

NEWS RELEASE

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



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MDMR issues notice of cancellation of molluscan shellfish leases request for proposals

BILOXI, Miss. – Following receipt of public comments, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) conducted an evaluation of the Molluscan Shellfish Leases Request for Proposals (RFP). This evaluation revealed several significant deficiencies in the RFP process, specifically with respect to the grading criteria. In addition, the evaluation revealed discrepancies in adherence to the MDMR's Title 22 Part 1 - Rules and Regulations for Molluscan Shellfish Related Activities. As a result of these review findings, the MDMR reached the conclusion that the best utilization of state resources was not accomplished under the current system and its administration to date.

In response to the findings, the MDMR conducted a thorough review and evaluation of the underlying statute and its rules and regulations. The goal of the review was to identify areas that could improve the lease program to ensure the best program for the lease participants and the best utilization of the state's resources.

As a result of the review, the MDMR has requested the Legislature to make statutory changes to several areas that will allow for better adherence to the best utilization of the state's resources, while creating the best program for the lease participants. In addition, the MDMR will update its rules and regulations to accomplish the same goal.

No leases have been awarded pursuant to the Molluscan Shellfish Leases Request for Proposals. Accordingly, the MDMR is canceling the Molluscan Shellfish Leases Request for Proposals that was previously issued on July 21, 2023, and will cancel/rescind all proposals and associated applications that were previously submitted and considered by the agency.

Following the above-described statutory and regulatory changes, the MDMR will provide another opportunity for individuals to apply for on bottom leases. The particulars of the application process will be announced at that time.

Anyone who is interested in obtaining an on-bottom oyster lease is encouraged to apply and all prior applicants are encouraged to reapply upon announcement of the

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new application procedures. Those individuals that paid an application fee under the previously issued and cancelled process may either request a refund or choose to have their payment credited to their application fees when the new program is announced. Although there is no current timeline, we will contact all those who previously applied when the next application period opens. It will also be announced to the public via press release.

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.

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