



## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



### NOAA Fisheries Service Participates in 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Wellfleet Oyster Festival

NOAA Fisheries Service participated in the Wellfleet Oyster Festival the weekend of October 17, 2009, on Massachusetts' Cape Cod. NOAA Fisheries Service's Director of Scientific Programs, Dr. Steve Murawski, served as a judge to the shucking contest and NOAA Fisheries Service sponsored the oyster shell recycling effort.

Despite a double nor'easter storm, this year's 9th Annual Wellfleet Oysterfest attracted more than 10,000 people and provided a wonderful opportunity for NOAA Fisheries Service to share its mission with the public. Dr. Steve Murawski, Director of Scientific Programs, served as one of the oyster shucking contest judges, and NOAA Fisheries Service was also a proud sponsor of the shell recycling effort. Sponsorship included supplying recycling bins, signage and aprons for over 70 volunteers who collected the oyster and clam shells during the event. NOAA Fisheries Service teamed up with the Town of Wellfleet, local vendors and Massachusetts Audubon Society's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (Audubon) to recycle the shells in support of a continuing reef restoration project in Wellfleet Bay that will provide habitat for native oysters and other marine invertebrates. Oysters provide a number of ecological services; they serve as a vital component of a healthy functioning ecosystem, are an important commodity providing a cornerstone of fishers' livelihood in the region, they are a worldwide delicacy, and improve water quality through the filtering of nitrogen and other minerals. The reclaimed shells will be set out in piles to weather and season, then half will be made available for town grant holders and the other half will be used by Audubon. NOAA is delighted to have partnered with Audubon, and many other partners over the past couple years to restore wild oyster reef habitat in Wellfleet Bay.

In keeping with the theme of habitat conservation and restoration, NOAA Fisheries Service staff from the Northeast Region also organized and hosted a clean-up of Mayo Beach. Volunteers picked up trash, learned a little bit about the natural history of the area and about NOAA's important role in managing our coastal resources.

NOAA Fisheries Service staff also staffed a general information booth which served as a platform for informing the public about habitat conservation and restoration activities and conducted interactive demonstrations teaching children and their parents more about the impact of marine debris and marine mammal entanglement.

NOAA Fisheries Service's Seafood Inspection Program also gave scheduled talks on the important role of the Seafood Inspection Program in keeping the public safe from seafood borne illnesses.