



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

MOLLUSCAN SHELLFISH GROWING WATERS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

The Mississippi molluscan shellfish growing waters located in the MS Sound are divided into 8 areas beginning in the west with Area 1 and ending in the east with Area 8. Mississippi currently uses four classifications as defined by the NSSP Model Ordinance including: approved, conditionally approved, restricted, and prohibited. They are defined as follows:

- **Approved** – Molluscan shellfish growing waters classification used to identify a growing area where harvest of shellfish for direct marketing is allowed
- **Conditionally Approved** – Molluscan shellfish growing waters classification that meets the criteria for approved classification except under certain environmental conditions such as rainfall and river stage
- **Restricted** – Molluscan shellfish growing waters classification used to identify a growing area where harvesting shall be by special license and the shellstock, flowing harvest, is subject to a suitable and effective treatment process through relaying or depuration
- **Prohibited** – Molluscan shellfish growing waters classification where the harvest of shellstock for any purpose is not permitted, except depletion, gathering of seed or nursery culture for aquaculture

Growing waters are given a classification based on annual shoreline surveys of potential and actual pollution sources and monthly water quality testing. These assessments ensure that the water meets the required standards for safe oyster consumption and help safeguard public safety. Illnesses associated with the consumption of raw or undercooked oysters stem primarily from elevated levels of bacteria from human and animal waste, called fecal coliforms, that are concentrated within oysters during the filter-feeding process.

Closing Criteria

As stated above, conditionally approved growing waters are open for direct shellfish marketing except under certain environmental conditions. This means the area has established rainfall and river stage thresholds that demonstrate a higher risk of fecal coliforms being present. When these thresholds are exceeded, the area will close to harvest until the water quality is deemed safe.

Listed below are the closing criteria for all conditionally approved growing waters in Mississippi.

Area I “B” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River is equal to or exceeds 10 feet as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or, when one (1) or more inches of rainfall occur in any 24 consecutive hours as measured at the Hancock County Utility Authority.

Area II “A” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River is equal to or exceeds 10 feet as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or, when one (1) or more inches of rainfall occur in any 24 consecutive hours as measured at the Hancock County Utility Authority.

Area II “B” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River is equal to or exceeds 10 feet as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or, when half (1/2) or more inches of rainfall occur in any 24 consecutive hours as measured at the Hancock County Utility Authority.

Area II “E”, “F”, “G” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River is equal to or exceeds 11 feet as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or, when two (2) or more inches of rainfall occur in any 24 consecutive hours as measured at the Hancock County Utility Authority.

Area V “A” Conditionally Approved Waters

- When half (1/2) an inch or more inches of rainfall occur in any 24 consecutive hours as measured at the Keesler Air Force Base gauge.

Opening/Re-opening Criteria

Areas may be “opened” to the start of the season and/or may be “re-opened”, when the following area specific criteria are met:

Area I “B”, Area II “A”, or Area II “B” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River has receded to less than 10 feet or has crested as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or the microbiological analysis of seawater samples indicate that the seawater is again acceptable, and the shellfish have gone through sufficient time interval to permit natural biological cleansing.

Area II “E”, “F”, “G” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The Pearl River has receded to less than 11 feet or has crested as measured at the Pearl River, Louisiana gauge, and/or the microbiological analysis of seawater samples indicate that the seawater is again acceptable, and the shellfish have gone through sufficient time interval to permit natural biological cleansing.

Area V “A” Conditionally Approved Waters

- The microbiological analysis of seawater samples indicates that the seawater is again acceptable, and the shellfish have gone through a sufficient time interval to permit natural biological cleansing.