

Recreational Shellfish Guide

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Introduction

Recreational shellfishing (the gathering of oysters and clams by individuals for personal consumption) is a popular outdoor activity in South Carolina. Not only is it a unique form of recreation but it provides fresh and healthful seafood for South Carolina families.

The South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department provides and maintains areas along the coast where shellfish can be harvested by residents of South Carolina for their personal use. This guide provides information on these areas and on regulations pertaining to the recreational harvesting of shellfish, as well as information on techniques for gathering and preparing shellfish.

The majority of shellfish areas in South Carolina fall into one of three categories — leased commercial grounds, public oyster grounds, and state shellfish grounds. The public and state grounds are used most often by recreational shellfishermen during the open seasons. Individuals may harvest shellfish from leased grounds if they have permission from the leaseholder, however, the gathering of shellfish without permission from leased grounds constitutes a trespassing violation.

Public oyster grounds are coastal areas where legal residents of South Carolina may gather shellfish for their personal use. There are currently fifteen such areas marked with metal signs which read — "Public Oyster Grounds, Commercial Harvesting Prohibited, Marine Resources Division, S.C.W.M.R.D."

The state shellfish grounds are also open to recreational shellfishermen and, by permit, to commercial shellfishermen. During the spring and summer of 1976, all state shellfish grounds were surveyed and several productive areas were marked to improve public shellfish harvesting. The locations of seven such areas are shown in this guide. These grounds are marked with metal signs which read — "State Shellfish Grounds, Public Harvesting Permitted, S.C.W.M.R.D."

Shellfish in the public grounds vary from one area to the next in both quantity and quality. The Department conducts a number of management activities, such as shell and seed oyster planting and thinning of over-crowded beds, to help maintain and upgrade the public grounds. In addition, continuing efforts are made to keep the areas adequately marked.

Regulations

The following regulations, based on the appropriate sections from the South Carolina Code of Laws, pertain to the recreational harvest of shellfish.

Seasons:

It shall be unlawful for any person to remove oysters from the beds between May 1 and September 15 or to remove clams between June 1 and September 1. The South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Commission may open the season fifteen (15) days earlier or close the season fifteen (15) days later, or both, in any year when the Commission deems it to be in the best interest of the State. Possession of oysters or clams during the closed season shall be prima facie evidence of violation of the provisions of this section, and any person violating the provisions of this section shall, upon conviction, be punished as provided in Section 28-761 of the S.C. Code of Laws.

Limits and License:

The head of any household may, in person or by servant or employee, gather for private use not more than two (2) bushels of oysters or one-half (1/2) bushel of clams, or both, in any one day

for not more than two days in any week from any lands owned by the State; **provided**, that in the case of those lands under lease by the State, permission for such gathering of shellfish shall be obtained from the lessee. No license is required for the recreational harvesting of shellfish for personal use.

Areas:

No permit is required for recreational harvest of shellfish from public oyster grounds or state shellfish areas. Permission of leaseholder is necessary for gathering shellfish from commercial oyster lease areas. Leased shellfish areas are often unmarked, while all public oyster grounds and marked state shellfish areas have signs delineating the boundaries of these areas.

Gear Restrictions:

There are no restrictions on the use of clam rakes and oyster tongs for the recreational harvesting of shellfish.



Shellfishing Techniques

The recreational harvesting of shellfish does not require any expensive equipment, just a few common household implements and some general knowledge of oysters and clams.

Most of South Carolina's oysters are intertidal; they grow between the low and high tide levels. Oysters found nearest the water's edge at low tide are usually the best and the plumpest because they are submerged for longer periods of time. In general, the higher up a creek bank one goes, the smaller and more numerous the oysters become. These high bank oysters tend to form dense clusters which often must be broken up and the larger oysters culled. Single oysters tend to be found at or below the low water mark, lying on their sides or partially buried with their hinge areas in the mud.

To harvest these intertidal oysters, use waders or boots and heavy gloves to prevent cuts from the sharp-edged shells. Other essential items are a screwdriver or piece of flat iron heavy enough to break up clusters, and a

bucket or basket in which to carry the oysters.

In a few areas, there are beds of subtidal or deep water oysters available for public harvesting. These subtidal beds generally produce a better quality oyster but they are more difficult to harvest than their intertidal relatives. Use a pair of longhandled oyster tongs or rakes to gather subtidal oysters.

If kept cool and moist, oysters can be stored out of water for a couple of days and still be used. They will survive low temperatures to about 34 degrees but if the temperature drops below that for long, they begin to die and their shells open.

Several species of clams are found in South Carolina waters, but the hardshell clam or quahog is the one most commonly encountered and harvested both commercially and recreationally. Commercial clambers grade this shellfish into three sizes — little-necks, cherrystones, and chowders. The smaller clams (little-necks and cherrystones) are more tender. They are

better for eating raw or steamed while the larger clams are usually diced or ground and used in chowders and dips.

Clam diggers usually find their bounty at low tide along creek banks and in the bottoms of creeks and rivers. Clams are a little tougher to spot than oysters because they live underground and must be located and dug up with a shovel, rake or other sharp object. On sandy bottoms where there are no oyster shells around, clams can even be dug by hand. Look for the small "keyhole" shaped opening which shows where the clam has extended his siphon up through the mud or sand to gather in food from the surrounding water.

Clams are often found associated with oysters in the same public beds. The "keyhole" test works in these beds as well, although the openings are a little harder to spot. If you think there may be clams in an area, just dig around a little with a spade, or better yet, the tines of a rake. If the clams are there, you will find them an inch or two below the surface.




Use of Maps


The areas open to public shellfish harvesting are shown on two types of maps and charts included in this guide. One is a general location map showing roads and boat landings in the general vicinity of the public and marked state grounds. Following each general map is one or more specific location maps which give the exact boundaries of the areas and show the placement of signs marking them. The maps are arranged in a generally north to south direction,



beginning with the public grounds at Murrells Inlet and ending with the public grounds in Beaufort County.

The following is a list of boat landings shown on the general location maps along with their corresponding designations and locations. Some of these boat landings cannot be used at low tide, so if you are not familiar with a particular landing it is best to check beforehand.

Legend to Maps

 Public Oyster Grounds

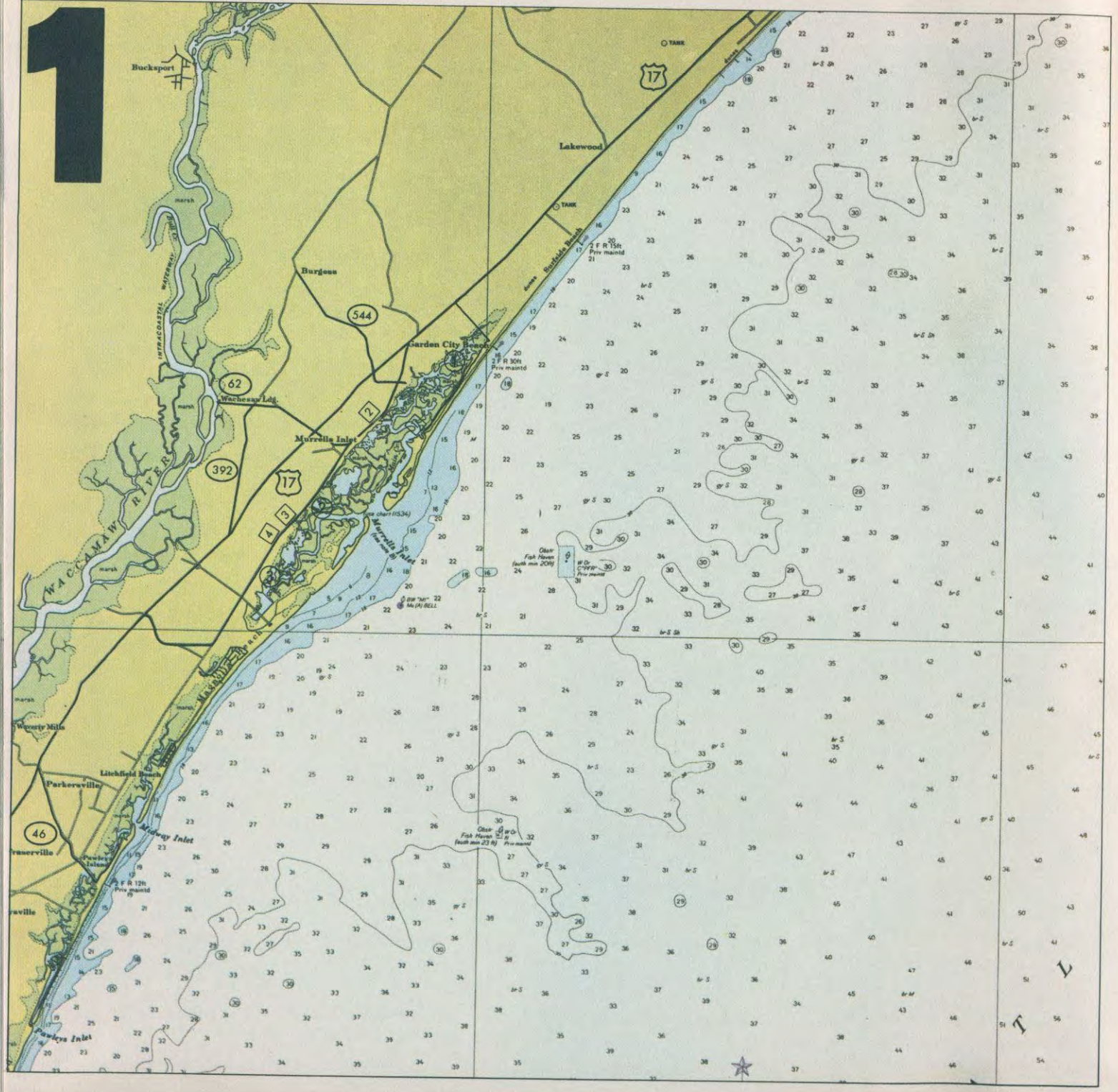
 Boat Landings

  Road Signs

Boat Landings

Number	Name	Location
1	Gulf Stream Marina	South end of Garden City Beach
2	Inlet Port Marina	Highway 17 by-pass, Murrells Inlet
3	Cedar Hill Landing	Highway 17 by-pass, Murrells Inlet
4	Inlet Marina	Highway 17 by-pass, Murrells Inlet
5	McClellanville Landing	Town of McClellanville off Highway 17 north of Charleston
6	Buck Hall Landing	Buck Hall lookout tower on Highway 17 north of Charleston
7	Moore's Landing	Highway 17 north of Charleston, end of State Road 1170
8	Isle of Palms Esso Landing	Just north of Breech Inlet on Isle of Palms
9	Sullivans Island Marina Ramp	Sullivans Island just south of Breech Inlet
10	Mt. Pleasant Marine Ramp	Highway 703 near Ben Sawyer Bridge, Mt. Pleasant
11	John F. Seignious Boat Ramp	Highway 171 at Folly River Bridge
12	Battery Island Ramp	End of Sol Legare Road (State Road 632) on James Island
13	Cherry Point Boat Ramp	Cherry Point Road 1 mile east of Rockville
14	Dawho River Bridge Boat Ramp	Highway 174 at Dawho River Bridge
15	Bennett Point Landing	Highway 17 south of Charleston, end of State Road 26
16	Grays Hill Landing	Grays Hill at end of State Road 71 in Beaufort County
17	Bolen Hall Landing	12 miles south of Coosawhatchie off of Highway 278 in Jasper County
18	Broad River Landing	Broad River Bridge on State Road 170
19	Chechessee Landing	Chechessee River Bridge on State Road 170
20	Buckingham Landing	Highway 278 just before Hilton Head Island Bridge
21	All Joy Landing	End of State Road 13 south of Bluffton

1



1a



1. North Murrells Inlet. Public Oyster Grounds. Located in Horry and Georgetown Counties.
2. Allston Creek. Public Oyster Grounds. Georgetown County.
3. Clam Bank Flats. Public Oyster Grounds. Georgetown County.

2



2a



4. Alligator Creek. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Charleston County. Subtidal oysters and clams.



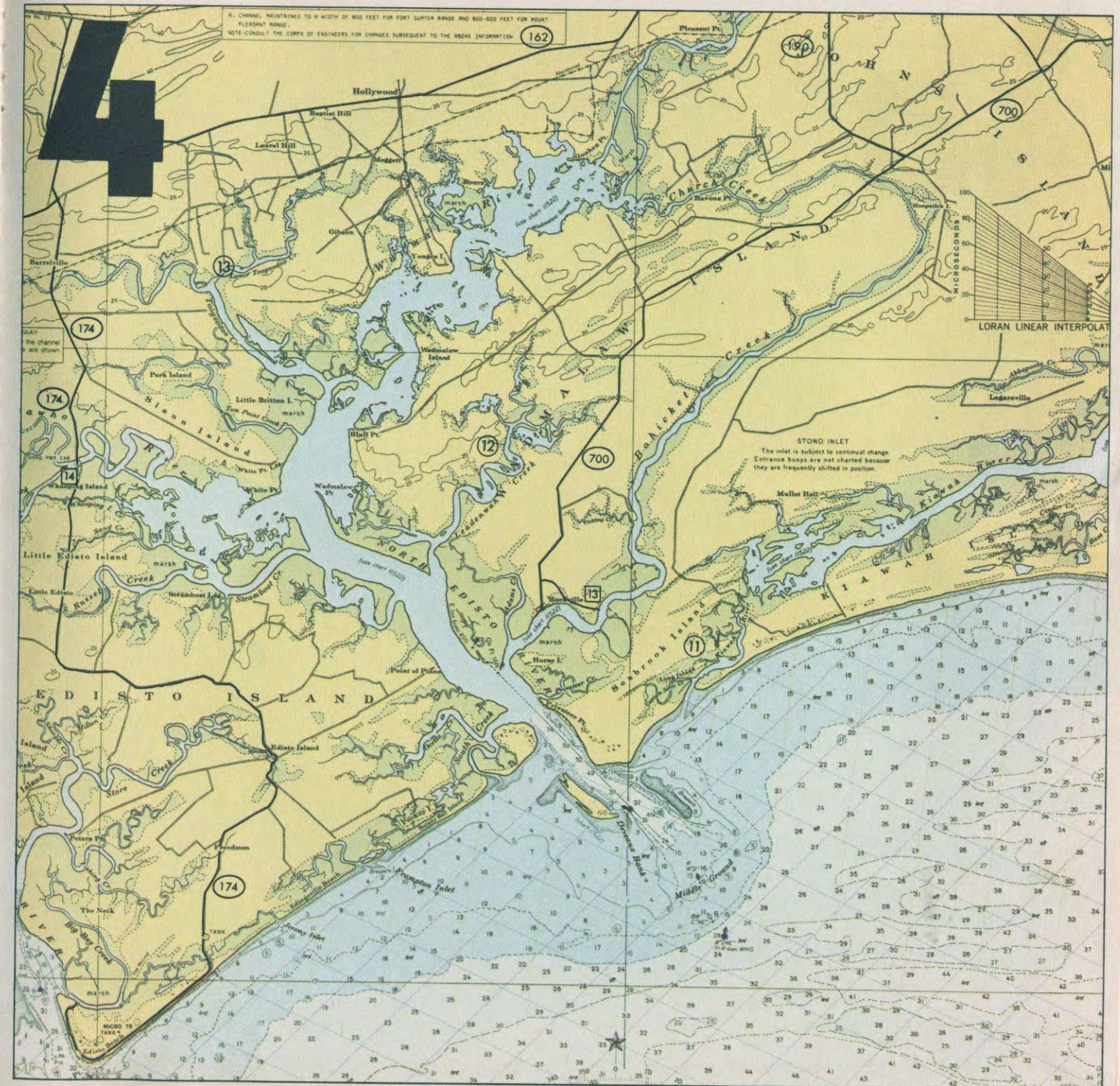
Hamlin Creek. Public Oyster Grounds. Charleston County.

36



- 8. Folly River. Public Oyster Grounds. Charleston County. Readily accessible without boat.
- 9. Folly River. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Charleston County.
- 10. Cole Creek. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Charleston County. Clams present in upper reaches of the creek.

4



Channel maintained to a width of 800 feet for foot sloop range and 800-600 feet for boat
pleasant range
NOTE-CONSULT THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR CHANGES SUBSEQUENT TO THE ABOVE INFORMATION

LORAN LINEAR INTERPOLATION

4a



11. Kiawah Island. Public Oyster Grounds. Charleston County. Clams present in Captain Sam's Creek.

4b



12. Leadenwah Creek. Public Oyster Grounds. Charleston County.

4C

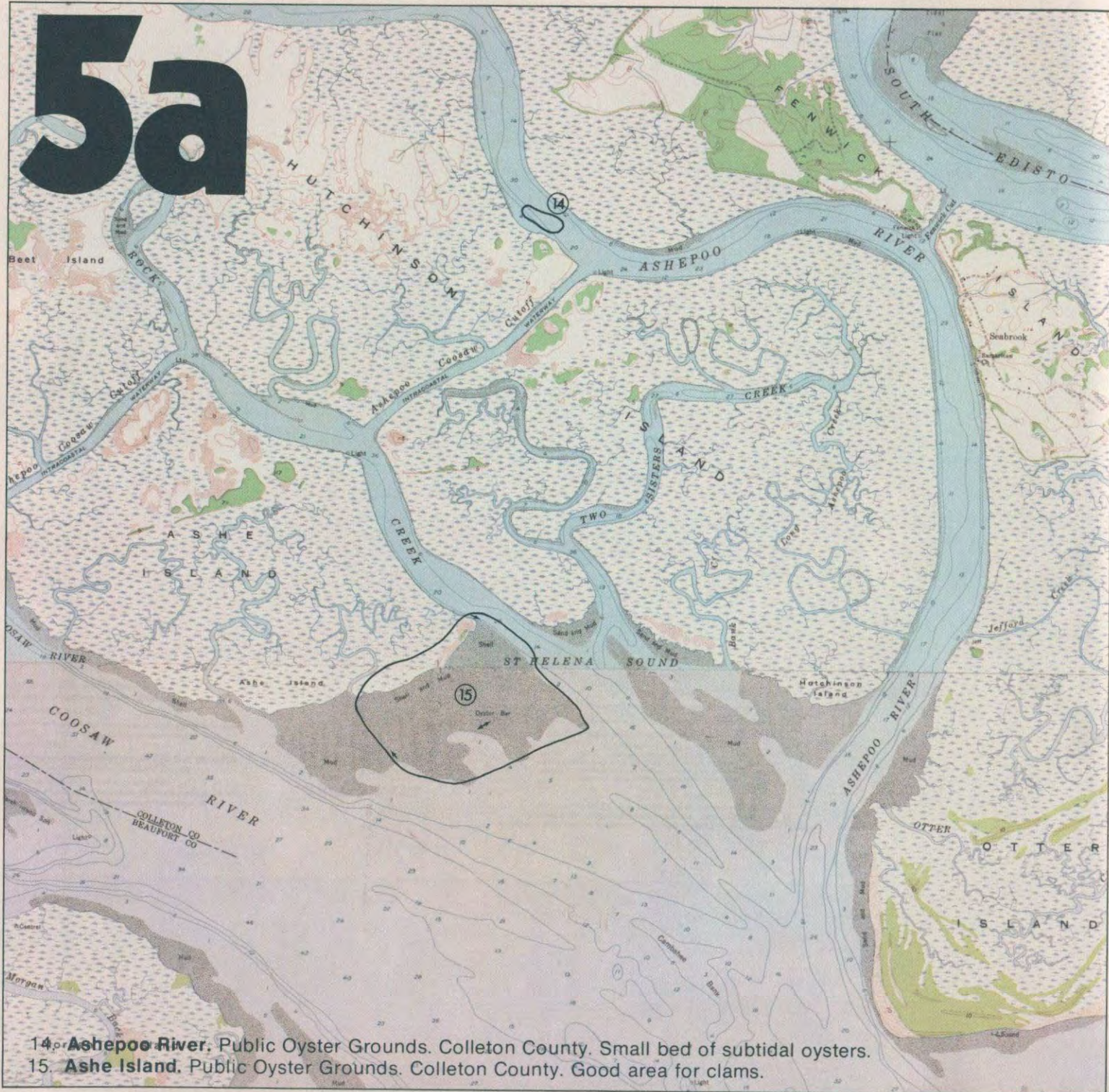


13 Toogoodoo Creek. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Charleston County.

5



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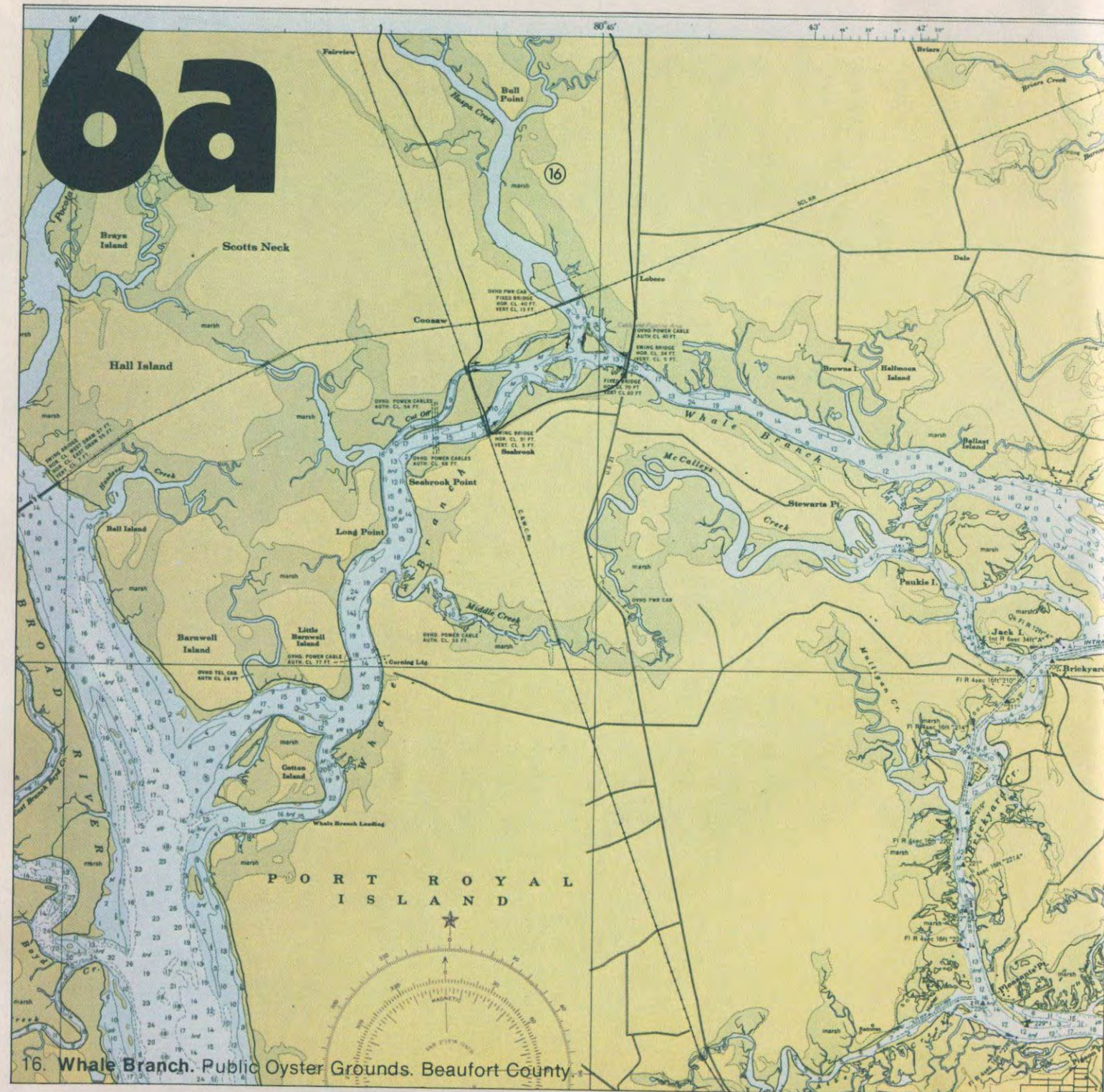


14. Ashepoo River. Public Oyster Grounds. Colleton County. Small bed of subtidal oysters.
15. Ashe Island. Public Oyster Grounds. Colleton County. Good area for clams.

6



6a



16. Whale Branch. Public Oyster Grounds. Beaufort County.

6b



17. Marsh Island. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Beaufort County.
 18. Euhaw Creek. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Jasper and Beaufort Counties.
 19. Habersham Creek. Marked State Shellfish Grounds. Beaufort County.

7a



21. Last End Point. Public Oyster Grounds, Beaufort County. Readily accessible without boat.

22. May River—Bull Creek. Public Oyster Grounds, Beaufort County.

Preparation and Recipes

After you have gathered your clams and oysters, how do you go about preparing them for the table? The first step in the process is to wash your shellfish thoroughly to remove all mud and sand. The next step is to open them so they can be frozen for later use or eaten immediately in a variety of delicious ways.

Raw clams and oysters can be opened with a heavy-bladed knife. Simply insert the knife between the valves or two halves of the shell near the hinge and pry open. The knife is then used to cut the muscle which holds the valves together, exposing the clam or oyster.

Another method used to open clams is to freeze them in the shell. After a day or so, place the frozen clams in boiling water for a couple minutes and they will open easily. The clam and its juices are removed in a frozen lump which can be placed back in the freezer for future use or thawed and used immediately in numerous recipes.

Oysters and clams also can be opened by placing them in a hot oven in a roaster with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water in the bottom. Steam them about 5 to 10 minutes until the shells gape open slightly. Holding them over another container, pry the shellfish open so that the meat **and** juices are saved. After straining the juice, pour it into a container with the meats and use immediately or freeze for later use.

Raw oysters "on the half-shell" is a popular way of eating shellfish. The meat usually is dipped in sauce (such as one of those given later in the recipe section) and consumed along with your favorite beverage.

A real Lowcountry tradition is the oyster roast. A large sheet of heavy metal is heated over an open fire and when the metal gets red hot, the oysters are placed on the sheet and covered with a wet burlap bag. In a short time, the steamed oysters are shoveled onto a table for eager consumption by ardent oyster lovers.

Hundreds of delicious seafood recipes call for oysters and clams as their main ingredients. The following are reprinted from the popular **Charleston Receipts**, compiled and edited by the

Junior League of Charleston, Inc. The authors express their sincere appreciation to the Junior League of Charleston for their kind permission to reproduce these recipes.

Scalloped Oysters

1 quart oysters
Milk
1 pint cracker crumbs
½ cup butter
2 salt spoons of pepper
2 salt spoons of mace
Salt to taste

Drain oysters and add to the liquor enough milk to make one pint. Salt to flavor and set where it will heat. Mix pepper and mace with cracker crumbs. Melt butter and add to crumbs. Put oysters and crumbs in baking dish in layers—crumbs first and then oysters. Pour the liquor over the top and bake in a moderate oven for 20 to 30 minutes. Serves 6-8.

Sea-Food Gumbo

¼ pound butter
2 quarts water
2 pounds fresh okra
1 pint raw oysters
4 tablespoons flour
2 pounds fresh raw shrimp
Salt and pepper to taste
5 fresh tomatoes
1 pound fresh crab meat
2 pounds fresh fish

Melt butter and add flour. Make a smooth paste and stir constantly over fire until a rich brown, being careful not to burn. Add water, tomatoes and okra (chopped fine). Cook slowly for one hour. Add crab meat, oysters, shrimp (picked and deveined) and fish (minus bones and skin). Cook 15 minutes; add seasonings. Soup should be thick. Add steamed rice to each serving. Serves 8.

Clam Chowder

3 dozen clams in the shell
3 cups of clam broth
4 slices bacon
4 tablespoons butter
4 cups milk
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons flour
2 medium onions
1½ cups diced raw potatoes

Scrub clams clean with hard brush. Open with clam knife, being careful not to lose any of the liquor in the shell. Strain liquor through two thicknesses of cheese cloth. Grind clams. Chip bacon and onions and fry until brown. Put ground clams, potatoes, bacon and onions in kettle and cover with just enough water to cook potatoes and clams. When done, add clam liquor, milk and seasonings. If a thick chowder is desired, make a paste of melted butter and flour and thicken to desired consistency. Add butter, salt and pepper. Serves 8-10.

Broiled Oysters

1 pint oysters
½ cup salad oil
1 cup cracker crumbs (fine)
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

Drain oysters then dry in towel. Dip in oil and then cracker crumbs to which salt and pepper have been added. Broil in hot oven (425°) until oysters are golden brown on one side. Turn each oyster and cook on other side until done. Serve at once with tomato catsup. Serves 4-6.

Fried Oysters

1 quart oysters
2 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons milk
Salt and pepper
1 cup bread crumbs, cracker crumbs or corn meal

Drain oysters; mix eggs, milk, seasonings. Dip oysters in egg mixture and roll in crumbs. Fry in deep fat (375°F) about 2 minutes or until brown. Or fry in shallow fat about 2 minutes on one side, turn and brown on other side. Serves 6.

Oyster Cocktail Sauce

4 tablespoons tomato catsup or chili sauce
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1½ teaspoons Worcestershire
Salt.
Few grains red pepper
1½ teaspoons grated horseradish (optional)

Mix and pour over oysters just before serving. Serves 4.

Horseradish Sauce

2 tablespoons grated horseradish
1 tablespoon vinegar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
4 tablespoons whipped cream

Mix horseradish with vinegar, add seasonings and stir in cream, whipped stiff.