



First (above) and second (top) floor plans of the Oyster House.

Courtesy of Dale Overmyer, Architect

Baywatch:

Weekend Retreat Brings Guests to the Water's Edge

by G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA,

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The goal of this project, according to architect **Dale Overmyer, AIA**, was “to create a weekend retreat that puts guests in the most dramatic part of the site.” Once occupied by an oyster processing plant that was abandoned due to declining oyster population, the property is at the end of a peninsula at the juncture of the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. Fulfilling the architect’s objective, the main house stands on a narrow spit of land near the peninsula’s tip and at the mouth of a small lagoon, which appears to separate the structure from the “mainland.” Guests can reach the main house only by boat or via a long, pier-like walkway that crosses the lagoon.

The main house is actually a pair of “pavilions” linked by a glass bridge at the second level. The pavilion to the left (as seen from the entry walkway) accommodates the more public spaces, including the living area, dining area, and kitchen. Its design was inspired by the simple forms of nearby boat docks, with tall, cylindrical wooden columns and a canted, metal roof. The exterior walls of this pavilion are almost entirely of glass, creating the impression from a distance that it is unenclosed (indeed, a folding window wall allows one corner of the living area to be opened completely in good weather).

The adjacent pavilion, housing bedrooms and other private spaces, is more demure than the public wing. Its architectural expression was derived from the “maritime industrial architecture” of nearby seafood processing plants. It has relatively small windows with operable shutters and a gabled roof topped by clerestory windows running the length of the structure. Both of the pavilions manage to appear fresh and modern while strongly evoking the rustic, vernacular buildings that are characteristic of the Chesapeake Bay area.

Sustainability was an important consideration in the design. The project incorporates geothermal heating and cooling and takes advantage of natural ventilation whenever possible. The landscape design, by Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, preserves the existing marshlands, eliminating the need for artificial fertilization and irrigation. 🌿



Oyster House.

Project: Oyster House, Loittsburg, Virginia

Architect: **Dale Overmyer, Architect**

Contractor: **Ilex Construction**

Landscape Architects: **Oehme, van Sweden & Associates**

Interior Designer: **Elizabeth Hague, Inc., Interiors**



Oyster House as seen from the entry bridge.



Main living area, with kitchen in the background.



Main living area.