

SCDNR's oyster restoration program celebrates 25 years

Director says program is one of the top oyster recycling and restoration efforts nationwide

CONWAY, SC, UNITED STATES, October 29, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) hosted a "partnership meeting" earlier this month at Coastal Carolina University in Conway to strengthen support and expand the agency's oyster restoration and recycling efforts in Horry and Georgetown counties.

The event brought together local leaders, restaurant partners, educators, and community organizations to collaborate on building a stronger regional presence for the South Carolina Oyster Recycling and Enhancement (SCORE) program — one of the most successful oyster restoration initiatives in the nation.

SCDNR Director Dr. Tom Mullikin addressed attendees, emphasizing both the accomplishments and future opportunities of the program.



SCDNR Director Tom Mullikin addresses audience at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, S.C., October 2025.



Dr. Tom Mullikin, director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources.

"The SCDNR SCORE Program has become one of the top oyster recycling and restoration efforts in the country," said Mullikin. "Since 2010, South Carolina has recycled more than half a million bushels of shell — more than the leading nonprofit programs in the Chesapeake Bay and New York Harbor. That's a remarkable achievement, driven not by a large nonprofit, but by our

people, our communities, and our partnerships.”

The meeting focused on increasing oyster shell recycling participation in Horry and Georgetown counties, which currently lag behind other coastal and even inland areas of the state.

“There is tremendous untapped potential right here along our coast,” Mullikin said. “Every un-recycled shell represents a missed opportunity — for cleaner water, stronger oyster populations, community engagement, and landfill diversion.”

The SCORE program, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, has worked with more than 700 organizations statewide, recycled over 609,000 bushels of shell, and constructed 34 miles of living shoreline, helping restore and protect critical estuarine habitat.

Mullikin said that SCDNR will soon establish an official State Oyster Shell Recycling Day to recognize the partners and volunteers who make the program possible and to inspire greater participation statewide.

SCDNR’s SCORE program relies on community collaboration — from local governments and schools to restaurants, solid waste authorities, and volunteers — to recycle oyster shells and restore reefs that support clean water and resilient coastal ecosystems.

“Together, we’ve proven what’s possible when South Carolinians unite behind a shared mission,” said Mullikin. “Let’s continue that momentum — not just for cleaner water or stronger oysters, but for the future of our coast and our communities.”

– For more information, visit <https://www.dnr.sc.gov/>.

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