



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Department of Marine Resources Rebuilds and Restores Oyster Reefs

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) is concluding an oyster cultch plant, which is a process that is part of a continuing effort by the MDMR Shellfish Bureau to rebuild and refurbish Mississippi oyster reefs. The project began in August 2011 and will be finished by Sept. 30, 2011, which is an ideal time for oyster larvae to attach to cultch material and grow.

In this cultch plant, two types of materials are being used to rebuild 1,043 acres. One is 30,000 cubic yards of crushed oyster shell from Bayou La Batre, Ala., shipped on barges that are 123 feet long and 30 feet wide. The other is 34,681 cubic yards of limestone material traveling down the Mississippi River, roughly 430 miles, to the Mississippi Gulf Coast on hopper barges, which are 195 feet long and 35 feet wide.

Once the material arrives, high pressure hoses are used to disperse the oyster shell and limestone material off the barges onto the reefs. The oyster reefs being replenished are St. Joe's Reef, Pass Marianne Reef, Telegraph Reef, Henderson Point Reef and Pass Christian Tonging Reef.

Oyster larvae swim around in the water for approximately three weeks, then descend to the bottom of the sound and permanently attach themselves to the oyster shell and limestone material where they will grow. Within 18 to 24 months the oysters will be ready to harvest. So get your lemons and horseradish ready!

The project is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Emergency Disaster Recovery Programs I and II.

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 dmr.ms.gov.

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Photo: Courtesy of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

Caption: Mississippi oyster reefs are being replenished by dispersing oyster shell and limestone material off the barges onto the reefs.

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