

Sea Grant Extension
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Have you ever wanted to take part in a restoration project for Mobile Bay? That opportunity may be at hand this summer. We are nearing the beginning of the 2008 Oyster Gardening season and are looking for interested people who wish to participate. There are some guidelines for prospective volunteers which include having a pier in waters considered 'conditionally open' for shellfish harvesting. It generally takes about twenty minutes a week to participate in this program which runs June through November. There is a short, free workshop planned for May 10th at 10:00 AM at the Claude Peteet Mariculture Center in Gulf Shores for interested volunteers. To attend you must first contact me at waterph@aces.edu or 251.438.5690 so there can be sufficient cages and manuals.

The Oyster Gardening program has been run each year since 2001. In June, oyster spat (juvenile oysters) set on whole shell will be delivered to volunteers. Each week volunteers will spend about twenty minutes cleaning the four small cages called 'Page Cages'. Cleaning can be done with a garden hose or other method with the goal of washing off any mud that may have accumulated during the week. Additionally, volunteers will check for predators (blue crabs and oyster drills primarily) at this time. Then lower the cages back into the water column and you are done for the week. The cages hang from piers and are suspended in the water column between pilings and off of the bottom. It is important that they be up in the water column to ensure good flow

through the cage. This flow brings food in for the baby oysters and helps to keep them clean. Additionally, oyster drills have a harder time reaching the cages that are in the water column. At the end of the season (November), we will come and collect the oysters which will have grown up to two inches, and plant them on restoration reef sites.

If it sounds like something you are interested in participating in, or if you are not sure if your pier is in an area considered 'conditionally open' for shellfish harvesting, give me a call or send me an e mail.

For additional questions or information, contact P.J. Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, 438-5690.