

Cooper River Underwater Heritage Trail

By Lynn Harris

During March and April many sport divers volunteered on the Cooper River Underwater Trail Project. Braving the chilly spring water temperatures (around 40 degrees!) enthusiastic teams helped to take underwater photographs, identify local wildlife, map and measure timbers on dock structures and shipwrecks, and attempt artistic renditions in low visibility conditions. Despite the challenging conditions, the divers always completed the task and even added a little extra detail if they had the time.

Many thanks to all those who were part of this project: Gunter and Peggy Weber, Anna and Grey Davis, Avery Currie, Drew Ruddy, George Pledger, Doug Boehme, Brian Johaneck, Charlie Nelson, Joseph Lewis, Chantalle Brunson, Michael Bove, Jonathan Pennington, and Bill Barr. Thanks also to all the Field Training Course students from Virginia–Wayne Lee, Donald Tuten, Dave Gararo, Thomas Coleman, and Elizabeth Lamons. We are most appreciative of all those who came to the taskforce meetings in Charleston and made useful suggestions about the trail implementation—especially the representatives from local dive stores like East Coast Dive Connection, The Wet Shop, and Charleston Scuba. Useful input also came from historic preservation and heritage tourism aficionados representing the Historic Charleston Foundation and the South Carolina Heritage Corridor in the low country.

SCIAA Underwater Division Staff are currently designing the underwater slates for the trail and planning the logistics for placing mooring blocks and trail marker buoys on each of the sites. The trail is scheduled to be officially open by October. Slates with site maps, and historical and environmental information will be distributed through local dive stores. Pamphlets will be placed in visitor centers and dive clubs. The three-mile long trail



Figure 1: SCIAA Research Affiliate Doug Boehme (left) prepares to dive on the submerged colonial plantation dock at Mepkin Abbey, while George Pledger tends the boat (SCIAA photo).

includes a diverse selection of underwater site such as: a Revolutionary War shipwreck, a colonial ferry landing, an 18th-century barge, an ocean-going sailing vessel, and a plantation wharf and shipwreck. We hope that the trail will enhance the safety, accessibility, and public education potential of underwater sites in the state.

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