



# Morning News

MONDAY MARCH 7, 2016

TODAY'S WEATHER

Mostly sunny. High 70, low 43.

DETAILS 2A

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## Georgetown County

# Seafood, beaches and oil

### Peaceful county at odds over drilling possibility

BY SAMMY FRETWELL  
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MURRELLS INLET — The lunch crowd at King Street Grille was too busy eating seafood last week to notice Peg Howell, a former oil-rig boss, sitting in a corner of the marsh-front restaurant with a small stack of papers and a grim smile.

Howell and local seafood dealer Rick Baughmann were in deep discussion about oil drilling along the South Atlantic coast.

Both hate the idea. Georgetown County has as much at risk as any community in the region if the government opens the coast to oil-and-gas drilling, said Howell and Baughmann, who are leading the charge locally to stop the federal government's plan.

"Once we open that up, it is there forever," Howell said as she went over a report she had written about the dangers of offshore drilling. "As long as they find enough oil and gas to produce, they will always be out there. It makes me furious."

With a major federal decision expected soon on whether to open the South Atlantic coast for oil and natural-gas drilling, opponents like Howell and Baughmann are eager to hear whether the government sticks with a plan that has coastal communities from Virginia to Georgia in an uproar.

The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is expected in the next month to update its draft proposal for offshore energy development. Drilling opponents, and some who support offshore energy exploration, say the bureau's updated plan will say a lot about how the government moves ahead with drilling in the South Atlantic.

Many people in South Carolina are hoping the bureau will drop the proposal, or at least exclude Palmetto State waters. As proposed last year, the government plan would open areas off the coasts of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia for oil-and-gas development.

Drilling could lead to spills that would pollute beaches and marshes that draw tourists to popular vacation spots, critics of the plan say. The images of oil-coated seabirds from BP's 2010 spill in the Gulf of Mexico are hard for some people to shake, they say.

Some business interests and state politicians, who are urging the Obama administration to stick with the proposal, say oil rigs off the South Atlantic coast do not mean spills would occur, but drilling does mean prosperity for poor states such as South Carolina.

John Filostrat, a spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, said his agency is considering comments it has received since the bureau first revealed the offshore-drilling plan last winter. The bureau will update the proposal and give the public another comment period before the ultimate decision is made by early 2017.

"We do weigh what the states want, and we take into account comments from the governor and lawmakers down there," Filostrat said. "We also have spoken with various interest groups over the past 12 months. We weigh that too."

While the drilling proposal has generated debate from Hilton Head Island to Myrtle Beach, nowhere is it more relevant than in

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Each Monday, the Morning News features a good news story on a person, place or organization in the Pee Dee. If you have a suggestion for someone or something to profile, send it to news@snow.com.

# Never say no

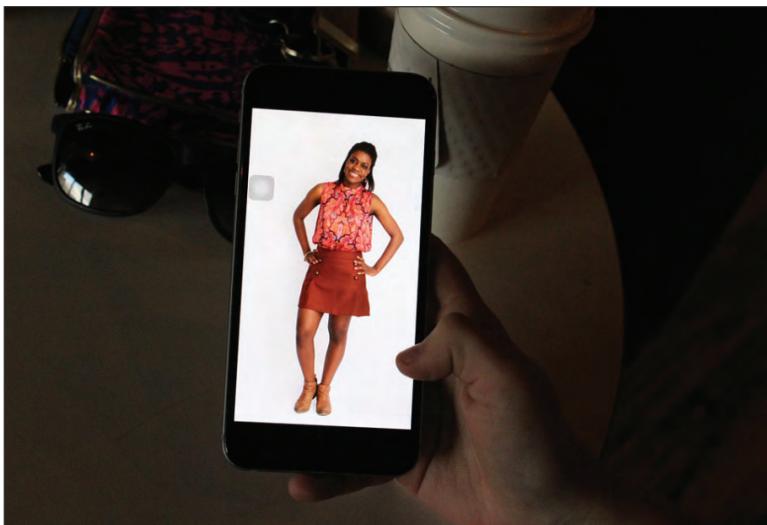


PHOTOS BY DEBORAH SWEARINGEN/MORNING NEWS

Tindall Hutchinson is 16 years old and has her own photography business, called Shutter Up.

## 16-year-old runs thriving photography business in Florence

BY DEBORAH SWEARINGEN  
Morning News  
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Tindall Hutchinson shows off some of her favorite photographs. This one is of her best friend and fellow young business owner, Thomasena Thomas.

FLORENCE — Tindall Hutchinson doesn't take no for an answer.

Despite some people's reservations about her age, the 16-year-old South Florence High School sophomore opened her own photography business, Shutter Up, almost 3½ years ago.

The projects began sporadically after she got a red Nikon D3200 for Christmas in 2012. Hutchinson simply would take photographs for

### MORE ONLINE

Like Shutter Up Photography on Facebook or visit shutterupflorence.com to book Tindall Hutchinson for a shoot and view her work.

See PHOTOGRAPHER, Page 3A

## Robert Harris is back to finish where he left off

BY SHAMIRA MCCRAY  
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SHAMIRA MCCRAY/MORNING NEWS

Florence's Biggest Loser contestant Robert Harris finished in ninth place for inches and pounds lost in last year's competition. He is back again to finish where he left off.



FLORENCE — Robert Harris got halfway toward his goal last year in the United Way of Florence County's Biggest Loser program. He finished in ninth place for both inches and pounds.

He is participating in the competition again this year to finish where he left off. Harris' daughter Ashleigh Turner has joined him this year.

His motivation is to just get healthier.

"I turn 66 in June," Harris said. "Looking at a bunch of old people around, I think I'm in pretty good shape. But I just want to see that grandson that turns 5 in

June, I want to see him graduate from college, and hopefully he'll choose to go to The Citadel, and I'll give him his diploma when he walks across the stage."

Harris said he has three other grandchildren whom he wants to be around to have fun with, too.

Before joining Florence's Biggest Loser, Harris said he tried a number of things to lose weight, including Nutrisystem in the 1980s and Weight Watchers.

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## SEC CHAMPS

No. 3 South Carolina tops Mississippi State for 2nd SEC title. Page 1B

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