

# **BUREAU OF WATER**

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

## **SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT AREA 04**

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### **2008 ANNUAL UPDATE**

**Shellfish Sanitation Section  
Water Monitoring, Assessment and Protection Division  
Environmental Quality Control - Bureau of Water  
2600 Bull Street  
Columbia, SC 29201**

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# SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT AREA 04 2008 ANNUAL UPDATE

[ Data Through December 2007 ]



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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**  
**Shellfish Management Area 04 Annual Update**

Summary .....	2
Introduction.....	2
Pollution Source Survey .....	7
Survey Procedures .....	7
Point Source Pollution .....	7
A. Municipal and Community Waste Treatment Facilities .....	8
B. Industrial Waste .....	8
C. Marinas.....	8
D. Radionuclides .....	8
Nonpoint Source Pollution.....	8
A. Urban and Suburban Stormwater Runoff.....	8
B. Agricultural Runoff.....	9
C. Individual Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems .....	9
D. Wildlife and Domestic Animals.....	10
E. Boat Traffic .....	10
F. Hydrographic and Habitat Modification.....	10
G. Marine Biotoxins .....	11
Hydrographic and Meteorological Characteristics .....	11
Water Quality Studies .....	12
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	13
References.....	17
Murrells Inlet Management Plan For Conditionally Approved Areas .....	30
<i>Management Plan; Evaluation of Management Plan</i>	

**Figures and Tables**

**Figures:**

(1) Shellfish Harvesting Classification Prior to this Survey.....	21
(2) Current Shellfish Harvesting Classification.....	22
(3) Potential Pollution Sources .....	23

**Tables:**

(1) Murrells Inlet Pollution Event Closures.....	18
(2) Shellfish Water Quality Sampling Stations Description.....	29
(3) Area 04 Marina Inventory .....	20
(4) Fecal Coliform Bacteriological Data Summary Sheets A & B	
A - All Stations (2005-2007).....	24
B - Selected Stations, CAO (2005-2007).....	25
(5) Rainfall Data: (2005/2006/2007).....	26

**2008 ANNUAL UPDATE  
Shellfish Management Area 04**

**Data Inclusive Dates:**

01/01/05 thru 12/31/07

**Classification Change:**

X  Yes   No

**Shoreline Survey Completed:** Yes

**(I)ncreased/(D)ecreased/(N)one:**

I  Approved

D  Conditionally Approved

N  Restricted

N  Prohibited

**Prior Report & Date:** Annual-2007

**SUMMARY**

Changes in the Area 04 classification will be implemented for the 2008-2009 shellfish season. Modifications in classification descriptions have been updated in the text and summary table of this report to more accurately describe existing classifications.

Murrells Inlet exhibits a slight improvement in water quality for the current review period. Rainfall and associated runoff continues to strongly influence Area 04 shellfish water quality. For the 2005-2007-review period, total rainfall for CY 2005 was higher than in either of the two subsequent calendar years. Rainfall amounts recorded in CY 2006 remained fairly consistent over the entire year. Moderate drought conditions existed throughout the region for CY 2007. Based upon water quality improvement, some Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved areas will be upgraded to Approved. The rainfall criteria for closure of Conditionally Approved portions of Murrells Inlet will remain at 1.0 inch per 24 hours, as measured at the Department-operated electronic rain gauge located adjacent to the Murrells Inlet estuary. The Brookgreen Gardens rainfall monitoring station will be used as a supplemental source of precipitation data.

The Pawleys Island/Litchfield estuary will retain its Restricted Classification. Stations 04-09, 04-10, 04-12 and 04-14 exceed fecal coliform indicator standards for this reporting period. Although stations 04-11, 04-13, 04-15, and 04-21 did not exceed standards for an Approved classification, due to potential impacts from Station 04-10, the portion of the estuary from Station 04-11 to 04-15 shall remain Restricted. Similarly, due to potential impacts from Station 04-12, the area of the estuary from Station 04-11 to Station 04-21 shall remain Restricted. Portions of the estuary adjacent to Station 04-13 may be suitable for conditional management; however, this will require additional study in order to determine feasibility.

**INTRODUCTION**

**PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The authority to regulate the harvest, sanitation, processing and handling of shellfish is

granted to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control by Section 44-1-140 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended. The Department promulgated Regulation 61-47, which provides the rules used to implement this authority and outlines the requirements applied in regulating shellfish sanitation in the State. This regulation specifically addresses classification of shellfish harvesting areas and requires that all areas be examined by sanitary and bacteriological surveys and classified into an appropriate shellfish harvesting classification.

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) Guide For The Control Of Molluscan Shellfish is used by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to evaluate state shellfish sanitation programs. The NSSP Model Ordinance requires that a sanitary survey be in place for each growing area prior to its use as a source of shellfish for human consumption and prior to the area's classification as Approved, Conditionally Approved, Restricted, or Conditionally Restricted. Each sanitary survey shall be updated on an annual basis and accurately reflect changes which have occurred within the area. Requirement of the annual reevaluation include, at a minimum, field observations of pollution sources, an analysis of water quality data consisting of the past year's data in combination with appropriate previously collected data, review of reports and effluent samples from pollution sources, and review of performance standards for discharges impacting the growing area. A brief report documenting the findings shall also be provided.

The following criteria consistent with the NSSP Model Ordinance and S. C. Regulation 61-47 are used in establishing shellfish harvesting classifications:

**Approved Area** - Growing areas shall be classified approved when the sanitary survey concludes that fecal material, pathogenic microorganisms, and poisonous or deleterious substances are not present in concentrations that would render shellfish unsafe for human consumption. Approved classifications shall be determined upon a sanitary survey that includes water samples collected from stations in the designated area adjacent to actual or potential sources of pollution. For waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions, the median fecal coliform Most Probable Number (MPN) or the geometric mean MPN shall not exceed fourteen per one hundred milliliters, nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a fecal coliform MPN of forty-three per one hundred milliliters (per five tube decimal dilution). For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the geometric mean fecal coliform MPN shall not exceed fourteen per one hundred milliliters, nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of forty three per one hundred milliliters (per five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be determined using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

**Conditionally Approved Area** - Growing areas may be classified conditionally approved when they are subject to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution. When such events are predictable, as in non-point source pollution from rainfall runoff or discharge of a major river, a management plan describing conditions under which harvesting will be allowed shall be adopted by the Department prior to classifying an area as conditionally approved. Where appropriate, the management plan for each conditionally approved area shall include performance standards for sources of controllable pollution (e.g., wastewater treatment and

collection systems), evaluation of each source of pollution, and means of rapidly closing and subsequently reopening areas to shellfish harvesting. Memorandums of agreements shall be a part of these management plans where appropriate. Shellfish shall not be directly marketed from a conditionally approved area until conditions for an approved classification have been met for a period of time likely to ensure the shellfish are safe for consumption. Shellstock from conditionally approved areas that have been subjected to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution may be relayed to approved areas for purification or depurated through controlled purification operations only by special permit issued by the Department.

**Restricted Area** - Growing areas shall be classified restricted when sanitary survey data show a moderate degree of pollution or the presence of deleterious or poisonous substances to a degree that may cause the water quality to fluctuate unpredictably or at such a frequency that a conditionally approved classification is not feasible. Shellfish may be harvested from areas classified as restricted only for the purposes of relaying or depuration and only by special permit issued by the Department and under Department supervision. The suitability of restricted areas for harvesting of shellstock for relay or depuration purposes may be determined through the use of comparison studies of background tissue samples with post-process tissue samples, as well as other process verification techniques deemed appropriate by the Department. For restricted areas to be utilized as a source of shellstock for depuration, or as source water for depuration, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN of restricted waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a MPN of two hundred and sixty per one hundred milliliters for a five tube decimal dilution test. For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of two hundred and sixty (five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be obtained using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

**Conditionally Restricted Area** - Growing areas may be classified conditionally restricted when they are subject to temporary conditions of actual or potential pollution. When such events are predictable, as in the malfunction of wastewater treatment facilities, non-point source pollution from rainfall runoff, discharge of a major river or potential discharges from dock or harbor facilities that may affect water quality, a management plan describing conditions under which harvesting will be allowed shall be prepared by the Department prior to classifying an area as conditionally restricted. Where appropriate, the management plan for each conditionally restricted area shall include performance standards for sources of controllable pollution, e.g., wastewater treatment and collection systems and an evaluation of each source of pollution, and description of the means of rapidly closing and subsequent reopening areas to shellfish harvesting. Memorandums of agreements shall be a part of these management plans where appropriate. Shellfish may be harvested from areas classified as conditionally restricted only for the purposes of relaying or depuration and only by permit issued by the Department and under Department supervision. For conditionally restricted areas to be utilized as a source of shellstock for depuration, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN of conditionally restricted waters sampled under adverse pollution conditions shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall more than ten percent of the samples exceed a MPN of two hundred and sixty

per one hundred milliliters for a five tube decimal dilution test. For waters sampled under a systematic random sampling plan, the fecal coliform geometric mean MPN shall not exceed eighty-eight per one hundred milliliters nor shall the estimated ninetieth percentile exceed an MPN of two hundred and sixty per one hundred milliliters (five tube decimal dilution). Computation of the estimated ninetieth percentile shall be obtained using National Shellfish Sanitation Program Guide for the Control of Molluscan Shellfish methodology.

**Prohibited Area** - Growing areas shall be classified prohibited if there is no current sanitary survey report or if the sanitary survey report or monitoring data show unsafe levels of fecal material, pathogenic microorganisms, or poisonous or deleterious substances in the growing area or otherwise indicate that such substances could potentially reach quantities that could render shellfish unfit or unsafe for human consumption.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Shellfish Management Area 04 (Area 04) consists of 4364 acres of habitat suitable for the production of molluscan shellfish. Area 04 is comprised of two separate estuaries; Murrells Inlet, and Pawleys Island/Litchfield, which includes Midway Inlet and Pawleys Inlet. A portion of U.S. Highway 17 traversing the Waccamaw Neck defines the area's western boundary; the northern boundary is defined by uplands of Horry County approximately one mile north of Garden City Beach. The eastern boundary is the Atlantic Ocean, and the southern boundary extends from the Atlantic Ocean to U. S. Highway 17, approximately one mile south of Pawleys Inlet in Georgetown County.

Murrells Inlet is located in the northern portion of Area 04 and has long been considered to be the most economically important shellfish producing area along South Carolina's northern coast (Caulder et al., 1976). Murrells Inlet encompasses approximately 3,108 acres of habitat suitable for the production of shellfish. This includes numerous commercial shellfish Culture Permit Areas, two State Shellfish Grounds that are used both commercially and recreationally, and two Recreational Shellfish Grounds. The northern boundary of the Murrells Inlet estuary is Garden City, a densely developed, unincorporated portion of Horry County, and its southern border is defined by Huntington Beach State Park. The Atlantic Ocean is to the east, and lands of the Waccamaw Neck define the western boundary.

Prior to this survey in Murrells Inlet, approximately 1814 acres were classified Approved, 403 acres were classified Conditionally Approved, 736 acres were classified Restricted, and 155 acres were classified Prohibited. Current management criteria for the Conditionally Approved portion of Murrells Inlet dictate closure upon receipt of 1.0 inches of rainfall within a 24-hour period.

The Pawleys Island/Litchfield estuary comprises approximately 1,256 acres of Restricted shellfish habitat. Two State Shellfish Grounds within the Litchfield portion of the estuary are occasionally utilized for relay purposes. Pawleys Island has not been utilized as a source of shellfish for relay projects.

The harvesting classifications of Area 04 prior to this sanitary survey were as follows:

**Prohibited:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of Captain Dick's/Voyager View Marinas;
2. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of the docking facilities at Bovines and Snug Harbor;
3. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of Marina Colony;
4. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of the Marlin Quay Marina.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**Restricted:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Portions of the Garden City Canal north of Station 04-04A;
2. All portions of the estuary north of Station 04-02;
3. Portions of the estuary north of a line extending from the eastern bank of Main Creek in the vicinity of Station 04-25 to Station 04-04A on Garden City Canal;
4. All waters of Parsonage Creek extraneous of marina closure zones;
5. All small feeder creeks and marsh adjacent to the mainland extending from the northern end of Allston Creek to a point 200 meters south of Hughes Landing;
6. Those waters within 1000 feet of the Huntington Beach State Park pond outfall;
7. Alston Creek, from Station 04-07 to Parsonage Creek.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

All waters.

**Conditionally Approved:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. All portions of Flagg Creek and adjacent flats not included in the Marina Colony closure zone;
2. All portions of Main Creek from Station 04-02 to Station 04-23, excluding all marina closure zones;
3. All areas south of the Marlin Quey closure zone, east of Main Creek;
4. The Garden City Canal, between Station 04-04A and the Marlin Quey Marina closure zone;
5. All portions of the central part of the Murrells Inlet estuary, west of a line extending from the Voyagers View marina closure to the extreme eastern portion of Allston Creek, excluding all portions of Parsonage and Allston Creeks;
6. All waters of Oyster Cove.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**Approved:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Those portions of Main Creek extending from Station 04-05 to Station 04-23;
2. Culture Permit area 356;
3. Portions of Allston Creek, from Station 04-07 to Oaks Creek.
4. Those portions of Oaks Creek and areas adjacent to Drunken Jack Island from Station 04-05 to Station 04-28.
5. Southern portions of the estuary from Station 04-07 to Station 04-28, including State Shellfish Ground S354 and portions of Public Shellfish Ground R355 and R351;
6. All portions of the central part of the estuary east of a line extending from the Voyagers View marina closure zone near Station 04-17A to Station 04-24, excluding any portions of Allston Creek, any portion of Captain Dick's - Voyagers View Marina closure zone, and any portion of Oyster Cove;
7. C370 and portions of C371, excluding marina closure zones and portions of C371 north of Flagg Creek and east of the Main Creek.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**POLLUTION SOURCE SURVEY**

**SURVEY PROCEDURES**

Shoreline survey activities are routinely conducted in Area 04 by the Region 6 Environmental Quality Control (EQC) Shellfish Sanitation staff. Extensive visual examination of lands adjacent to the waters of Area 04 was conducted to determine type of activities, location of significant concentrations of domestic animals and other actual and potential sources of pollution entering shellfish growing waters.

A review of SCDHEC Region 6 EQC files was conducted for information on central collection and disposal systems and lift stations. Surveys indicated the majority of the Murrells Inlet and Litchfield Beach areas were serviced by central wastewater collection systems. Wastewater disposal on the mainland adjacent to Pawleys Island was accomplished almost exclusively through the use of individual sewage treatment and disposal systems. In June of 2004, notification was received from Georgetown County Water and Sewer District that they plan to construct sewer facilities on the mainland side of Pawleys Island.

Additionally, a shoreline survey reconnaissance was conducted of sites with a high probability of structures being serviced by individual sewage treatment and disposal systems.

**POINT SOURCE POLLUTION**

- A. Municipal and Community Waste Treatment Facilities** - Two wastewater treatment facilities provide service to lands adjacent to shellfish growing waters; however, none discharge within the area. Georgetown County Water and Sewer Authority provides wastewater disposal service to Litchfield Beach, Pawleys Island and portions of Murrells Inlet. Treated wastewater is discharged to the Waccamaw River and does not affect Area 04 shellfish waters. Portions of the Pawleys Island Community, located on the mainland, are serviced by Georgetown County Water and Sewer District. Grand Strand Water and Sewer provides service to the Horry County portions of Murrells Inlet and Garden City.

Both authorities have acknowledged their responsibility to promptly notify the Department in the event of spillage of untreated wastewater that could affect Area 04 shellfish growing waters. Lift stations with the potential of adversely affecting shellfish growing waters are provided with emergency power, visual and audible alarms, and telemetry systems to alert repair crews and nearby residents when malfunctions occur. These lift stations have been inspected by SCDHEC and found to be well maintained by the local sewer authority.

- B. Industrial Waste** - Industrial wastewater discharges have not been permitted within Area 04.
- C. Marinas** - Several marinas and multiple docking facilities are located within the Murrells Inlet estuary. Locations of these facilities are shown in Figure 3. Marinas are not located within the Pawleys Island/Litchfield system due to the estuary's shallow waters. Water depths limit the size of watercraft using the area to typically less than 16 feet in length. Murrells Inlet marinas are encompassed by approximately 1000' Prohibited closure zones.
- D. Radionuclides** - Sources of radionuclides have not been identified within Area 04, and radionuclide monitoring has not been conducted. No other sources of poisonous or deleterious substances have been identified within the area.

#### NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

- A. Urban and Suburban Stormwater Runoff** - Stormwater runoff is a substantial problem in the majority of Area 04 waters due to dense development of the surrounding area. The lands adjacent to shellfish growing waters in Area 04 consist of various soil types and conditions that have been defined by the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (1982) utilizing general classifications and descriptions.

A demarcation in soil type and condition occurs between the Murrells Inlet and Pawleys Island/Litchfield system. Lands adjacent to Murrells Inlet and extending westward toward the Waccamaw River range from level to gently sloping and possess soils that are moderately to excessively draining. Soil types are generally Lakeland-Chipley-Centenary fine sands. Areas to the south of the demarcation line are primarily level and possess poorly to moderately well drained soils. Soil types are generally Leon-Lynn Haven sands in addition to Chipley fine sands.

There are a few large, undisturbed tracts of forested lands adjacent to Area 04 shellfish growing waters. However, several former rice plantations, located west of U. S. Highway 17, as well as a single tract east of this highway are currently under various stages of development. This construction has generally been limited to single and multi-family housing and golf courses. An increase in human population density has resulted in the development of shopping centers, restaurants, and gasoline stations primarily adjacent to U. S. Highway 17. When construction requires a Department permit or U. S. Army Corps of Engineers certification, an approved Office of Coastal Resource Management site-specific stormwater management permit must be obtained.

In the early 1980's, the Department attempted to disinfect the initial flush of bacterial pollutants entering the Murrells Inlet estuary following rainfall events. This effort involved using both chlorine and ozone contact chambers in drainage ditches. Neither treatment system appeared to lower bacteria levels effectively in adjacent shellfish growing areas and, as a result, treatment was discontinued.

- B. Agricultural Runoff** - Area 04 does not have great potential for agricultural nonpoint source pollution. Commercial crop production throughout the area is limited due to soil characteristics as well as land use economics. Small agricultural operations exist at some upland sites. Brookgreen Gardens is a 9127-acre nature park located approximately one-half mile southwest of Murrells Inlet. Brookgreen Gardens has gravitated from its former policy of benign forestry management. The present methodology provides for timber harvest through clear cutting.

Shellfish tissue sampling for pesticides, herbicides and heavy metals was conducted in Area 04 during the survey period. However data will not be available until the next reporting period.

- C. Individual Sewage Treatment and Disposal (ISTD) Systems** - Generally, individual sewage treatment and disposal systems in Area 04 are being replaced by municipal wastewater collection and treatment facilities. Central treatment systems have less potential to impact shellfish growing waters than ISTD systems, although central treatment system malfunctions can occasionally result in spills of untreated wastewater to the environment.

Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority personnel reported two small areas bordering the Main Creek in the northern portion of Murrells Inlet that are not currently served by central sewer.

Personnel with the Department's Division of Environmental Sanitation conducted a survey, beginning in southern Horry County and progressing through portions of Georgetown County, of Murrells Inlet sites with a high probability of having operational septic systems. Initial screenings cross-referencing county tax maps with active water and sewer authority customer accounts. Sites not shown on authority maps as being provided with central sewer were visited for evaluation. Sites determined to have active

septic systems were mapped with a Trimble GeoExplorer GPS unit. Of a total of 4014 sites, 1869 were visited. Of the 1869, 119 proved to have active septic systems. Of these, 101 were in Horry County and the remaining 18 were in Georgetown County. Of the total number identified, 76 were concentrated within two mobile home parks in close proximity to the northwestern portions of the estuary. The survey identified only two systems that were described as 'malfunctioning'. The report indicates that they were repaired before official notice could be issued to the property owners.

The Division of Environmental Sanitation, assisted by members of the Region 6 EQC Shellfish Program staff, conducted a survey along the Pawley's Island mainland during the winter of 2001. Overt malfunctions were documented in the Maryville community in the southern portion of the survey area. This area is separated from the marsh by a golf course- a distance of approximately one mile between the community and the estuary.

- D. Wildlife and Domestic Animals** - Area 04 supports substantial populations of both wildlife and domestic animals. Brookgreen Gardens, the nature park situated approximately one-half mile southwest of Murrells Inlet, contains a variety of wild animals confined for exhibition. Huntington Beach State Park, located along the southern reaches of the estuary, is a popular bird watching area and public beach. Brookgreen Gardens and Huntington Beach support natural populations of rabbit, white-tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, alligators, rodents, songbirds, shorebirds, and migratory waterfowl typical of the coastal Carolinas. Murrells Inlet receives runoff from both of these areas. Other portions of Area 04 support similar natural wildlife populations.

Domestic animal populations in the area are generally limited to dogs and cats. However, there are several horse stables within approximately two miles of estuarine waters.

- E. Boat Traffic** - Murrells Inlet is a small estuary; however, it provides ocean access for many recreational and commercial vessels. Boat traffic is heaviest during summer months and on weekends during the spring and fall. Weekday boating activity during the spring and fall is moderate. Boat traffic during the winter months is dependent on weather conditions and fisheries product prices and may range from very light to moderate. Boat traffic in the shallow Pawleys Island/Litchfield system is generally light, consisting primarily of boats less than 16 feet in length.

- F. Hydrologic and Habitat Modification** - Hydrologic and habitat modification in estuarine areas requires both State and federal approval. A rubble jetty system was constructed at the mouth of Murrells Inlet. Maintenance dredging has been allowed in several Murrells Inlet locations (primarily marinas) and in the Oyster Cove section of Garden City Beach. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers routinely dredges the entrance channel of Murrells Inlet and did so in the summer of 2002. Sand from this dredging has been utilized for beach renourishment at Huntington Beach State Park and southern Garden City Beach. Georgetown County has dredged channels south of Captain Dicks Marina near sample stations 04-17A and 04-03A, as well as marina entrance channels north in the vicinity of Station 04-03B.

A flood control structure at a brackish water impoundment adjacent to the Huntington Beach State Park causeway controls salt water intrusion and regulates pond water levels.

- G. Marine Biotoxins** - South Carolina experienced its first documented occurrence of the toxic dinoflagellate, *Ptychodiscus brevis* (*K. brevis*), during the 1987-1988 shellfish-harvesting season. The Murrells Inlet area was closed to shellfish harvesting on February 1, 1988, as a result of this occurrence. The area was subsequently reopened on March 11, 1988, after laboratory analyses indicated that oysters and clams in the area had purged themselves of the biotoxin. A complete account is available in a SCDHEC report entitled "Red Tide in South Carolina". No marine biotoxins have been identified in the area since that time.

## HYDROGRAPHIC AND METEOROLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### PHYSIOGRAPHY

The Murrells Inlet and Pawleys Island/Litchfield systems are classical well-mixed, meso-tidal, bar-built estuaries typical of the northern coastal region of South Carolina. In terms of freshwater input, the estuaries conform closely to the definition of a neutral embayment (Odum and Copeland, 1974). Murrells Inlet is approximately 5.5 nautical miles in length with an average width of less than 1 nautical mile. The maximum width is approximately 1.5 nautical miles. Main channel depths are approximately 4 meters. The Pawleys Island/Litchfield system is approximately 5.5 nautical miles in length with typical widths of less than one-half nautical mile. Depths rarely exceed 2.5 meters in this system.

The Murrells Inlet and Pawleys Island/Litchfield systems are similar in terms of estuarine geological development. Characteristic of both systems are ebb and flood tidal deltas, protective point bars (although not readily apparent in Murrells Inlet due to rubble jetty construction), expansive intertidal mud flats, and intertidal oyster reefs. Small meandering creeks as well as high marsh areas dominated by smooth cord grass (*Spartina alterniflora*) are also prevalent.

The most obvious difference between the two estuarine systems is at the inlet mouths. Murrells Inlet has a rubble jetty system (completed in 1980) extending approximately 1,000 meters seaward which serves to stabilize the inlet entrance channel (Van Dolah et al., 1983). Considerable shoaling has occurred around both jetties. In contrast, two separate inlets, Midway Inlet to the north and Pawleys Inlet to the south, feed the Pawleys Island/Litchfield system. There is very little intermixing of waters from these two inlets, partially due to the two causeways extending from the mainland onto Pawleys Island. The southern causeway appears to impede flushing action in the south-central portion of the estuary. A tidal node has been observed in the vicinity of this causeway.

Water temperatures in shallow portions of the estuaries often differ from temperatures in adjacent coastal waters. Overnight changes in temperature of five degrees centigrade are not

unusual.

Tides in Area 04 are semidiurnal, consisting of two low and two high tides occurring each lunar day. Mean tidal range in Murrells Inlet varies from 4.2 feet to 4.5 feet, dependent upon location. Spring tides range from 4.7 feet to 5.3 feet. Mean tidal range in the Pawleys Island/Litchfield system varies from 2.9 feet to 4.9 feet, and spring tides range from 3.2 feet to 5.7 feet (Tides and Currents for Windows, 1997). Wind direction and intensity, as well as atmospheric pressure, can alter predicted tidal ranges.

Precipitation in Area 04 is generally heaviest during late summer and early autumn. Tropical storms or hurricanes also produce large amounts of rainfall when they occur. During winter months, rainfall amounts usually decline and events are more uniform in occurrence. However, winter thunderstorms associated with rapidly moving low-pressure systems can generate heavy rains. Precipitation in the form of snow or ice rarely occurs. Spring weather patterns are often dynamic and occasionally produce hail and tornados.

During the review period, rainfall for Area 04 was recorded at the Brookgreen Gardens monitoring station. During 2007, the Department began operation of an electronic precipitation data logger located in Murrells Inlet. The Department operated gauge will be the primary rainfall monitoring site for Area 04.

Prevailing winds along the northern portion of the South Carolina coast are from the south during the spring and summer and from the north during autumn and winter. Wind speeds are typically less than 15 miles per hour (mph); however, strong weather systems can generate winds in excess of 25 mph. Tropical storms and hurricanes are unusual but occasionally occur during summer and autumn. "Northeasters" frequently occur during late autumn and early winter months.

The lack of major freshwater input into this area results in a generally homogenous salinity distribution. Freshwater input is limited to precipitation and resulting runoff, thus salinities are generally greater than 30 parts per thousand (ppt) through the estuaries. Surface water salinities of less than 20 ppt may be encountered near drainage ditches.

## **WATER QUALITY STUDIES**

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM**

The Department utilizes a systematic random sampling (SRS) strategy within Area 04 in lieu of sampling under adverse pollution conditions. In order to comply with NSSP guidelines, a minimum of thirty samples are required to be collected and analyzed from each station during the review period. Sampling dates are computer generated prior to the beginning of each quarterly period thereby insuring random selection with respect to tidal stage and weather. Day of week selection criteria is limited to Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays due to shipping requirements and laboratory manpower constraints. Sample schedules are rarely altered.

During July 1998, an updated data analysis procedure was formalized. Samples utilized for classification purposes are limited to those samples collected in accordance with the SRS for a 36-month period beginning January 1 and ending December 31. This allows for a maximum of 36 samples per station, yet provides a six-sample “cushion” (above the NSSP required 30 minimum) for broken samples, lab error, breakdowns, etc. This also allows each annual report to meet the NSSP Triennial Review sampling criteria.

During the period 01/01/05 through 12/31/07, one thousand-two hundred and sixty-nine (1269) surface water samples (<1.0 ft. deep) were collected at the thirty-three currently active Area 04 monitoring stations for bacteriological analyses. Of this total, 1154 samples were utilized for classification purposes in accordance with the Department’s systematic random sampling plan. The remaining one hundred and fifteen (115) special samples were collected following rain events related to conditional or precautionary closures. Samples were collected in 120 ml amber glass bottles, immediately placed on ice and transported by bus to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Trident District Environmental Quality Control laboratory at North Charleston, South Carolina. An additional 120 ml water sample was included with each shipment as a temperature control. Upon receipt at the laboratory, sample sets that exceeded a 30-hour holding time or contained a temperature control >10 degrees C. were discarded. Samples collected after September 1, 1986 have been analyzed using the five-tube/three dilution modified A-1 method described by Nuefeld (1985).

Surface water temperatures were measured utilizing hand-held, laboratory-quality calibrated centigrade thermometers. Salinity measurements were measured in the laboratory using automatic temperature compensated refractometers. Additional field data include ambient air temperature, wind direction, tidal stage and date and time of sampling. Tidal stages were determined using Nautical Software’s Tides and Currents, Version 2.2 (1997).

## **MONITORING RESULTS**

Area 04 stations 04-01, 04-08, 04-16, (Murrells Inlet) and 04-09, 04-12, and 04-14, (Pawleys Island/Litchfield) exceed a fecal coliform MPN geometric mean value of 14. Murrells Inlet stations 04-01, 04-02, and 04-08 and Pawleys Island/Litchfield stations 04-09, 04-10, 04-12, 04-14, and 04-19 exceed a fecal coliform MPN estimated 90th percentile value of 43. No station exceeds a fecal coliform geometric mean MPN value of 88, however, Murrells Inlet stations 04-01 and 04-16, as well as Pawleys Island/Litchfield station 04-09 exceed a fecal coliform MPN estimated 90th percentile value of 260. A fecal coliform data summary is included as Table 4(A). An additional summary of selected stations sampled while the Murrells Inlet conditionally approved area was open (CAO) is included as Table 4(B).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Classification changes are recommended for implementation for the 2008-2009 shellfish season. Murrells Inlet exhibits a slight improvement in water quality for the current review period. Rainfall and associated runoff continues to strongly influence Area 04 shellfish water quality. For the 2005-2007-review period, total rainfall for CY 2005 was higher than in either of

the two subsequent calendar years. Rainfall amounts recorded in CY 2006 remained fairly consistent over the entire year. Moderate drought conditions existed throughout the region for CY 2007. Based upon water quality improvement, some Conditionally Approved areas located in Murrells Inlet Main Creek (between station 04-25 and 04- 23) and Oyster Cove (stations 04-29 and 04-30) are recommended for upgrade to the Approved classification. A small area north and west of Station 04-25 will be reclassified from Conditionally Approved to Restricted. Rainfall criteria for closure of Conditionally Approved portions of Murrells Inlet should remain at 1.0 inch per 24 hours, as measured at the Department-operated electronic rain gauge located adjacent to the Murrells Inlet estuary. The Brookgreen Gardens rainfall monitoring station will be used as a supplemental source of precipitation data.

The Pawleys Island/Litchfield estuary will retain its Restricted Classification. Stations 04-09, 04-10, 04-12 and 04-14 exceed fecal coliform indicator standards for this reporting period. Although stations 04-11, 04-13, 04-15, and 04-21 did not exceed standards for an Approved classification, due to potential impacts from Station 04-10, the portion of the estuary from Station 04-11 to 04-15 shall remain Restricted. Similarly, due to potential impacts from Station 04-12, the area of the estuary from Station 04-11 to Station 04-21 shall remain Restricted. Portions of the Pawleys Island/Litchfield estuary may be suitable for conditional management; however, this will require additional study in order to determine feasibility. Based upon review of current bacteriological and shoreline survey data, no classification change is recommended.

Management of the Murrells Inlet Conditional Approved area is based upon several factors that influence water quality. Water quality at Station 06 is adversely impacted by water exiting Parsonage Creek during ebb tide. This impact is primarily limited to the creek and does not affect nearby Weston Flat because that area receives inflow via the eastern portion of the estuary. This limits any mixing of saline water in the central portion of the estuary with runoff from inland ditches. Additionally, several stations located within the current Conditionally Approved portions of Murrells Inlet exhibit geometric mean MPN's of less than 14 and Estimated 90th Percentile values of less than 43. These areas should be reclassified as Approved. The Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved Area Management Plan rainfall closure criteria should remain at 1.0 inches of rainfall per twenty-four hours, as recorded at the Department Operated rain gauge in Murrells Inlet and the NOAA National Weather Service Brookgreen Gardens station as a supplement station. Sewage overflows are infrequent and are recommended to continue to be treated as precautionary closures.

South Carolina shellfish related regulation R.61-47 sets no upper limit for Restricted waters. Areas in proximity to Murrells Inlet stations 01, 08, and 16 may, with special permit, be utilized as a source of shellfish for relay, but not depuration purposes. Marinas will retain their administrative Prohibited classification. Additionally, during the harvest season, the entire estuary will be placed under a precautionary closure in conjunction with the issuance of an official Hurricane or Tropical Storm Warning or upon receipt of four or more inches of rainfall within twenty-four hours, as recorded at the NOAA National Weather Service Brookgreen Gardens station.

Based upon the findings of this Annual Update, the following classification is

recommended:

**Prohibited:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of Captain Dick's/Voyager View Marinas;
2. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of the docking facilities at Bovines and Snug Harbor;
3. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of Marina Colony;
4. Those waters within approximately 1000 feet of the Marlin Quay Marina.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**Restricted:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Portions of the Garden City Canal north of Station 04-04A;
2. All portions of Main Creek and the adjacent flats to the north of an imaginary line extending east to west from Station 04-04A through Station 04-25 along the high marsh to an intersect with the Prohibited closure boundary east of Marina Colony;
3. All waters of Parsonage Creek extraneous of marina closure zones,
4. All small feeder creeks and marsh adjacent to the mainland extending from the northern end of Allston Creek to a point 200 meters south of Hughes Landing;
5. Those waters southwest of an imaginary line extending from Huntington Beach through Station 04-28 and continuing to the mainland. This line is approximately 560 meters the northeast and parallel to the Huntington Beach State Park Causeway.
6. Allston Creek, from Station 04-07 to Parsonage Creek.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

All waters.

**Conditionally Approved:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. All portions of the central part of the Murrells Inlet estuary, west of a line extending from the Voyagers View marina closure zone at Station 04-17A southwestward across Weston Flats to the extreme eastern portion of Allston Creek, excluding all portions of Parsonage and Allston Creeks.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**Approved:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. Those portions of Main Creek, including Oyster Cove, extending from Station 04-05 to Station 04-25;
2. Culture Permit area 356;
3. Portions of Allston Creek, from Station 04-07 to Oaks Creek.
4. Those portions of Oaks Creek and areas adjacent to Drunken Jack Island from

Station 04-05 to Station 04-28.

5. Southern portions of the estuary from Station 07 to Station 28, including State Shellfish Ground S354 and portions of Public Shellfish Ground R355 and R 351;
6. All portions of the central part of the Murrells Inlet estuary east of a line extending from the Voyagers View marina closure zone near Station 04-17A to Station 04-24, excluding any portions of Allston Creek and any portion of Captain Dick's - Voyagers View Marina closure zone;
7. C370 and portions of C371 east of Main Creek and those portions of C371 south of Flagg Creek, excluding the Marina Colony closure zone.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

Analysis of sampling data for Area 04 demonstrates the probability of a significant impact from rainfall exceeding 4.00" in a 24-hour period. Therefore, a precautionary closure of Area 04 will be implemented following rainfall events of greater than 4.00" in a 24-hour period, as measured at Brookgreen Gardens. This methodology is associated with the concept of the Probable Maximum Precipitation (PMP). PMP estimates for the coastal United States have been published in a series of hydro-meteorological reports (HMRs) by the National Weather Service (National Weather Service). PMP estimates for South Carolina's growing areas are derived from HMRs 51, 52, and 53 (National Research Council, 1985).

Rainfall exceeded 4 inches on two separate occasions in 2005. On October 5, 6 and 7<sup>th</sup>, the Brookgreen rain gauge measured a three day total of 8.40 inches of rain resulting from Hurricane Tammy passing over the area. The second event occurred November 21<sup>st</sup> with an unnamed storm system delivering 4.01 inches in a 24 hr period. Murrells Inlet was placed under precautionary closure during these periods. Samples indicating acceptable bacteriological indicator levels were collected prior to opening.

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- Nuefeld, N. 1985. "Procedures for the Bacteriological Examination of Seawater and Shellfish". In: A.E. Greenberg and D.A. Hunt (eds.) *Laboratory Procedures for the Examination of Seawater and Shellfish, Fifth Edition*. American Public Health Association, Washington, D.C. p. 37-63.
- Van Dolah, R.F., D.M. Knott, and D.R. Caulder. 1983. Ecological effects of rubble weir jetty construction at Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, Technical Report EL-84-4, Vol. 1, Colonization and Community Development on New Jetties. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, D.C. 69p.

**Table #1**

**Murrells Inlet  
Pollution Event Closures**

<b><u>Violation Date</u></b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Sample Date</b>	<b>Opening Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
January 22	Rainfall	January 23 February 14 February 27	March 2	Subsequent rainfall events occurred within the 14-day waiting period.
September 20	Rainfall	October 2 October 10	October 22	Subsequent rainfall event Occurred within the 14-day waiting period.
October 27	Rainfall	November 7	November 9	1.17 inches of rain
December 16	Rainfall	December 18	Did not reopen In 2007	Subsequent rainfall event Occurred within the 14-day waiting period.

**2007**

**TABLE #2**  
**Shellfish Management Area 04**  
**WATER QUALITY SAMPLING STATIONS DESCRIPTION**

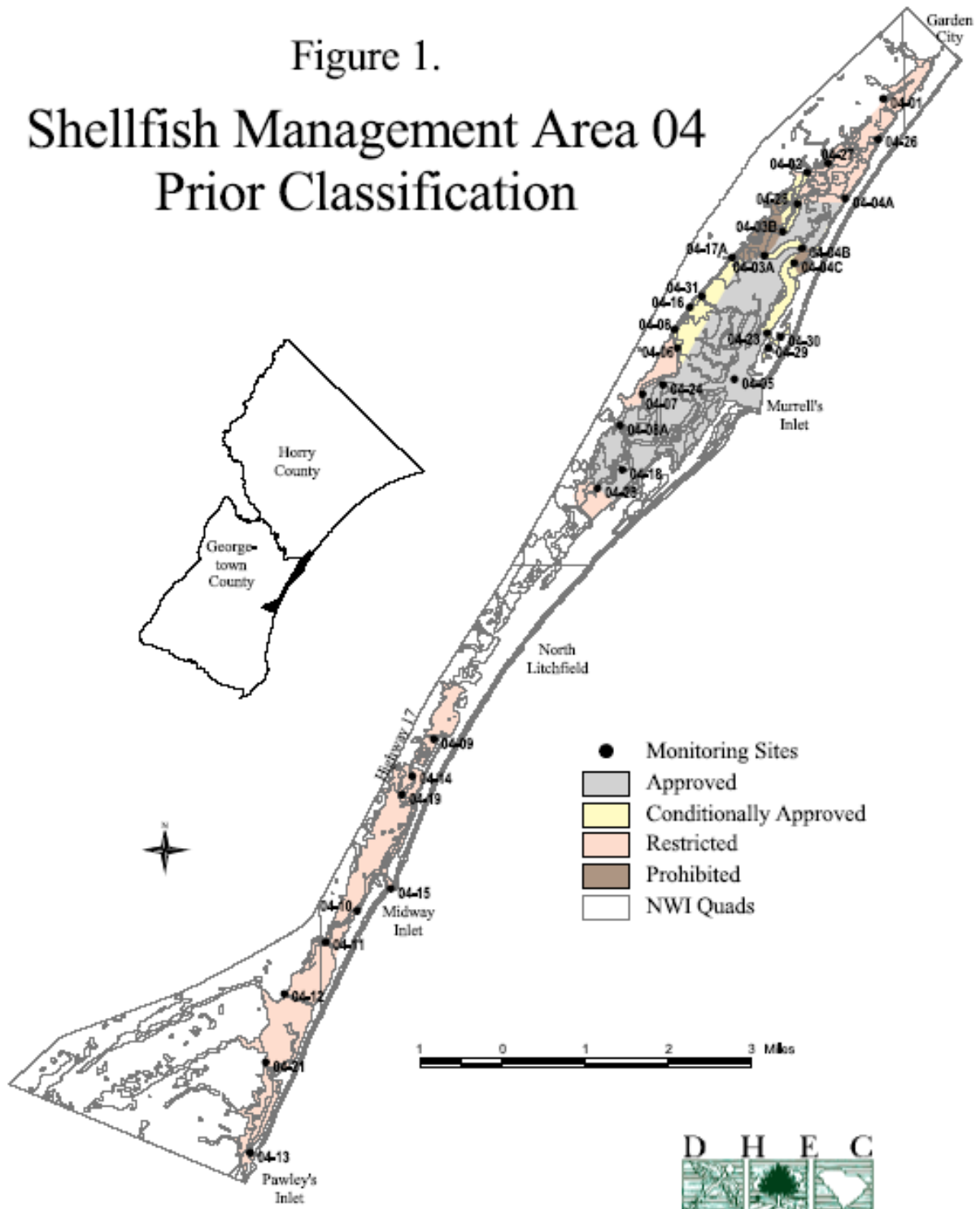
<b>Station</b>	<b>Description</b>
04-01	Main Creek at Atlantic Avenue Bridge
04-02	Main Creek at Mickey Spillane's Home
04-03A	In Main Creek, Southeast side of the Prohibited Area near Captain Dick's Marina
04-03B	In Main Creek, on the Northwest Side of the Prohibited Area near Captain Dick's Marina
04-04A	Garden City Canal due E of Entrance to Flagg Creek
04-04B	Northern Boundary of Marlin Quay Closure Zone – Main Creek
04-04C	Western Boundary of Marlin Quay Closure Zone – Main Creek
04-05	Murrells Inlet - Range Marker
04-06	Allston Creek at Weston Flat
04-07	Allston Creek - Hughes Landing
04-08	Parsonage Creek at Nance's Dock
04-08A	Oyster (Carr) Landing at Huntington Beach Station Park
04-09	Clubhouse Creek at Litchfield Boulevard Bridge
04-10	Shell Avenue and Pawley's Island Creek
04-11	North Causeway Bridge at Pawley's Island Creek
04-12	South Causeway Bridge at Pawley's Island Creek
04-13	Pawley's Inlet
04-14	Dock - End of Sportsman Boulevard
04-15	Midway Inlet
04-16	Parsonage Creek at Chicken Farm Ditch
04-17A	Southwest Corner of the Voyager View Marina Prohibited Zone in Parsonage Creek
04-18	North Boundary of Clambank Flats POG
04-19	Clubhouse Creek - First Bend South of Salt Marsh Cove
04-21	South Pawley's Island Boat Landing
04-23	Main Creek at Oyster Cove
04-24	Oaks Creek at First Curve
04-25	Main Creek at Flagg Creek
04-26	Garden City Canal at the "Old Boat Wreck"
04-27	Main Creek, Opposite Entrance to Mt. Gilead Canal
04-28	Oak's Creek, Approx. 150 Meters from the Huntington Beach State Park Causeway
04-29	Oyster Cove, South Branch
04-30	Oyster Cove, North Branch
04-31	Woodland Creek - 100 Meters East of Mainland

(Total active for this report - 33)

**TABLE #3**  
**Shellfish Management Area 04**  
**MARINA INVENTORY**

<b>Marina</b>	<b># Slips</b>	<b>Pump out facilities</b>	<b>Fuel Dock</b>
Captains Dicks	45	Yes	Diesel-Gas
Crazy Sisters	14	Yes	Diesel-Gas
Marlin Quay	63	No	Diesel-Gas
Voyager View	41	No	Diesel-Gas
Snug Harbour	10	No	No
Marina Colony	19	No	No
Divine's Docks	22	No	No

Figure 1.  
 Shellfish Management Area 04  
 Prior Classification



2008 Annual Report



Figure 2.  
Shellfish Management Area 04  
Current Classification

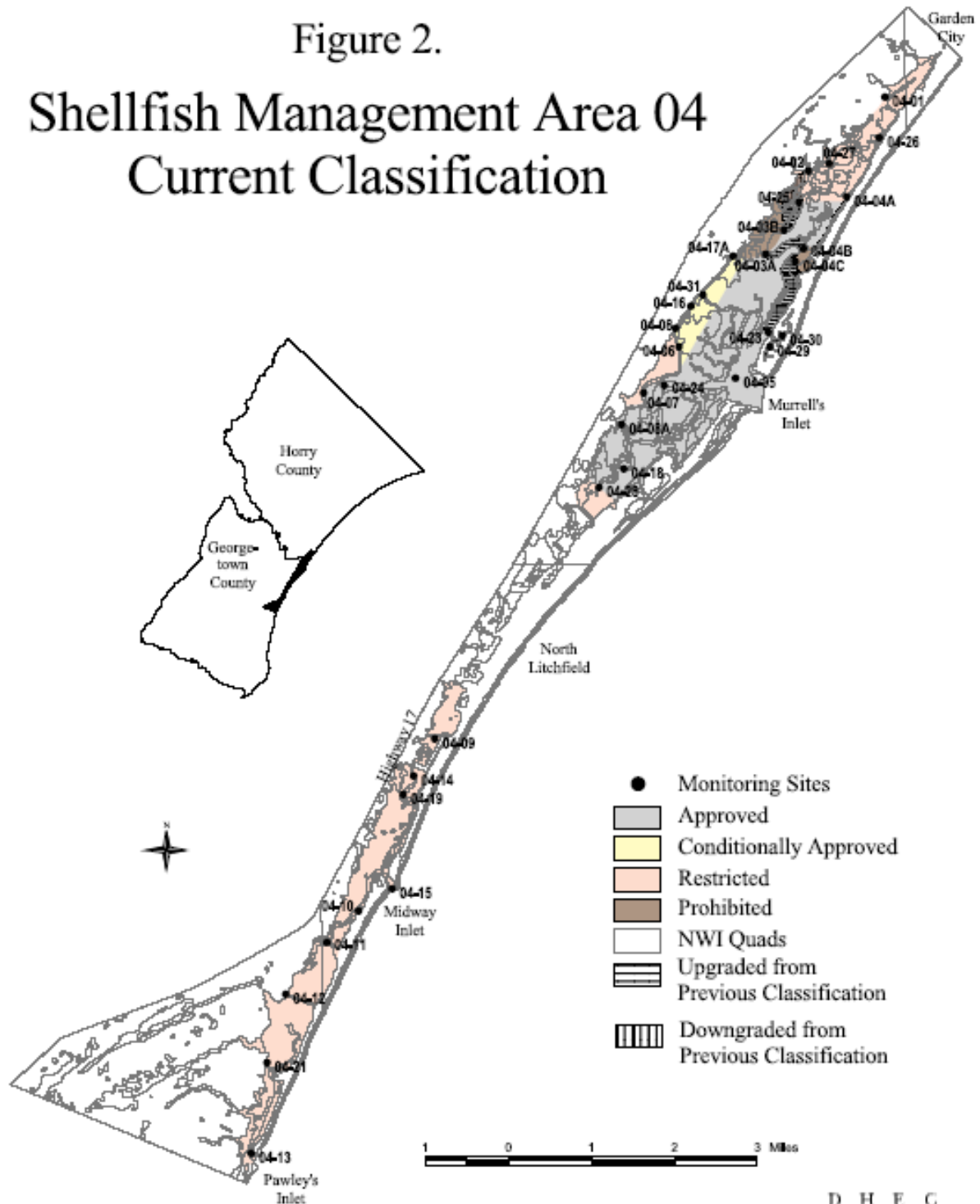
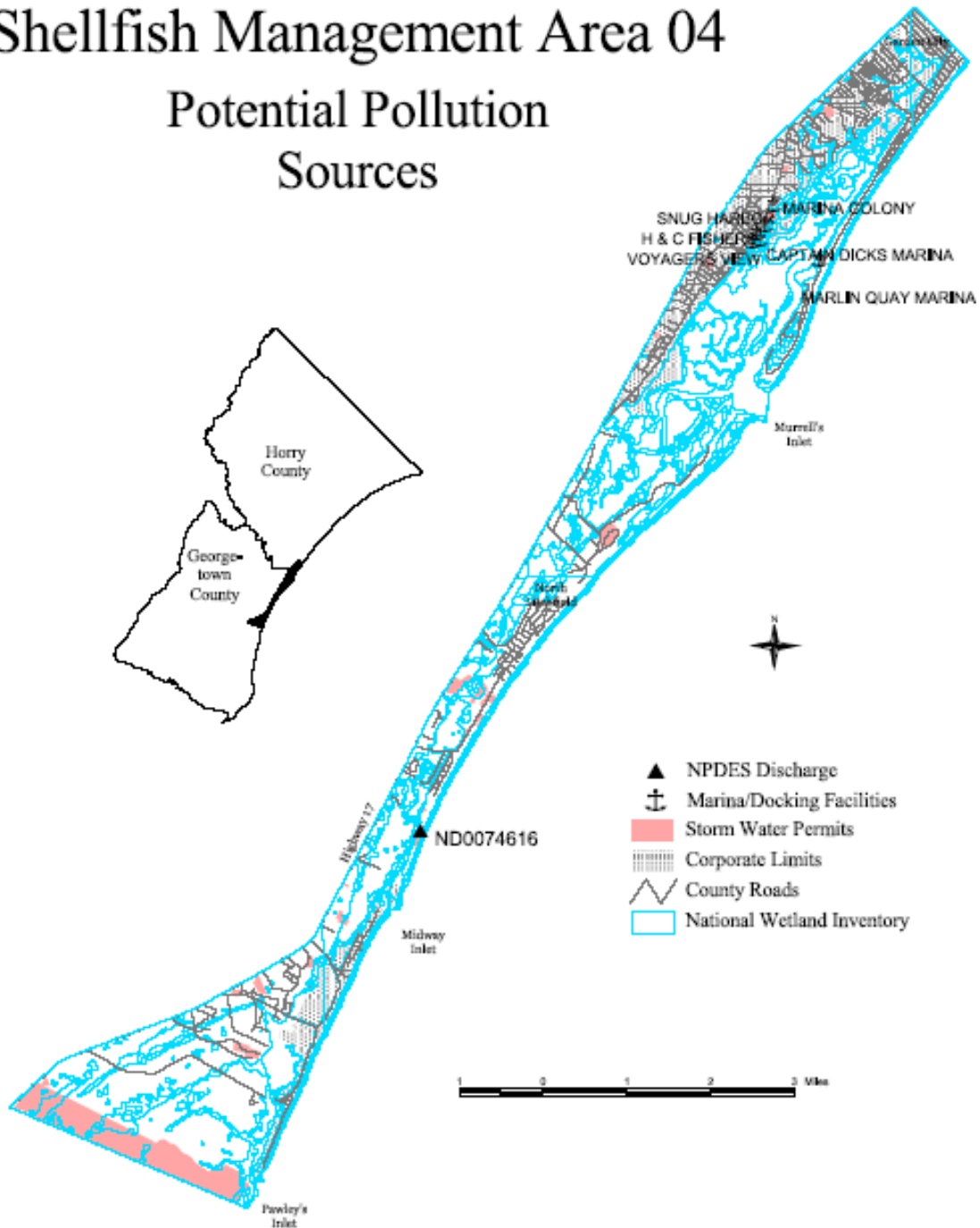


Figure 3.  
 Shellfish Management Area 04  
 Potential Pollution  
 Sources



**TABLE #4 (A)**

**Shellfish Management Area 04  
Fecal Coliform Bacteriological Data Summary  
From Shellfish Water Quality Sampling Stations Between**

**January 01, 2005 and December 31, 2007**

<b>Station</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03A</b>	<b>03B</b>	<b>04A</b>	<b>04B</b>	<b>04C</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>08</b>
Samples	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
GeoMean	64.8	8.1	5.3	5.0	5.3	3.3	3.8	2.6	7.4	5.8	18.2
Est. 90th	963	45	21	17	19	10	10	5	34	24	188
Water Quality	RND	R	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	R
Classification	R	R	A	A	A	A	A	A	CA	R	R

<b>Station</b>	<b>08A</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17A</b>	<b>18</b>
Samples	35	35	34	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
GeoMean	3.9	56.6	9.1	6.6	32.4	6.4	21.8	3.8	48.1	6.9	4.3
Est. 90th	14	531	72	26	218	32	89	13	882	41	14
Water Quality	A	RND	R	R	R	R	R	R	RND	A	A
Classification	A	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	CA	A

<b>Station</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>
Samples	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
GeoMean	12.2	7.6	3.0	3.2	5.2	11.8	7.4	6.8	3.5	3.0	5.6
Est. 90th	81	37	7	9	17	70	39	24	10	6	21
Water Quality	R	R	A	A	A	R	A	A	A	A	A
Classification	R	R	A	A	R	R	R	R	A	A	CA

**A** - Approved      **CA** - Conditionally Approved      **R** - Restricted  
**RND** - Restricted/No Depuration      **P** - Prohibited

**TABLE #4 (B)**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL FECAL COLIFORM BACTERIOLOGICAL DATA SUMMARY**  
**From Conditionally Approved Sampling Stations**  
**Conditional Status Open**  
**January 01, 2005 and December 31, 2007**

Station No.	02	03A	03B	04A	04B
Samples	7	7	7	7	7
GeoMean	8.8	7.1	4.2	4.8	2.7
Est. 90th %ile	87	60	15	23	5
Water Quality	R	A	A	A	A
Current Classification	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA
Recommended Classification	R	A	A	A	A

Station No.	04C	06	17A	18	23
Samples	7	7	7	7	7
GeoMean	3.1	7.3	3.7	4.2	2.6
Est. 90th %ile	27	38	11	16	6
Water Quality	A	A	A	A	A
Current Classification	CA	CA	CA	A	CA
Recommended Classification	A	CA	CA	A	A

Station No.	25	28	29	30	31
Samples	7	7	7	7	7
GeoMean	5.9	10.3	3.1	2.2	5.2
Est. 90th %ile	28	32	6	3	20
Water Quality	A	A	A	A	A
Current Classification	R	R	CA	CA	CA
Recommended Classification	R	R	A	A	CA

A - Approved      CA - Conditionally Approved      R - Restricted  
RND - Restricted/No Depuration      P - Prohibited

**RAINFALL DATA  
BROOKGREEN GARDENS (2005) &  
Department Operated Datalogger- Murrells Inlet  
(2006/2007)**

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**Shellfish Management Area 04**

**2005 Annual Rainfall Summary**  
**Source: Brookgreen Gardens**  
**Location: Murrells Inlet, SC**

2005	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1					0.11	0.14	0.12					
2				0.21		1.21						
3		0.73				0.16				0.11		
4		0.03				1.02	0.86					
5			0.03		0.94	0.02	0.26			1.53		0.52
6					0.35			0.68		3.77		
7				0.51						3.10		
8						0.26	0.20	0.14				
9		0.06				0.05	0.51	0.49				
10		0.19					0.02					
11												
12						0.11						
13	0.26						1.18		0.17			
14	0.58						0.02		3.08			
15							0.24					0.62
16		0.02	1.83		0.34							
17					0.10			0.53				
18							0.04					0.97
19												
20		0.03			0.11						0.08	
21		0.21			0.23			0.72			4.01	
22	0.27	0.14										
23			0.74					1.14				
24					0.46					1.35		
25						0.63						0.09
26	0.02					0.27		0.87				
27		0.08	0.98	0.34					0.58		1.93	
28		1.04	1.36		0.18	0.08			0.12	0.21		
29	0.04					0.31			0.08		1.22	0.47
30	0.41				0.87	1.62	0.31					
31					0.16		3.01					0.07

<b>Total</b>	1.58	2.53	4.94	1.06	3.85	5.88	6.77	4.57	4.03	10.07	7.24	2.74
<b>Max</b>	0.58	1.04	1.83	0.51	0.94	1.62	3.01	1.14	3.08	3.77	4.01	0.97

**Annual Total    55.26**

**2006 Annual Rainfall Summary**  
**Source: Brookgreen Gardens**  
**Location: Murrells Inlet, SC**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1									3.12			
2	1.69											
3	0.12	0.40				0.74						0.31
4		0.08										
5					0.81	0.16			1.28			
6					0.68			0.02	0.56			
7		0.14			0.29		0.57		0.12		2.68	
8				0.31		0.68				0.93	0.09	
9		0.02		0.62						1.21		
10												
11		0.24					0.03					
12							0.32	0.92			0.16	
13						0.42						
14	0.18		0.02		1.21	0.96						
15					0.08							
16						0.72	0.31				1.93	
17										0.61		
18		0.02		0.08	0.27		0.11					
19		0.32			0.22							
20		0.08			0.18							
21	0.22		1.97			0.08					1.44	
22	0.38	0.04		1.21				0.63		1.01	0.34	1.62
23								1.34	0.08			
24			0.33				0.21					
25		0.21					1.52		0.31			0.93
26		1.28				0.14	0.08					
27				1.18	0.46	0.67				1.29		
28									0.03		0.18	
29												
30	0.04						0.11					
31	0.63							1.14				0.41

<b>Total</b>	3.26	2.83	2.32	3.40	4.20	4.57	3.26	4.05	5.50	5.05	6.82	3.27
<b>Max</b>	1.69	1.28	1.97	1.21	1.21	0.96	1.52	1.34	3.12	1.29	2.68	1.62

**Annual Total      48.53**

**2007 Annual Rainfall Summary**  
**Source: Brookgreen Gardens**  
**Location: Murrells Inlet, SC**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	0.22	1.02	0.60									
2		0.33				0.65						
3						1.97						
4										0.60		
5	0.66					0.08				1.55		
6	0.11									0.03		
7	0.26									0.63		
8	0.09						0.94	0.31		0.21		
9					1.31		0.28					
10												
11				0.62								
12		0.08					0.51		0.76			
13		0.16							0.98			
14				0.45			1.09					
15			0.22				0.42		0.46			0.13
16										0.03		1.16
17					0.92		0.46					
18	0.86											
19												
20						0.77	0.42		1.48			1.12
21		0.46										
22	1.05											0.19
23								0.91				
24												
25							0.03			0.72		0.54
26								1.93		1.01	0.01	
27	0.52							0.84		1.11		
28												
29						0.12						0.01
30							0.29	1.84				
31							0.38	0.10				

<b>Total</b>	3.77	2.05	0.82	1.07	2.23	3.59	4.82	5.93	3.68	5.89	0.01	3.15
<b>Max</b>	1.05	1.02	0.60	0.62	1.31	1.97	1.09	1.93	1.48	1.55	0.01	1.16

**Annual Total 37.01**

**MURRELLS INLET  
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR  
CONDITIONALLY APPROVED AREAS**

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**Shellfish Management Area 04**

**Murrells Inlet Management Plan  
For Conditionally Approved Areas  
July 2008**

**I. AREA DESCRIPTION**

The following is a description of Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved areas as indicated in the 2008 Annual Update:

**Conditionally Approved:**

***Murrells Inlet***

1. All portions of the central part of the Murrells Inlet estuary, west of a line extending from the Voyagers View marina closure zone at Station 04-17A southwestward across Weston Flats to the extreme eastern portion of Allston Creek, excluding all portions of Parsonage and Allston Creeks.

***Pawleys Island/Litchfield***

None.

**II. Factors Indicating Suitability of Murrells Inlet as a Conditionally Approved Area**

- A. The major pollution source adversely affecting water quality in Murrells Inlet is nonpoint source in origin.
- B. Murrells Inlet receives no substantial freshwater input other than from rainfall and associated runoff.
- C. Murrells Inlet has a tidal range sufficient to allow substantial exchange with coastal ocean waters. This exchange results in a typical salinity range of 30 ppt to 35 ppt. Depressed salinities due to rainfall are temporary.
- D. Murrells Inlet is relatively small geographically and does not present major patrol difficulties.

**III. PREDICTABLE POLLUTION EVENTS**

**A. Meteorological Events**

1. Sanitary Surveys indicate that a 24-hour rainfall total of 1.0 results in degradation of water quality through portions of the estuary.

**B. Seasonal Events**

1. No marinas will be conditionally managed.

2. Rainfall quantities are fairly uniform throughout fall, winter, and spring. Rainfall varies in intensity and duration; however, it is more uniform in nature during the winter months. Fall and spring rainfall patterns are typically more dynamic, with thunderstorms being quite common.
3. Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved areas should remain in a closed status during the summer months.
4. Potential impacts from migratory waterfowl populations are mitigated by tidal flushing.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF A CONDITIONAL AREA CLOSURE**

##### **A. Notification of management plan violation**

1. SCDHEC is responsible for determining compliance with this management plan.
2. Daily rainfall is summarized by the Department-operated rain gauge on a 24-hour cycle from 5:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.
3. Closures will be implemented upon receipt of 1.0 inches of rain as recorded at the Department operated rain gauge in Murrells Inlet. The Brookgreen Gardens station may be used to supplement Department-collected data in the event of an emergency.
4. Closure notices and postings will be implemented prior to the following harvest day.
5. Murrells Inlet will remain in a closed status from June 1 through September 15.

##### **B. Implementation of Closure (September through May)**

1. SCDHEC Media Relations shall be notified of the need for a Press Release no later than 9:00 p.m. following determination of a rainfall violation.
2. SCDHEC will notify Shellstock Shippers operating Culture Permit Areas (private leases) or buying from State Shellfish Ground permit holders within Murrells Inlet by telephone. Notification will be provided by fax, telephone, or email to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (MRD and local law enforcement). Major boat landings will be posted.
3. SCDHEC is the agency responsible for patrol of shellfish areas closed for public health protection.

##### **C. Enforcement of Closure**

1. SCDHEC is the agency responsible for public health protection. This includes

public notice and closures of shellfish harvest areas.

2. Murrells Inlet will be patrolled at frequencies to deter illegal harvest during closures of Conditionally Approved areas. SCDHEC Shellfish Sanitation Program officers may coordinate with other law enforcement agencies to insure adequate area coverage.

## **V. CRITERIA FOR REOPENING AFTER A POLLUTION EVENT**

### **Control Elements**

1. Cessation of causative rain event as officially measured at the Department gauge in Murrells Inlet.
2. For the 2008-2009 shellfish season, the following stations shall be sampled prior to reopening: 04-06, 04-17A, and 04-31.
3. Data indicate that Conditionally Approved portions of Murrells Inlet typically exhibit acceptable water quality within 48 hours following moderate rain events. Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved areas shall exhibit acceptable water quality prior to reopening.
4. For purposes of this management plan, acceptable water quality shall mean that all three monitoring station samples collected within, or on the boundary of, Conditionally Approved areas shall not exceed a most probable number value of 43 FC/100 ml prior to reopening.
5. Low water temperatures have been shown to lower metabolic rates of shellfish. It is likely that these same temperatures inhibit shellfish from bioaccumulation of bacteriological contaminants. Except during periods of atypical temperatures, metabolic activity should be sufficient to allow natural cleansing.
6. Fourteen consecutive days absent violation of rainfall criteria has been shown to be acceptable for cleansing. Closures will remain in effect for a minimum of 14 consecutive days.

## **VI. MANAGEMENT PLAN Evaluation**

This plan shall be evaluated once per year and included as a part of the Shellfish Management Area 04 Annual Update.

## **Shellfish Management Area 04 EVALUATION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **EVALUATION**

The current management plan evaluation period is January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007. Bacteriological water quality samples used for classification purposes were collected monthly from each station within Area 04. Additionally, sampling was conducted in order to confirm water quality conditions for Conditional Area openings. Unless pre-scheduled sampling (systematic random sampling) followed the pollution events and thus could also be used for opening determination, a set of special samples were collected from stations within and bordering the conditional areas.

1. Compliance – With the exception of one violation, Conditionally Approved areas were closed well within specified time-lines.
2. Four closures notices were issued during 2007.
3. With the exception of single violation, all occurrences of rainfall greater than or equal to 1.0 inch were followed by a Conditional Area closure. Brookgreen Gardens rainfall data indicates a violation occurred on May 9, 2007. However, data monitored at the Department operated gauge indicated a total substantially below the 1.0 inch threshold. No closure was issued.
4. With the exception of the May 9, 2007 violation, notifications of rainfall criteria violations were prompt.
5. With the exception of Station 04-03A, water quality data indicate compliance with Approved Growing Area criteria. Station 04-03A has met Approved water quality for the past two reporting periods. A single apparently anomalous sample result collected on April 11, 2007, included in the CAO subset [Table 4(B)] of the Shellfish Management Area 04 Annual Update indicates an estimated 90<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 220. This station is being reclassified as Approved based upon the full data set [Table 4(a)]
6. The primary pollution source in Area 04 is non-point source pollution that enters the estuary via several ponds and drainage ditches. These have been well documented over the last 20 years. Sewage lift station blockages have sporadically induced overflows, which have resulted in emergency closures. These lift stations include audible and visual alarms as well as telemetry. These stations are routinely checked for compliance by the regional office.
7. Conditionally Approved and boundary sample stations were sampled on 42 different dates during the three-year review period. Thirty-five routine systematic random samples and 7 special reopening samples (typically three to four days prior to reopening) were collected at each station. For the three-year review period, the majority of stations classified as conditionally approved were sampled 7 times while in the open status (CAO).

8. No marinas were conditionally managed. Marinas are circumscribed by a minimum 1000' Prohibited closure zone.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, Conditionally Approved area management based upon the present management plan, has been successful. The Conditionally Approved area will be continue to be managed based upon receipt of 1.0 inches of rainfall in 24-hours. The Department-operated rain gauge has been installed adjacent to the Marina Colony marina. This station, along with an additional station located at Garden City, will provide a more comprehensive view of rainfall in the Murrells Inlet portion of Area 04. Supplemental rainfall data collected at NOAA's Brookgreen Gardens station may also be used in the event of an emergency. Based upon improvements in water quality, portions of the Murrells Inlet Conditionally Approved area will be reclassified as Approved. Murrells Inlet stations requiring sampling prior to conditional area re-opening for the 2007-2008 shellfish season will be, 6, 17A, and 31.