

*Came out July 8*



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Development of a practical method for restoring and increasing the production of oysters on the public oyster rocks of the Rappahannock River is aimed at in a new investigation under way by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the Virginia Commission of Fisheries.

During the early part of June a preliminary survey of the principal natural oyster beds in this region was made by Dr. H. F. Frytherch, Director of the Service biological laboratory at Beaufort, North Carolina, and arrangements completed whereby regular observations are to be made at 14 field stations with respect to the spawning and setting of oysters and the hydrographical conditions in this estuary. Representative samples of oysters, collected during the preliminary cruise, were found to be of exceptionally fine quality, size, and shape but there was a general depletion of the beds and scarcity of seed oysters which appeared to be due to the fact that there has not been a heavy "strike" or "set" of young oysters in this region for the past 7 years.

"The investigation will deal primarily," according to Frytherch, "with the vertical and horizontal distribution of oyster larvae and spat, in order to determine what happens to the large quantity of spawn that is presumably released in this river. The great numbers of shells that have been planted in this region by the state are for the most part in a clean condition so that, with the advent of

a favorable setting season this summer, there would be effected a rapid restoration of the public oyster rocks.

"In certain experimental areas attempts will be made to stimulate the attachment of spawn by means of metallic copper or copper salts, provided, of course, that mature larvae are found in the water and appear to require this stimulus for their attachment."

Field headquarters have been established at the town of Urbanna, Virginia, where facilities have been provided on the water front for the manufacture of spat collectors of the "wire bag" and "cement slab" type. Excellent cooperation is being received from the Virginia Commission of Fisheries and the Work Projects Administration which has arranged to supply immediately over 1,000 shell bag collectors for experimental purposes.

In addition to the 14 field stations, 10 special stations have been established at various piers extending from the lower region of the Rappahannock to the upper limit of the more important natural beds. At these piers studies of the vertical distribution of setting will be made by means of cement slab collectors arranged from the surface of the water to the bottom. The collectors of the wire bag type will also be planted at these piers and particularly at the regular field stations.

Another general survey of the oyster situation in the Rappahannock River will be made during the middle of July, when special attention will be paid to the spawning condition of the adult oysters, and the development and setting of the larvae.