

VIMS partners with schooner *Alliance* for “Science Under Sail”

(May 23, 2011) The Virginia Institute of Marine Science has begun a unique new partnership with Yorktown Sailing Charters LLC and their 105-foot schooner *Alliance*. Starting on Wednesdays in June, guest scientists from VIMS will share their knowledge of Chesapeake Bay and its marine life with the passengers of the *Alliance* during two-hour “Science Under Sail” cruises on the York River.

The *Alliance* is a traditional 3-masted schooner built in 1995 by Treworgy Yachts in Palm Coast, Florida. She began plying the waters of the York River in 2005, when Greg and Laura Lohse established Yorktown Sailing Charters and began offering day-sail cruises from Yorktown’s Riverwalk Landing Pier, across the York River from VIMS. The 75-ton vessel can hold 49 passengers.

“Our guests often ask questions about the health of the Bay and the jellyfish and other marine life they see,” says Laura Lohse. “We thought it would be great to build on that interest by establishing a partnership with VIMS that could help answer our guests’ questions and give them a better awareness of the Bay ecosystem.”

VIMS Dean and Director John Wells says the partnership “expands our outreach into a unique new setting,” and “offers a wonderful opportunity for VIMS scientists to share their knowledge of Chesapeake Bay and its marine life with the public.” He notes that the partnership “continues a long-standing maritime tradition of onboard naturalists that includes the likes of Joseph Banks and Charles Darwin.”

During the inaugural season of the partnership, a guest scientist from VIMS will come aboard an *Alliance* cruise each Wednesday afternoon in June and July. The researcher will focus on his or her area of expertise, sharing knowledge on topics ranging from Bay water quality and shoreline management to sea turtles, oysters, sea grasses, jellyfish, zooplankton, marine pollution, and derelict or “ghost” crab pots. The presentations are designed to be as interactive as possible, with plans to include hands-on activities using nets and other scientific gear.

As with the other *Alliance* tours, passengers will first learn about the vessel itself, with a “setting sail” demonstration that describes the ship’s rigging and gives them the option to help lift the sails. Depending on time and passenger interest, the crew may also talk about the area’s rich history—the topic of the traditional *Alliance* cruises.



Schooner Alliance and VIMS: The schooner Alliance in front of Yorktown. VIMS is in the background across the York River. Photo courtesy of Laura Lohse.

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Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, VA 23062
(804) 684-7000

For more information on the “Science Under Sail” cruises, visit www.schooneralliance.com

Schedule of topics, “Science Under Sail 2011”:

- June 1: Living Shorelines and Shoreline Management—Karen Duhring
- June 8: Health of the Bay—Dr. Carl Hershner
- June 15: Detecting Pollutants for a Healthier Bay—Dr. Drew Luellen
- June 22: Marine Debris “Ghost Pots”—Dr. Kirk Havens
- June 29: Sea Turtles—Diane Tulipani
- July 6: Jellyfish and other Zooplankton—Dr. Debbie Steinberg
- July 13: Chesapeake Bay Seagrasses—Dr. Robert Orth
- July 20: Oysters—Dr. Stan Allen
- July 27: Health of the Bay—Dr. Carl Hershner