





MISSISSIPPI

**OYSTER
STEWARDSHIP
TEAM**

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.



- ~Location - Pass Christian Harbor aboard the MDMR Conservationist, MS
- ~Goal - Visit various oyster reef locations and sample and evaluate their current conditions

- ~ Attendance - 109 Total
- ~ Location - University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Campus, Advanced Education Building, Long Beach, 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

- ~Location - MDMR Bolton Building in Room 205
- ~Goal – All oyster lease holders were invited to attend a meeting held by Scott Gordon and Bradley Randall. Bradley Randall gave a presentation on lease requirements by the state and FDA and also an overview of the new *Vibrio vulnificus* management plan effective May 1st 2010.

- ~Location - Pass Christian Harbor aboard the MDMR Conservationist, MS
- ~Goal - MDMR Shellfish Bureau staff took members of the oyster industry on a tour of the oyster reefs aboard the MDMR's vessel, The Conservationist. The Conservationist pulled a dredge to examine samples of oysters for observation of general abundance of marketable oysters and variability between the reefs. Oyster meat samples were also collected for the seafood safety sampling program.

~The newly created Mississippi Oyster Task Force met for the first time Nov. 24, 2009. The task force was formed to improve the oyster fisheries industry on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and will operate in an advisory capacity to the MDMR. Members of the task force are Leslie Hood, Pass Christian dredger; Harold Strong, Bayou Caddy dredger; George Stores, Tonger; Felix Rodrigue, recreational Tonger; Mike Cure, processor; DMR Office of Fisheries Director Dale Diaz and Shellfish Bureau Director Scott Gordon; DMR Marine Patrol Lt. Donnie Armes; and DMR legal staff, Joe Runnels and Sandy Chestnut. The main goals of the task force are to aid in the collection of pertinent oyster fishery data, provide for an effective management plan, encourage conservation of the resource and its habitat, identify industry issues, and facilitate workable solutions and improve overall value of the oyster.

- ~Attendance - 186 Total
- ~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

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.



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.

