Beginning in late October 2005, the DMR offered a program to the Mississippi oyster harvesters to work with the mapping and assessment of the Mississippi commercial oyster reef, which were seriously impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

All major oyster harvest areas were sampled by the DMR and preliminary reports indicated considerable mortality in the major commercial oyster reefs with the goal of the program being to employ Mississippi oyster harvesters to help assess the resource and to identify suitable areas for future plantings.

“This is a unique program that combines the mapping and experience of Mississippi commercial reefs with the resources of the DMR,” said DMR Shellfish Biological Program Coordinator Bradley Randall. “By working side by side with the fishermen, we will be able to identify the losses suffered by Hurricane Katrina more quickly than by ourselves. Plus, we will be able to put some money in their pockets that otherwise they would not have.”

“By providing a little positive feedback about the program from the industry,” said Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Technician Steve Breland. “Once they see the results, they will have an idea of what the new cultch will be capable of for young oysters to grow in.”

“These are the first of the Hurricane Katrina-damaged oyster reefs that have been mapped and assessed,” said Jeff Brown of the Mississippi Oyster Relief Effort.

“Providing these live oysters to the fishery will assist in the creation of new oyster reefs in the Telegraph Reef area,” said DMR Marine Program Coordinator Larry Simpson. “The Gulf of Mexico is in dire need of replenishment and this program is an important part of our efforts to help rebuild our national resources.”

In the spring to help rebuild and enhance oyster reefs in the western Mississippi Sound, the DMR deployed about 5,000 cubic yards of cultch material to build new oyster reefs in the Telegraph Reef, which was located about 4 1/2 miles south of Pass Christian, in an effort to offset the damage done to the oyster reefs as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

“On behalf of the DMR, I would like to acknowledge the work of and thank Senator Thad Cochran, Congressman Gene Taylor, and Governor Haley Barbour for their work in Congress to approve these disaster funds for rebuilding Mississippi’s oyster resources. This project is so important to our state, our economy, and our environment that it has gained the bipartisan support of congress,” said Commissioner Haley Barbour.

“Without the support of Senator Cochran, Congressman Taylor, and Governor Barbour for this project, we could not have had the necessary funds to help rebuild Mississippi’s oyster reefs,” said MS Oyster Relief Effort Executive Director Larry Simpson.

“Providing these live oysters to this project is a critical step in our efforts to help rebuild Mississippi’s oyster reefs,” said MS Oyster Relief Effort Executive Director Larry Simpson.

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“We are pleased to assist the states and NOAA Fisheries in helping Mississippi’s oyster reefs recover from this terrible natural disaster.”

The DMR distributed about 240 bags of cultch material to the Gulf of Mexico to help rebuild Mississippi’s oyster reefs. This program is part of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan for Recreational and Commercial Fisheries. Projected March 2007

Updated Mississippi’s Oyster Reefs

Rebuilding Mississippi’s Oyster Reefs

On Aug. 24, 2005, DMR Shellfish Program staff, working with a private contractor, planted more than 500,000 cultch material to build new oyster reefs in the Telegraph Reef area, located about 4 1/2 miles south of Pass Christian. Mississippi, other Shellfish Program staff were utilizing the DMR’s boat, the Conservator, to drop about 500,000 bags of cultch from the Point Cadet pier in Biloxi for referring to the new cultch bag site at Telegraph Reef.

“Providing these live oysters to this project will greatly enhance the success of our new cultch bag site,” said MS Oyster Relief Effort Executive Director Larry Simpson. “We are pleased to assist the states and NOAA Fisheries in helping Mississippi’s oyster reefs recover from this terrible natural disaster.”
The DMR has devised a five-year plan for restoration, enhancement and monitoring of Mississippi’s hurricane-damaged oyster reefs. At the core of this plan, the DMR hopes to accomplish the following objectives:

Goal 1: To survey, map and mark public oyster reefs, potential cultivation and cultch planting sites.

- To expand and maintain the public oyster reef system and determine suitability for oyster reef restoration or enhancement.
- To map public oyster reefs and cultch planting sites.
- To establish areas of public reefs that may have conflicts with other state or federal policies.
- To document oyster reef area changes due to the events of Hurricane Katrina.

Goal 2: To cultivate oyster reefs and relay oyster sites.

- To cultivate oyster reefs degraded by Hurricane Katrina, ensuring good health and sea conditions for the oyster reefs in the near future.
- The DMR will cultivate the public reefs and oyster reef areas with the oyster reefs damaged by Hurricane Katrina by implementing a protocol that will ensure the oyster reefs are in good health.
- To implement an protocol that will ensure the oyster reefs are in good health.
- The DMR will use a protocol that will ensure the oyster reefs are in good health.

Goal 3: To deploy cultch material, objective:

- To determine oyster reef area changes due to the actions of Hurricane Katrina.
- To establish areas of public reefs that may have conflicts with other state or federal policies.
- To document oyster reef area changes due to the events of Hurricane Katrina.

Goal 4: To continue Oyster Stewardship Program.

- To conduct a blue crab management program to better understand and monitor the existing condition of Mississippi’s oyster fisheries and the potential for future management.
- To establish a protocol that will ensure the oyster reefs are in good health.
- The DMR will implement a protocol that will ensure the oyster reefs are in good health.

Goal 5: To place Mississippi Coastal Drainage Basin Meteorological Monitoring Stations that provide continuous meteorological data on precipitation, temperature, wind speed and direction, solar radiation and air pressure.

- To maintain and operate real-time meteorological monitoring stations that provide continuous meteorological data on precipitation, temperature, wind speed and direction, solar radiation and air pressure.
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- We are proud that Mississippi is the first Katrina state to begin cultch planting operations that will help to restore public oyster reefs and begin the process of bringing the state’s oyster population back to its former levels.

- Cultch spraying oyster shells or cultch-graffed concrete rubble near the bottom waters using high-pressure hand pumps to help increase the population of oyster larvae.

- The DMR’s Oyster Stewardship Program includes the maintenance and monitoring of oyster reefs and the creation of additional reefs.

- Cultch plants consist of spreading oyster shells or cultch-graffed concrete rubble near the bottom waters using high-pressure hand pumps to help increase the population of oyster larvae.

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