



Oyster News

For the Mississippi Gulf Coast

A publication of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources – Spring 2012

CMR Sets Limits for 2012-2013 Commercial Oyster License Sales, Month of April Reserved for Commercial Oyster License Renewals Only

The Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources (CMR) voted during its February 14, 2012 meeting to restrict 2012-2013 oyster license sales to the number and type of license sold during the current 2011-2012 license year. Oyster harvest licenses for the 2012-2013 season will go on sale Monday, April 2, 2012.

During the month of April 2012, commercial oyster license sales for the upcoming license year will be limited

to renewals only of current 2011-2012 commercial oyster harvest license holders, of the same number and type of license. For renewals it is recommended that you bring in a copy of your valid 2011-2012 oyster harvest license.

If during the 2011-2012 license year, the license holder surrendered a commercial oyster dredging license to purchase a commercial tonging license, the license holder may select which license they desire to renew.

After April 2012, the remaining allocation of commercial oyster harvest licenses per license type will be made available to any interested party on a first-come, first-served basis, until the total number of licenses allocated for that category has been exhausted.

The CMR has taken similar actions to restrict oyster license sales over the past several seasons.



New Oyster Check Station

In spring 2012, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) will open a new Oyster Check Station in the Pass Christian Harbor. This new facility will house the MDMR Shellfish Bureau Check Station and Marine Patrol Office. The building is 1,810 sq ft and is elevated to 22 ft to meet FEMA guidelines.

Figure 1: Artistic rendering of the New Oyster Check Station and Marine Patrol Office located at the Pass Christian Harbor, MS.



Figure 2: Fall 2011 Oyster Cultch Planting - Water cannons are used to spray shell or limestone onto the oyster reefs.

Fall 2011 Oyster Cultch Planting

In September 2011, the MDMR Shellfish Bureau concluded another oyster cultch plant as part of the continuing effort to rebuild and refurbish Mississippi oyster reefs. The project, which started August

2011, was completed in September 2011. The two types of materials deployed during the cultch plant project included 30,000 cubic yards of oyster shell and 34,681 cubic yards of limestone which was planted on 1,043 acres in the western sound. The oyster reefs that were replenished include: St. Joe's Reef, Pass Marianne Reef, Telegraph Reef,

Henderson Point Reef and the Pass Christian Tonging Reef. The MDMR anticipates the oysters will be three inches long in 18 to 24 months. This project was funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Emergency Disaster Recovery Programs I and II.



Waveland Weather Station

The MDMR is currently operating a Meteorological Monitoring Station for the observation of current weather patterns and events affecting the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Waveland Weather Station utilizes various types of sensors and instruments to record meteorological data. Not only will the MDMR have the ability to monitor real-time weather conditions, but the MDMR Shellfish Bureau will use the site as a rainfall gauge to follow the current Oyster Growing Area Management Plan. The rainfall gauge will allow managers to open and close the harvesting areas based on accurate and readily available data.

Figure 3: The MDMR Waveland Weather Station

Proposal for Erosion Control on East Deer Island

MDMR Shellfish staff are currently working on a proposal for a grant by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and The Nature Conservancy. The grant is geared towards a community-based habitat restoration proposal. If funded, the money will be used to plant vegetation along the shoreline and on the five-acre sand dune on the east end of Deer

Island. In addition, a 1,250-foot oyster shell berm will be created to reduce erosion and form an oyster reef. Volunteers from the Mississippi Extension Service and the Mississippi Habitat Stewards Program will be utilized for this project.

Figure 4 & 5: East Deer Island shoreline



Fall Cultivation

During the month of August 2011, MDMR crew members aboard the Conservationist cultivated the Pass Christian tonging reef for a two-week period. This was done with two oversized bagless dredges. The dredges were dragged on either side of the boat for about one hour at a time, then retrieved to be cleaned and redeployed. The purpose of this cultivation was to break up clusters of oysters and to remove biofouling material such as hooked mussels and barnacles. This process also aids in cleaning oyster shell for the settlement of oyster spat. Additional cultivation will occur this spring.



Figure 6: A bag-less over-sized dredge



Figure 7: The red dye released in Joe's Bayou, St. Louis Bay for the Hydrographic Dye Study.

St. Louis Bay Hydrographic Dye Study

In January, The MDMR Shellfish Bureau Staff teamed up with Scientists from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to conduct a hydrographic dye study around Mississippi's oyster growing areas located near Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis.

The purpose of the study was to find possible pollution sources that might affect the oyster growing areas. The study involved water sampling at locations along the beaches and in the bayous along Waveland, Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian. The teams also deployed hydrographic instruments along the St. Louis Bay to monitor for red dye that was released at high tide. The purpose of the red dye deployment was to follow the route that the dye would take during the falling tide.

The FDA will produce a report with dispersion maps from the study. Information from the January dye study will be used to determine any potential impacts on nearby shellfish waters.

Other Developments

■ As a result of the Bonnet Carre' Spillway opening, a request has been submitted to the Department of Commerce, asking that a Fisheries Failure be declared for Mississippi's oyster fishery, along with the blue crab and inshore shrimp fishery.

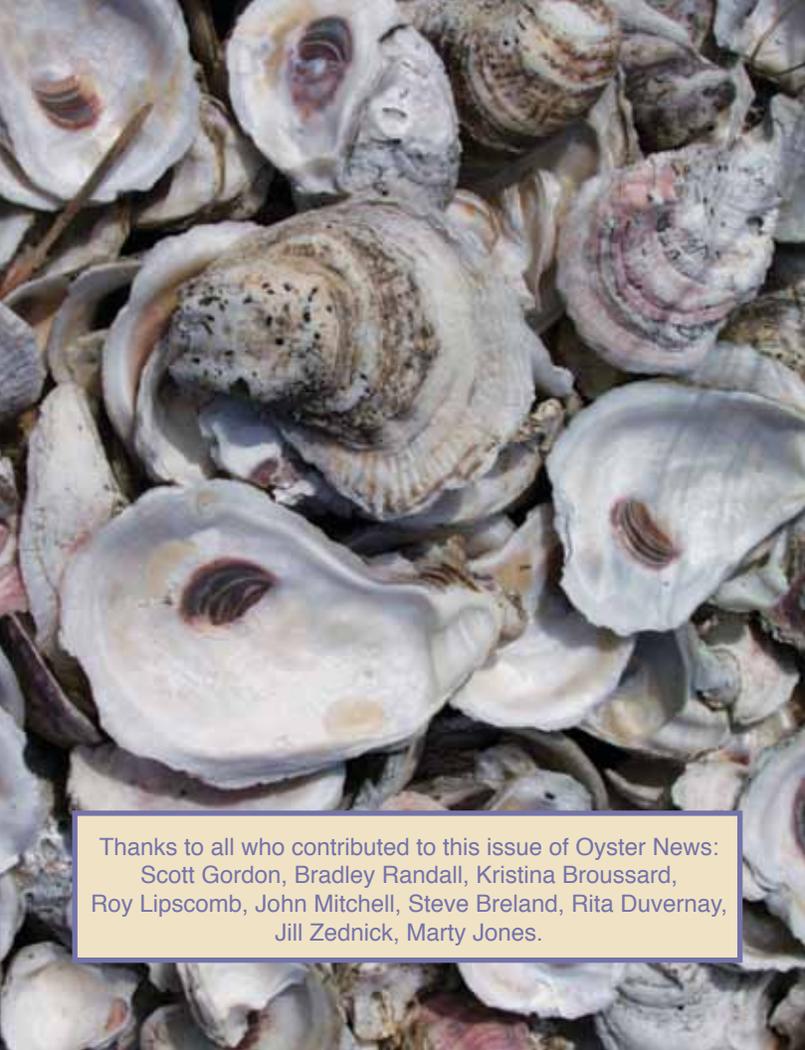
■ Two Natural Resource Damage Assessment early restoration project proposals are currently being prepared, requesting funding for:

an oyster relay program and for an oyster cultivation program. These proposals are in addition to the \$11 million oyster cultch plant project submitted as a phase I project and are currently awaiting final approval.

■ The MDMR Shellfish Bureau continues to conduct phytoplankton sampling twice per month at two locations on the northernmost point of the Pass Christian Oyster Reef

and the southernmost perimeter of this reef. Sample analysis is conducted in the Marine Fisheries laboratory. Qualitative analysis is recorded. In the event of a bloom, quantitative analysis will be conducted to determine possible toxicity levels.





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Scott Gordon, Bradley Randall, Kristina Broussard,
Roy Lipscomb, John Mitchell, Steve Breland, Rita Duvernay,
Jill Zednick, Marty Jones.

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

1-800-374-3449 or 228-374-5000
Oyster Hotline 228-374-5167
dmr.ms.gov

State of Mississippi
Phil Bryant, Governor

Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources

Vernon Asper, Ph.D., Chairman
Nonprofit Environmental Organization, Hancock County

Jimmy Taylor, Vice Chairman
Charter Boat Operator, Harrison County

Steve Bosarge
Commercial Fisherman, Jackson County

Shelby Drummond
Recreational Sports Fisherman, Jackson County

Richard Gollott
Commercial Seafood Processor, Harrison County

William W. Walker, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Dale Diaz
Marine Fisheries, Office Director

Scott Gordon
Shellfish Bureau Director

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Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

