**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES**
**OYSTER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

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**Brief Overview:**

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resource’s Shellfish Bureau developed the Oyster Stewardship Program to better inform and to promote the active involvement of oyster industry members including oyster tongers, dredgers, dealers, and processors. The goal is to encourage harvest practices and other techniques that can be used to assist managers in the judicious utilization of oyster resources of the state. Ideally, the Stewardship program will have harvesters and industry representatives directly involved throughout the development and implementation processes. This will be accomplished by way of meetings, surveys and individual contacts. Innovative methods of improving the resource potential will be investigated and implemented where feasible.

**Oyster Stewardship Meetings To-Date**

- **October 15, 2008** - 6:00pm - Dealers only meeting
  - Location: MDMR Bolton Building Room 205, Biloxi, MS
  - Topics discussed - Description: Problems with tags and marking areas, how to get more dealers to come to our stewardship meetings, listing topics that the dealers felt were problems with the program, the dealers were asked to list solutions for the problems previously discussed.
  - Attendance: 12 Total

- **October 21, 2008** - 5:00pm - Dredgers and Tongers meeting
  - Location: Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, MS
  - Topics discussed - Purpose and Goal of Seminar by Dale Diaz, Office Director, MDMR, Office of Marine Fisheries, Presentation by Walter Keithly, Ph.D. - Department of Agricultural Economics, Louisiana State University, Presentation by Patrick Banks - Biologist Program Manager, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Marine Fisheries Division, Presentation by Lance Robinson - Regional Director, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Coastal Fisheries, Dickinson Marine Laboratory, Question and Answer Session on Shellfish Limited Entry
  - Attendance: 79 Total

- **January 12, 2009** - 6:00pm - Dealers only meeting
  - Location: MDMR Bolton Building Room 205, Biloxi, MS
  - Topics discussed - Presentation from Robert Bicks with CoCoRahs (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Networks), 2008-2009 Mississippi Oyster Season, Review and update problems and solutions for the oyster industry by identifying and prioritizing problems and solutions.
  - Attendance: 71 Total

- **January 13, 2009** - 5:00pm - Dredgers and Tongers meeting
  - Location: West Harrison County Civic Center, Long Beach, MS
  - Topics discussed - General discussion on the oyster season, proposed changes to Title 22 Parts 1 and 17, a review of oyster restoration efforts, future plans for the oyster industry and scheduling of the proposed “Day on the Sound.”
  - Attendance: 79 Total

- **February 11, 2009** - 5:00pm - Sanitation meeting for the entire industry
  - Location: University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Campus, Advanced Education Building, Long Beach, MS
  - Topics discussed - Young Loveall, presenting Dr. Gordon on the recent recall of oyster due to Norovirus outbreak in Tennessee.
  - Attendance: 169 Total

- **August 27, 2009** - 5:00pm - All Industry meeting
  - Location: West Harrison County Civic Center, Long Beach, MS
  - Topics discussed - The 2009-10 oyster season, proposed changes to Title 22 Parts 1 and 17, a review of oyster restoration efforts, future plans for the oyster industry and scheduling of the proposed “Day on the Sound.”
  - Giveaways - Zip folder, T-shirt, First aid kit, sharpening stone, laminated cards w/ list of important phone numbers.
  - Attendance: 186 Total

- **September 1 & 2, 2009** - 8:00am - “A Day on the Sound” for all oyster industry members

**Marine Sanitation Disposal Give-Away - 2009**

The MDMR Shellfish Bureau distributed approximately 200 coupons for free marine sanitation devices (MSD) to licensed Mississippi oyster harvesters. The intent of the giveaway was to avoid possible Norovirus outbreaks by providing necessary equipment aboard vessels and by promoting proper sanitary procedures. Each licensed harvester was issued a coupon which could be used in exchange for the MSD at West Marine in Biloxi. The MSD distribution ended December 4, 2009, and was part of the Oyster Stewardship Program. Funding was provided by NOAA Fisheries through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program.

**NEWSLETTER - Rebuilding Mississippi’s Oyster Reefs - Fall 2009**

In July of 2009, the MDMR Shellfish Bureau developed the newsletter titled “Rebuilding Mississippi Oyster Reefs”. There were 611 newsletters sent by mail to all licensed oyster harvesters, dealers and processors. This newsletter was the second in a series of newsletters developed by the Shellfish bureau with the goal of informing the industry of important information that affects our oyster reefs. Articles included: the 2008-09 recap of oyster season, spring shell cultch plant, and new oyster refrigeration standards. The next newsletter will be sent out at the end of 2010.