

# NEWS RELEASE

MS Dept. of Marine Resources  
1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi 39530



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## ***MDMR begins bag dredge exchange program***

BILOXI, Miss. – Mississippi oyster fishermen who qualify can participate in a bag dredge exchange program through the state Department of Marine Resources.

In 2017, the Commission on Marine Resources banned the use of basket dredges because of the damage this dredge can do to reefs. This program will allow fishermen who qualify to exchange a basket dredge for a bag dredge at no cost.

To qualify, applicants must be a Mississippi resident and possess a current commercial Oyster Dredge License. They also had to have a valid Mississippi Resident Commercial Oyster License (Type 7) during the 2011-2012 license year. A license year runs from April 1 through March 31.

Applicants also must have had a valid license in one of the following years: 2007-2008, 2008-2009 or 2009-2010.

This program is part of restoration activities begun after the opening of the Bonnet Carre' Spillway in 2011. The opening of the Spillway forced large amounts of fresh water onto oyster reefs in Mississippi, killing up to 90 percent of the oysters on the western reefs.

"The agency has begun several fisheries restoration activities to help mitigate the impacts of the Bonnet Carre' Spillway opening," said Joe Jewell, director of Marine Fisheries for MDMR. "These programs, including the dredge exchange, will help us to restore and enhance habitat and monitor activities and recovery efforts."

Qualified participants who want to exchange their basket dredge for a bag dredge should bring their current license, a valid form of identification and the basket dredge to the MDMR office at 1141 Bayview Ave. in Biloxi.

Staff will inspect basket dredges between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. No appointment is necessary. After the inspection, the applicant will surrender the basket dredge and receive a certificate for a new bag dredge.

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Certificates can be redeemed at Bailus Danns Welding and Iron Works LLC located at 4401 Arceneaux Road in D'Iberville.

The bag dredges will be constructed after the company receives the certificate given to the applicant by MDMR.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at [dmr.ms.gov](http://dmr.ms.gov).

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