

## GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDED KNAUSS FELLOWSHIP

JOE PAWLIK CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY

**Steve McMurray**, a Master of Science candidate in marine biology, has been awarded the prestigious SeaGrant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship. SeaGrant is NOAA's primary university-based program supporting coastal resource use and conservation.

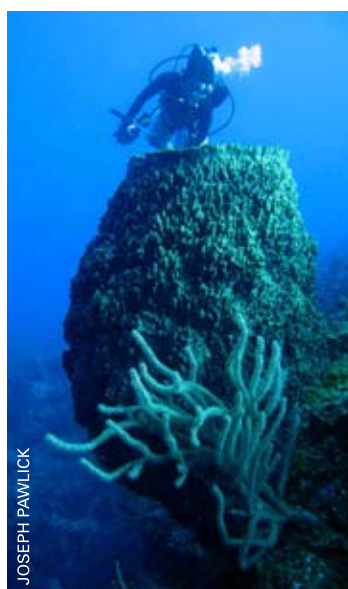
The fully paid fellowship will allow McMurray to spend a year in Washington, D.C., working with a host member of the legislative branch of government, the executive branch or appropriate associations/institutions on national policy decisions affecting ocean resources that have been his focus of study.

McMurray studies with professor Joe Pawlik in the Marine Chemical Ecology Laboratory at the Center for Marine Science. His research involves the growth, demographics and bleaching of the Caribbean giant barrel sponge. McMurray's research is jointly funded by NOAA and NSF and performed at the UNCW-operated National Undersea

Research Center (NURC) in Key Largo, Fla. McMurray uses the Aquarius habitat and technical diving to monitor the growth of barrel sponges on Conch Reef.

Utilizing long-term monitoring data sets to determine their rates of mortality and recruitment, McMurray was the first to establish the age of giant barrel sponges – hundreds to thousands of years old.

“Steve has also developed a novel technique for reattaching sponges to the reef after they become dislodged



JOSEPH PAWLIK

by monofilament fishing line in storm events. He

also helped document that cyclic bleaching in giant barrel sponges, unlike reef corals, is not a sign of stress to the organism,” Pawlik says.

McMurray has two publications in press, one in *Restoration Ecology* and one for *Marine Biology* and two more forthcoming. His work determining the age of ancient barrel sponges was featured in the July 4 issue of *Science* magazine.