



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2011-2012 Limited Mississippi Oyster Season to Open Oct. 24 to Tonging Only

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) has announced that the 2011-2012 limited Mississippi oyster season is scheduled to open **to tonging only at legal sunrise Monday, Oct. 24, 2011**, only in Areas II “A”, “B” and “C” Conditionally Approved waters, provided the area meets all criteria for opening as specified in the area management plan:

- **Area II “A” Conditionally Approved Waters**, which includes northern portions of the Pass Christian and Henderson Point reefs and Hornet’s Reef.
- **Area II “B” Conditionally Approved Waters**, which includes St. Stanislaus and Waveland reefs.
- **Area II “C” Conditionally Approved Waters**, and its subdivisions of II “E” (including Square Handkerchief Reef and southern portions of Henderson Point Reef), II “F” (including southern portions of the Pass Christian Reef) and II “G” (including northern portions of the Pass Marianne and Telegraph reefs).

The MDMR is advising oyster harvesters that the areas being opened experienced significant losses this spring and summer. Harvesters should expect a limited season, with lower than average catch rates. The areas will be monitored closely by the MDMR.

The 2011 oyster relay plant sites located within these areas will remain closed to the harvest of oysters. These sites may be opened to harvest at a later date after sampling by the MDMR indicates harvest would be appropriate.

For the month of Oct., the checkout time will be 3 p.m. with the designated checkout station on the west side of Pass Christian Harbor. There will be an initial daily sack limit of 10 per licensed commercial oyster tonging vessel. All commercial oysters landed in Mississippi shall be placed under mechanical refrigeration within 2 hours of their checkout time, and cooled to a temperature of 55° F or below within 8 hours after being placed under mechanical refrigeration.

Beginning Nov. 1, 2011, the checkout time will be 4 p.m. all commercial oysters shall be placed under mechanical refrigeration within 4 hours of their checkout time, and cooled to a temperature of 55° F or below within 8 hours after being placed under mechanical refrigeration.

Certified shellfish dealers, processors and shippers are required to have in place and follow Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) procedures and records documenting these time/temperature requirements. The MDMR's executive director is authorized to change these time/temperature requirements as necessary.

Harvesters in possession of a valid 2011–2012 commercial oyster dredging vessel license shall be permitted to purchase a 2011–2012 commercial oyster tonging vessel license for any vessel owned by the current licensee.

For more information on the open and closed areas, call the DMR's 24-hour Oyster Information Hot Line at (228) 374-5167 or (800) 385-5902.

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 MDMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

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