

Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival Announces the 2013 Admiral of the Fleet

Al Stokes has been honored by the Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival as this year's Admiral of the Fleet. Admiral Al will lead the Board Parade and Blessing of the Fleet on the May River during the opening ceremonies of the Ninth Annual Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival on Sunday, October 13 at 4:00pm. In addition, he will host Monday night's event, Dinner & Learn Tour at Waddell Mariculture Center at 5:30 PM October 14.

Our Admiral is well deserving of this honor. He is the Manager/Wildlife Biologist IV of the Waddell Mariculture Center located in Greater Bluffton and has been employed by the SCDNR for more than 35 years.

The James M. Waddell Research and Development Center, one of the country's largest and most sophisticated facilities for mariculture research, sits on 1,200 acres on Victoria Bluff, with frontage on the Colleton River and miles of hiking trails. It was constructed in 1983-84 to develop propagation and farming techniques for marine and brackish water species of finfish, mollusks, crustaceans and plants. In addition to developing techniques for commercial aquaculture, the center produces juvenile fish for use in fishery management and stock evaluation by the Marine Resources Division.

Over the years the center has released millions of cobia, spotted sea trout, red drum and striped bass into waters in Beaufort and Charleston counties, along with conducting extensive research such as the effects of storm water on Beaufort County's sensitive saltwater marsh. Working with USCB and Beaufort County they will develop baseline data to improve the county's storm water management plan.

Scientific and educational programs at the Center are conducted by the Marine Resources Research Institute doctorate level scientists and other staff members with expertise in finfish, crustacean and molluscan aquaculture, marine chemistry, fisheries management, phytoplankton ecology, statistics, system design, economics and marketing. Cooperative aquaculture activities are conducted in conjunction with Clemson University, the University of South Carolina, the College of Charleston and the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium. Faculty members from these affiliated institutions expand the Center's capabilities in genetics, developmental biology, pathology, nutrition, microbiology, food processing and engineering.

In recent years, the center has developed a novel method that allows shrimp farming almost anywhere, from the plains of Iowa to the shores of Maine. Stokes and his staff along with a handful of interns also study local fish stocks to ensure the fisheries' health.

In addition, WMC provides tours of the facility several times each week and in this past May alone welcomed over 100 students to its various programs.

Join Admiral Al Stokes at this year's Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival, October 13 – 20, 2013!