co., LLC

I am writing in support of the application to expand their beds. William James Clower and Aaron Hopkins have done an excellent job of managing their beds and delivering an exceptional product to the local consumers. These young men are very conscious of the environment and are good stewards of the area and resources. The consistent availability of their product is important for our local economy and restaurant industry. It's much better to have a local product than import from out of the area.



**Harrell, Kate**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 9:41

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am in support of the proposed lease for the oyster farm as it provides a regenerative ecosystem, supports the local economy, and offers local, high-quality seafood for residents and visitors.

**Hopkins, Glen**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 9:00

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

Want to support the aquaculture industry in our county. The party applying for the permit have shown a willingness to work with the process and have a record of commitment and success in the industry. I am aware that some duck hunters see this as a detriment to their recreation, however the applicants are local and will work with them to minimize any negative impacts to their fun. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this process.

Glen  
Hopkins

**Hopkins, Katherine**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 13:04

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

In total support of extending the amount of land for Herring Shoal LLC as these men are doing a great job of respecting the environment and providing an excellent oyster product that is highly desired in the community. The owners take great care to be respectful of the water and surrounding area. Oyster farming is an excellent industry to support as it is good for environment and the seafood industry as well as the economy. Thank you.

**Kenny, Liam**

Virginia  
5/3/2025 12:57

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

Oppose due to increased boat traffic on the shoal disturbing waterfowl.

**Klumpp, Jak**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 12:10

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

Knowing Mr. Clower and Mr. Hopkins, I am confident that they will continue to act as good stewards of the state's waters. Shellfish aquaculture is good for the local economy and good for the aquatic environment. I'd like to see shellfish aquaculture continue to grow and develop in dare county, improving habitats and adding jobs to the local economy. I know these two applicants to be the people to do just that

**Markowski, Olivia**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 12:17

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

There are few, if any, cogent arguments that can be made against the development of shellfish aquaculture in dare county. As a full-time resident I have grown to appreciate the benefits of a budding aquaculture economy on the outer banks. Herring Shoals produces the best oysters in the area and does so with professionalism and concern for the aquatic environment.

**Massie, Beth**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 14:33

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

I think the sustainability of oyster farming is important for the environment of coastal NC. They farm oysters are delicious and a great benefit for the local economy. This is a livelihood for our NC commercial seafood fishermen which is very important for the local economy as well as tourism by providing locally sourced delicious oysters.

**McLean, Nicholas**

North Carolina  
5/4/2025 18:51

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am in support of Herring Shoal lease application at Oregon Inlet. I've seen firsthand an increase in fish activity around their current oyster lease in Herring Shoal. It's a joy to have a sustainable seafood product grown from seed in our local waters and would love to see more of it.

**Muglia, Michael**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 13:21

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I strongly support Herring Shoals application for a shellfish lease. This team has proven to be a valuable community partner that promotes the local economy, science, collaboration, and education. Their business improves local water quality and provides valuable fish habitat. This is exactly the type of business that belongs in our community.

**Nelson, Lauren**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 7:49

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

I support local aquaculture. It provides an excellent resource to support and sustain our community and the local economy.

**Nettles, Lee**

North Carolina  
5/5/2025 8:04

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

As a resident of Nags Head and Dare County, I offer my support of the proposed shellfish lease by Herring Shoal Shellfish Company. My experiences with this company have been very positive and suggest that the company principals are responsible individuals who care greatly about the natural environment in which they operate. They recognize that the importance of balancing economic interests with respect for the local waters, as this is what has sustained generations of working watermen and their families. Thank you for your positive consideration of this lease request.

**Northrup, Margaret**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 11:39

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

We are so fortunate to have such wonderful oyster farmers in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Whenever we bring visitors into our area, we are proud to showcase herring shoals as well as our many other local oyster farmers. Their sustainable farming

practices improve our water quality while adding a lovely farm to table benefit to our restaurants. I support the expansion of leases for our native oyster farmers and cannot think of many better examples of sustainability than a business that bolsters our economy, provides a local narrative for our fishing communities and improves our water quality all while providing fresh local food unattainable in many regions to our restaurants.

**Pain, Kevin**

North Carolina  
5/4/2025 11:14

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

The applicants are both fine outstanding young men. I have watched them start and develop their enterprise to the point where their product can now be found in many fine dining establishments in Dare County. I urge the commission to approve their application for lease numbers 24-009BL and 24-010WC so these enterprising young men can expand their operation and continue to contribute to the Dare County economy in what appears to be an expanding section in our local economy. Thank you.

**Shane, Shane**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 14:44

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I think we should support the leasing. It supports local shellfish business and I don't see any downsides. It cleans up our water ways and we have plenty of areas to boat and fish in.

**Tudor, Nick**

North Carolina  
5/7/2025 14:50

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

I am in favor of Herring Shoal Shellfish Company for the following reasons:

Oyster and shellfish aquaculture leases foster a powerful symbiotic relationship with the health of local waterways, acting

as natural allies in the pursuit of cleaner water and more vibrant ecosystems. These leases, far from being solely commercial endeavors, initiate a cascade of ecological benefits that ripple through the aquatic environment, ultimately creating more favorable conditions for a variety of wildlife, including local bird populations.

Oyster and shellfish aquaculture leases are not simply about harvesting seafood; they represent a powerful tool for ecological restoration and the enhancement of local waterways. By naturally improving water quality and creating complex habitat structures, these leases foster a healthier environment that directly benefits a wide range of aquatic life, including supporting larger and more robust populations of local species. Recognizing and supporting this symbiotic relationship is crucial for the long-term health and biodiversity of our coastal ecosystems.

Thanks,  
Nick Tudor

**Wentzel, Lindsay**

North Carolina  
5/5/2025 18:40

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

As a KDH resident and customer, I support the proposed shellfish lease for Herring Shoal Shellfish Company. Shellfish aquaculture offers well-documented ecological and economic benefits, including benefits to water quality, habitat creation, and sustainable seafood production.

Herring Shoal Shellfish Company has demonstrated a strong commitment to responsible aquaculture practices and community engagement. Notably, they support ongoing coastal and environmental research, contributing meaningfully to

scientific advancement and local marine knowledge. Their willingness to partner with academic and applied research efforts helps bridge the gap between working watermen and the science that supports sustainable coastal economies.

Personally, I've had multiple conversations with co-owner James and his passion for sustainable and innovative aquaculture and scientific understanding of Oregon Inlet is evident. Herring Shoal Shellfish Company is actively promoting a healthier ecosystem for all consumers to harvest from. As a Dare County resident, I hope I can continue to purchase and eat these oysters for years to come.

**Wickre, Barry**

North Carolina  
5/6/2025 11:17

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

I support the new lease approval for the regenerative ecosystem that the form will provide. The local farm will support the local economy, supply high quality oysters to the area, and help promote "buy local seafood". The oyster farm will have a low environmental impact.

**Wickre, Mary**

North Carolina  
5/5/2025 22:14

Lease(s) Referenced:  
**24-009BL/24-010WC**

Supporting this lease means supporting local aquaculture and reinvesting into our local seafood and shellfish community to further supply the growing need for quality and sustainably grown oysters in this area. The proximity to Oregon Inlet creates and supplies a regenerative ecosystem surrounding the lease that then further supplies the perfect environment for plankton, algae, crab, fish and food for various wildlife and birds in the area. The oyster lease does not disrupt the ecosystem in the area but enhances the environment tenfold. The surrounding activity with any oyster farms leases are various wildlife blinds, but they will not be affected in season due to the low impact of the poles and

cages on the environment and the very limited if any boat traffic of harvesting in the hours where hunting is active. Those who know the boat passageway through the cut will still be able to access the cut through passable tides. This lease is a great way to grow a local and sustainable company that betters the environment and betters the shellfish industry on the outer banks.