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Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources

September 16, 2025



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Employment, Contracts and Procurement Updates September 16, 2025

Employment Updates

New Hires:

- MaCayla Taylor Dixon – Started on September 1, 2025 – Environmental/Natural Resources Technician II – Office of Marine Fisheries

Promotion:

- Lindsey Hoyer – Promoted from a contractor on September 1, 2025 – Environmental/Natural Resources Specialist, II – Office of Marine Fisheries



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Actions Update for the September 16, 2025 Commission Meeting

Discussed at the August 2025 meeting:

The Commission recommended and the Director approved:

- Motion to approve the permit and requested variance to Title 22, Part 23 Mississippi Coastal Program for Jackson County's drainage improvement project between Canty Street and Communny Avenue for the installation of a box culvert and rip rap which will fill:
 - 185 square feet of coastal wetlands,
 - 10 square feet of vegetated waterbottoms and
 - 175 square feet of unvegetated waterbottoms.

- Motion to approve the following State Saltwater Finfish Record:

Conventional Tackle:

Conger Eel (*Conger oceanicus*) – 30 lbs. 2.24 oz.
– Brandon Hogue



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Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources

September 16, 2025

Wetlands 101 Workshop



Microbiology at North Woolmarket Middle School



Biloxi Seafood Festival





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2025-2026 Oyster Season Update

Jason Rider
Shellfish Bureau Director

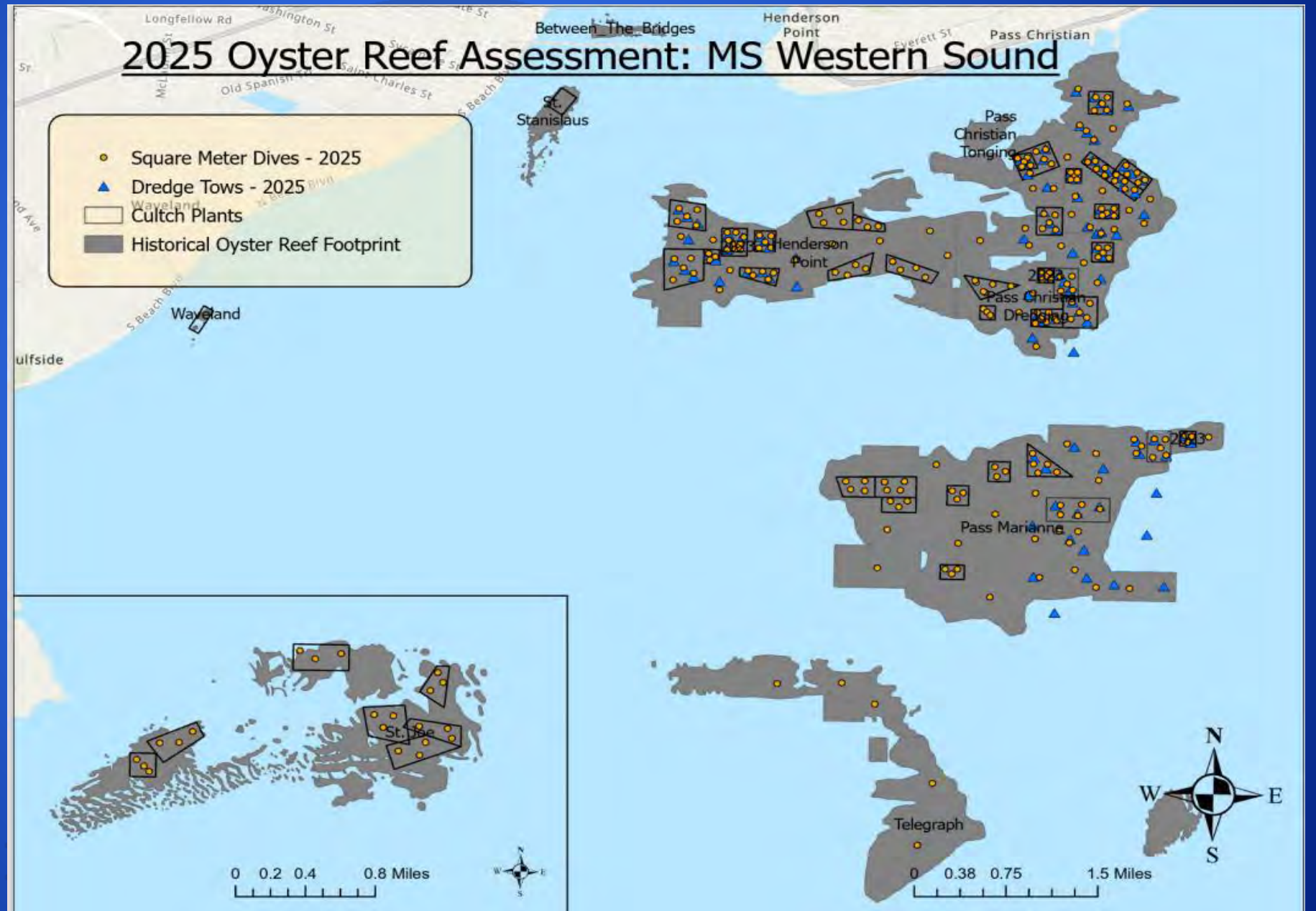
2024-2025 OYSTER SEASON RECAP

- Opened Nov 13, 2024 – Closed Apr 26, 2025
- Approximately 8,900 sacks harvested (avg. 136/day)
- Majority of harvest from Area 2F
- 156 licenses sold:
 - 5 recreational
 - 76 in-state dredge
 - 34 in-state tong
 - 36 out-of-state tong
 - 5 out-of-state dredge
- Approximately 80 active harvesters during season
 - Daily Average per day: 11.9 Dredger, 11 Tong
- Strong participation despite no open season since 2018



2025 WESTERN SOUND SMAMPLING EFFORTS

- Completed 133 one-min dredge tows
- Completed 303 square meter samples site with 606 total samples



WESTERN SOUND CULTCH PLANTING: 2017 - 2025

927 acres planted since 2017

Year	Acres Planted
2017	384
2018	188
2019	0
2020	10
2021	100
2022	62 (Remote Set)
2023	45 (Remote Set)
2024	138
2025	0

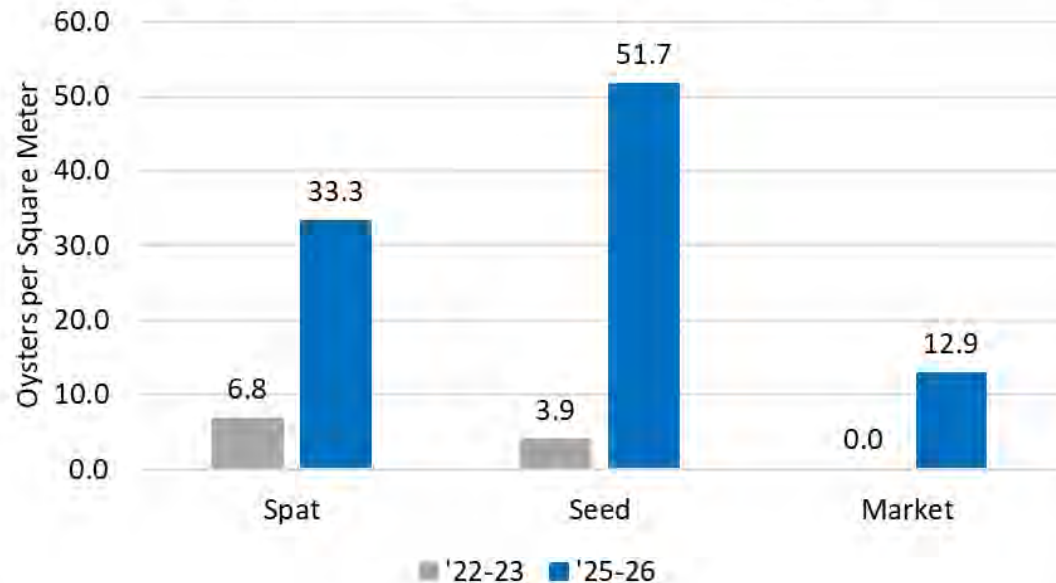


ST. JOE REEF

- Reef footprint: ~473 acres
- Cultch plants: 169 acres (36% reef coverage)
- 2022 sampling: No material found off cultch plants
- 2025 sampling: Focused on cultch plants only
- Dive samples: 30



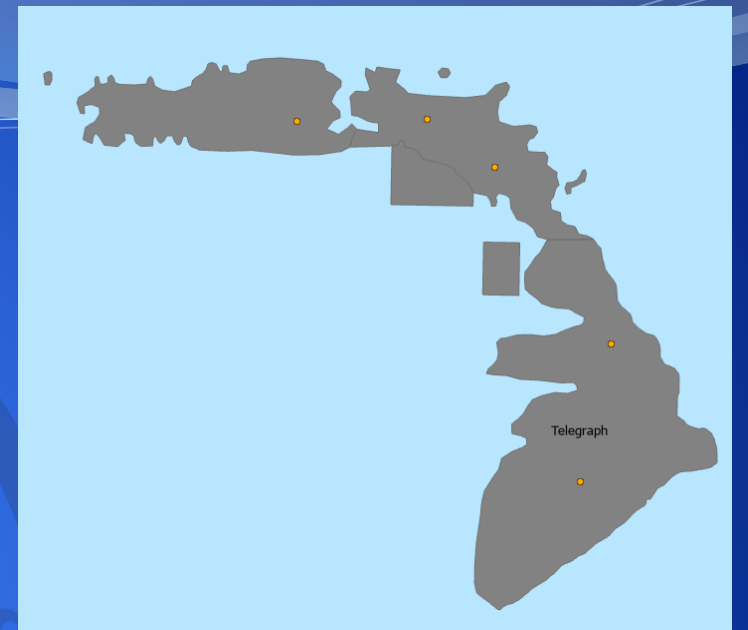
St Joe Cultch Plant Only Size Distribution



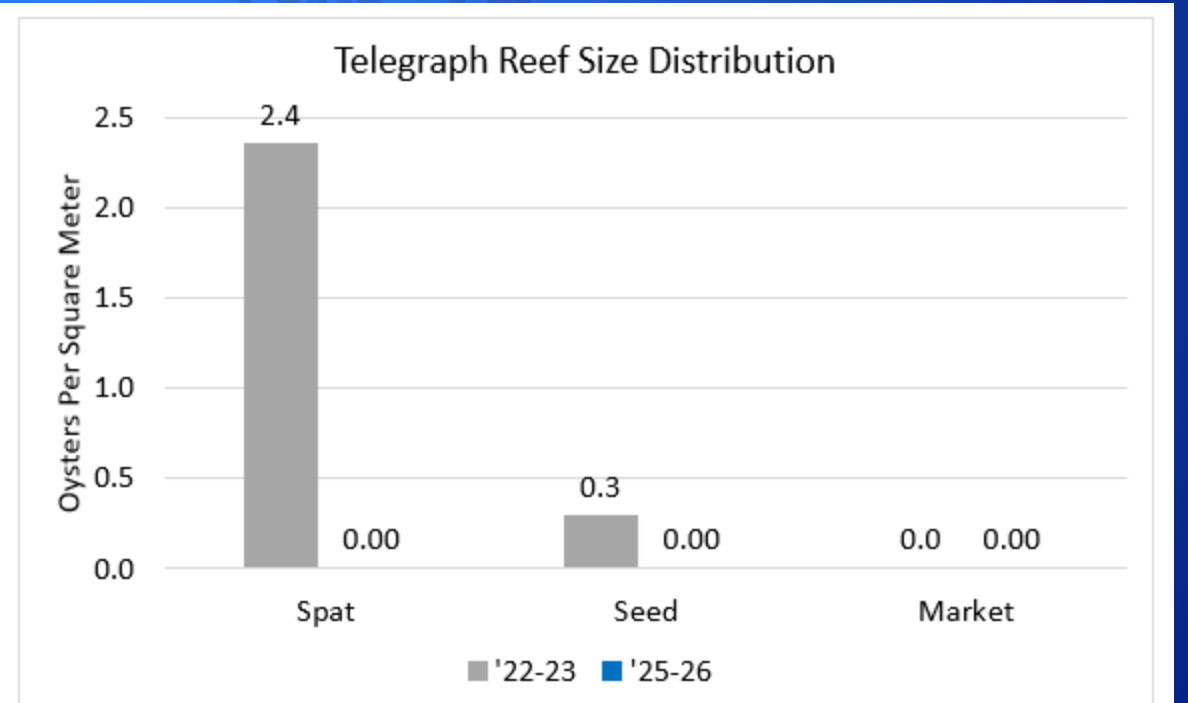
St. Joe					
YEAR	Spat Size 1-9mm	Spat size 10-24mm	Seed size 25-49mm	Seed size 50-74mm	Sack size ≥75mm
'14-15	82.3	21.8	22.7	4.9	2.1
'15-16	7.3	5.4	7.1	5	0.8
'16-17	0.4	2.1	6.2	6.1	4.2
'17-18	0.6	1.3	2.2	3.6	2.5
'18-19	1.4	0.4	0.7	1.3	3.1
'20-21	0.3	1.6	0.3	0	0
'21-22	0	0	0.3	0	0
'22-23	0.5	4	3	0.1	0
'25-26	21.4	32.9	21.4	28.5	12.8

TELEGRAPH REEF

- **Reef footprint:** ~897 acres
- **Cultch limited:** No oysters found in samples
- **Bottom type:** Soft mud with scattered shell hash
- **Cultch planting:** None since 2006
- **Dive samples:** 10

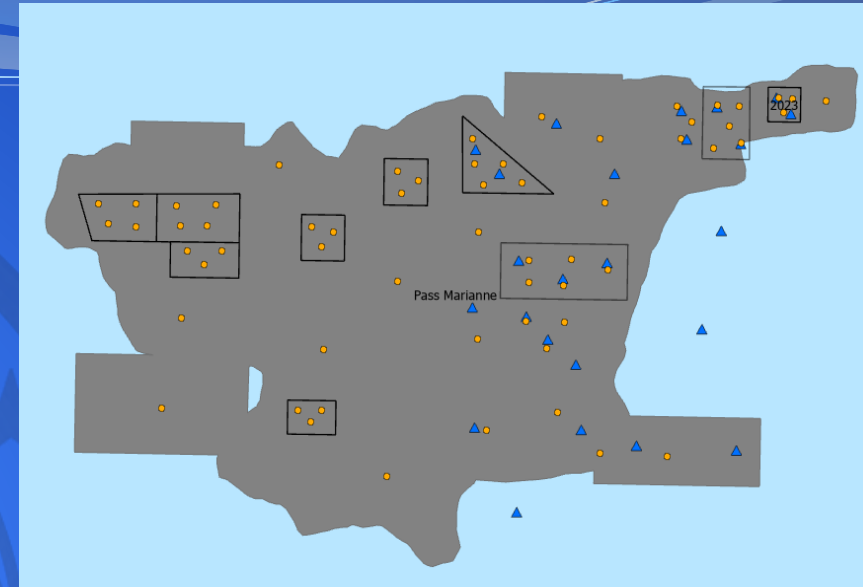


Telegraph Total Market Size Oysters			
'16-17	0	0	0
'17-18	0	0	0
'18-19	0	0	0
'20-21		0	0
'21-22	0	0	0
'22-23	0	0	0
'23-24	-	-	-
'24-25	-	-	-
'25-26	0	0	0

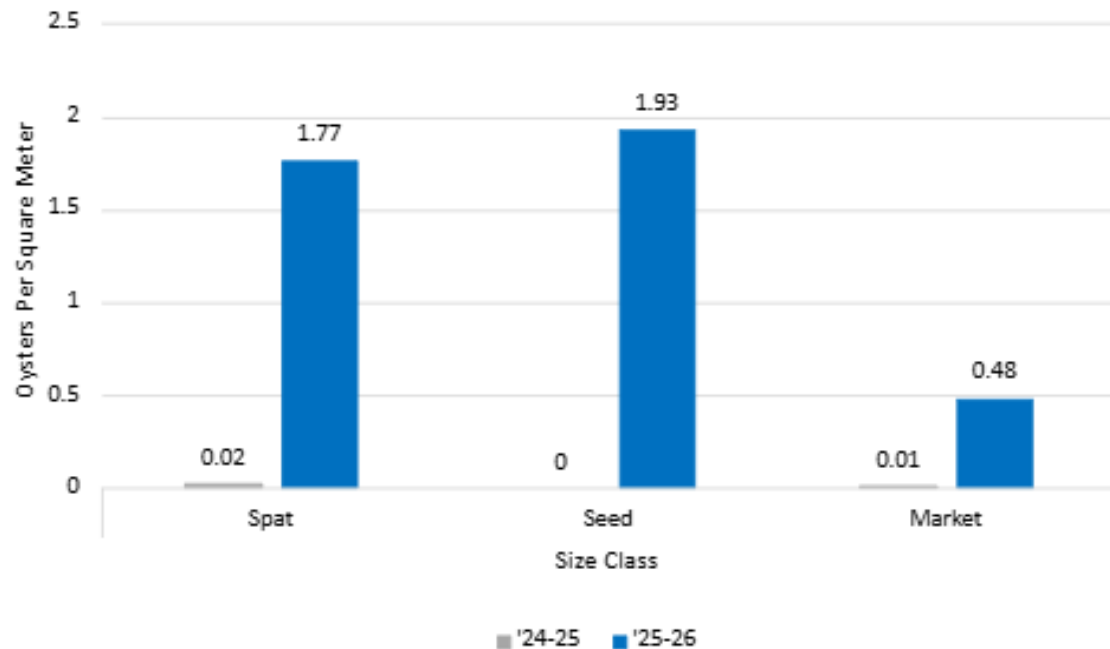


PASS MARIANNE REEF

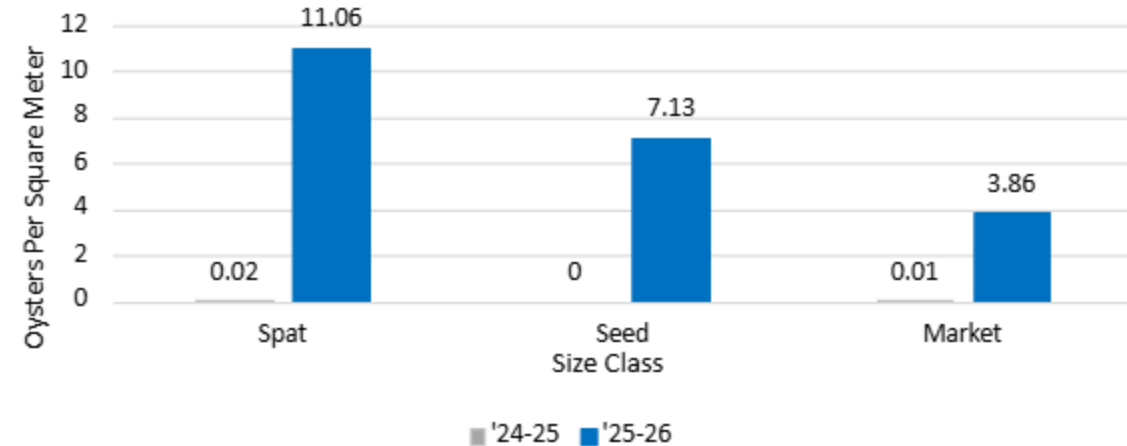
- **Footprint:** ~2,372 acres
- **Cultch dependency:** 100% of market-size oysters are on 280 acres of cultch plants
- **Recruitment:** Limited material for settlement
- **2024 July plants:** Strong seed abundance; more expected by 2026
- **Fresh spat:** Detected in August, low numbers early in spawning season
- **Dive samples:** 118



Pass Marianne Reef Size Distribution

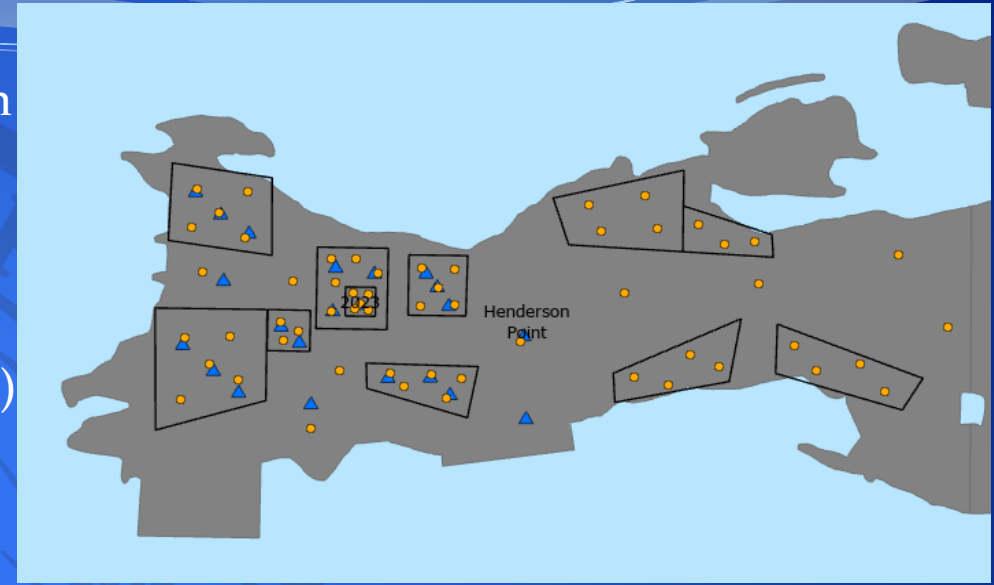


Pass Marianne State Owned Reef Cultch Plants Size Distribution



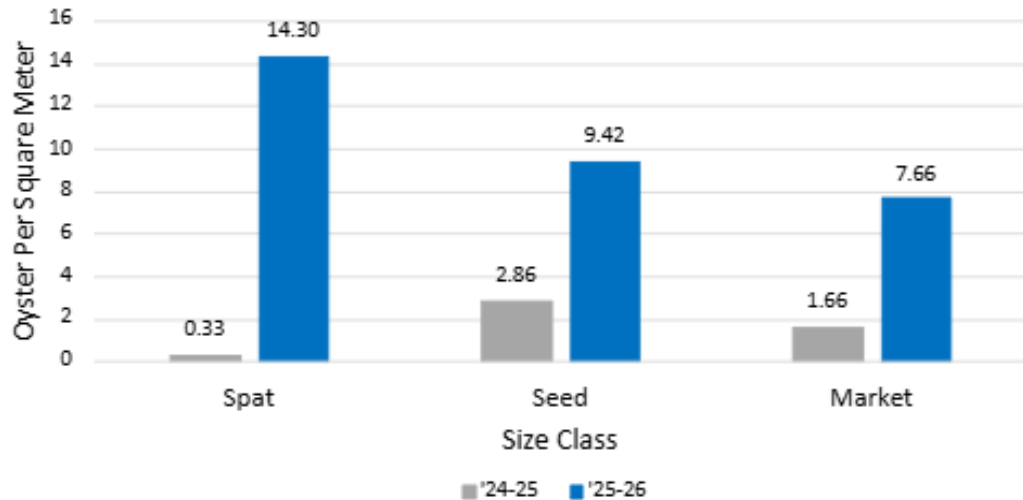
HENDERSON POINT REEF

- **Footprint:** ~1,300 acres
- **Cultch dependency:** 94% of market-size oyster on 326 acres of cultch plants
- **Cultch concentration:** 3 cultch plants = 45% of oysters on the reef
- **Growth potential:** Market-size increase expected from strong seed class
- **Recruitment:** Increase in August- September late spat set (Oct–Nov)
- **Dive Samples:** 95

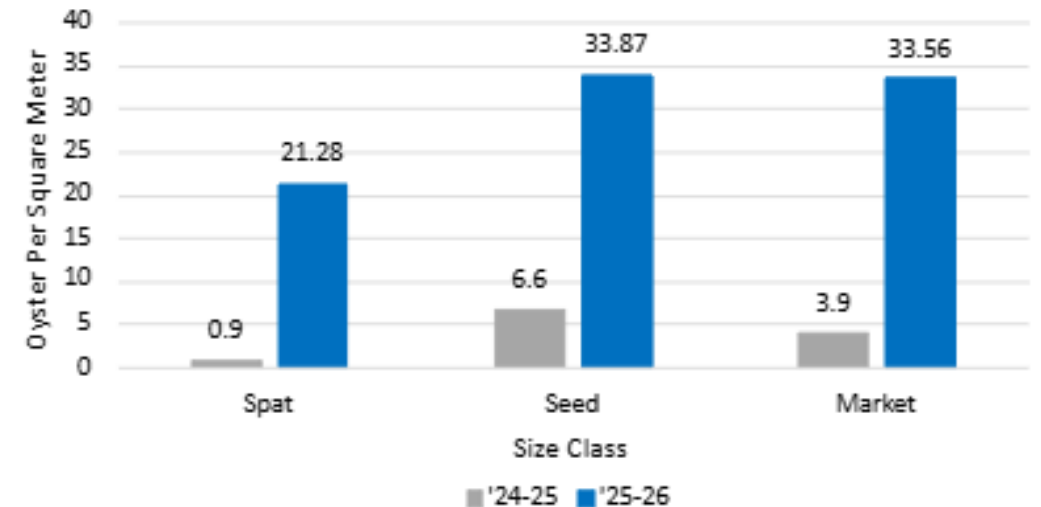


Oyster production remains heavily concentrated on a few cultch plants, but strong seed classes signal growth in 2025

Henderson Point Reef Size Distribution

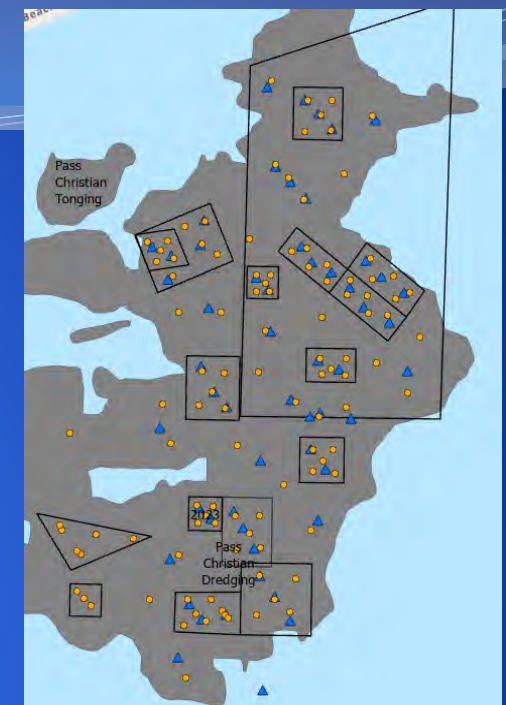


Henderson Point State Owned Reef Cultch Plant Size Distribution

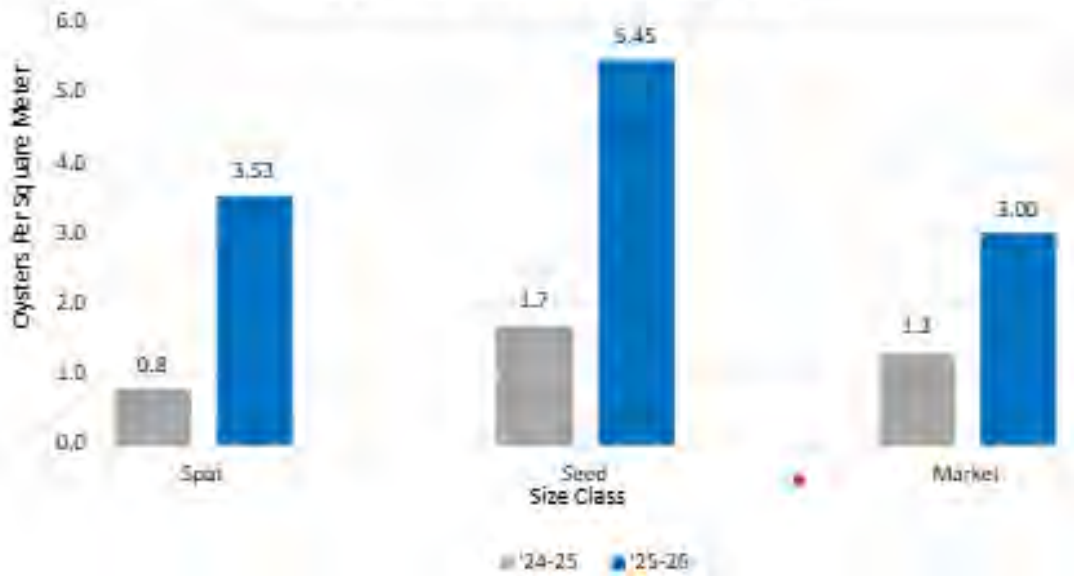


PASS CHRISTIAN REEF

- **Footprint:** ~1,819 acres
- **Cultch dependency:** 95% of market-size oysters found on 463 acres of cultch plants
- **Growth outlook:** Market-size increase expected in 2025 from current seed class
- **Oyster structure:** Healthy distribution from singles to 4+ clusters
- **Dive samples collected:** 198



Pass Christian Reef Size Distribution



Pass Christian State Owned Reef Cultch Plant Size Distribution



2025 MISSISSIPPI OYSTER STOCK ASSESSMENT

Major Western Sound Reef Complexes	2025 Est. Sack Total	2024 Est. Sack Total	2023 Est. Sack Total	2022 Est. Sack Total	2021 Est. Sack Total	2020 Est. Sack Total	2018 Est. Sack Total	2017 Est. Sack Total	2016 Est. Sack Total
Pass Christian	81,946	36,277	19,905	0	0	1,372	651	3,530	3,682
Pass Marianne	16,893	51	135	19,901	0	0	1,308	4,027	5,000
Henderson Point	146,543	13,733	525	0	0	0	2,064	2,117	3,487
Telegraph	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
St. Joe	29,451	-	-	-	204	0	21,229	17,111	20,292
TOTAL SACKS AVAILABLE	274,833	50,061*	20,565*	19,901	204	1,372	25,252	9,674	12,169

*Samples Only State Owned Reefs

30% Harvest	82,450
25% Harvest	68,708
20% Harvest	54,967

HARVEST DAYS AND TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS

Harvest Days in Each Month (excluding Sundays and State Holidays)						
October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
27	23	26	25	23	26	150
Days Open in 2024						
-	11	7	13	11	-	42

NSSP Time / Temperature Requirements – 2025-2026 Time Schedule					
Month	Maximum Time Unrefrigerated (hrs.)	Maximum Time to cool down (hrs.)	Month	Maximum Time Unrefrigerated (hrs.)	Maximum Time to cool down (hrs.)
May-25	2.5	2	Nov-25	18	10
Jun-25	2.5	2	Dec-25	18	10
Jul-25	2.5	2	Jan-26	24	10
Aug-25	2.5	2	Feb-26	18	10
Sep-25	4	2	Mar-26	18	10
Oct-25	5	2	Apr-26	7	2

PROPOSED DAILY HARVEST LIMITS (50 HARVESTERS)

Tonger cap (sacks/person)	15	15	15	20
Dredger cap (sacks/person)	20	25	30	30
Quota	82,000	82,000	82,000	82,000
Cumulative Harvest Days	96	82	71	66

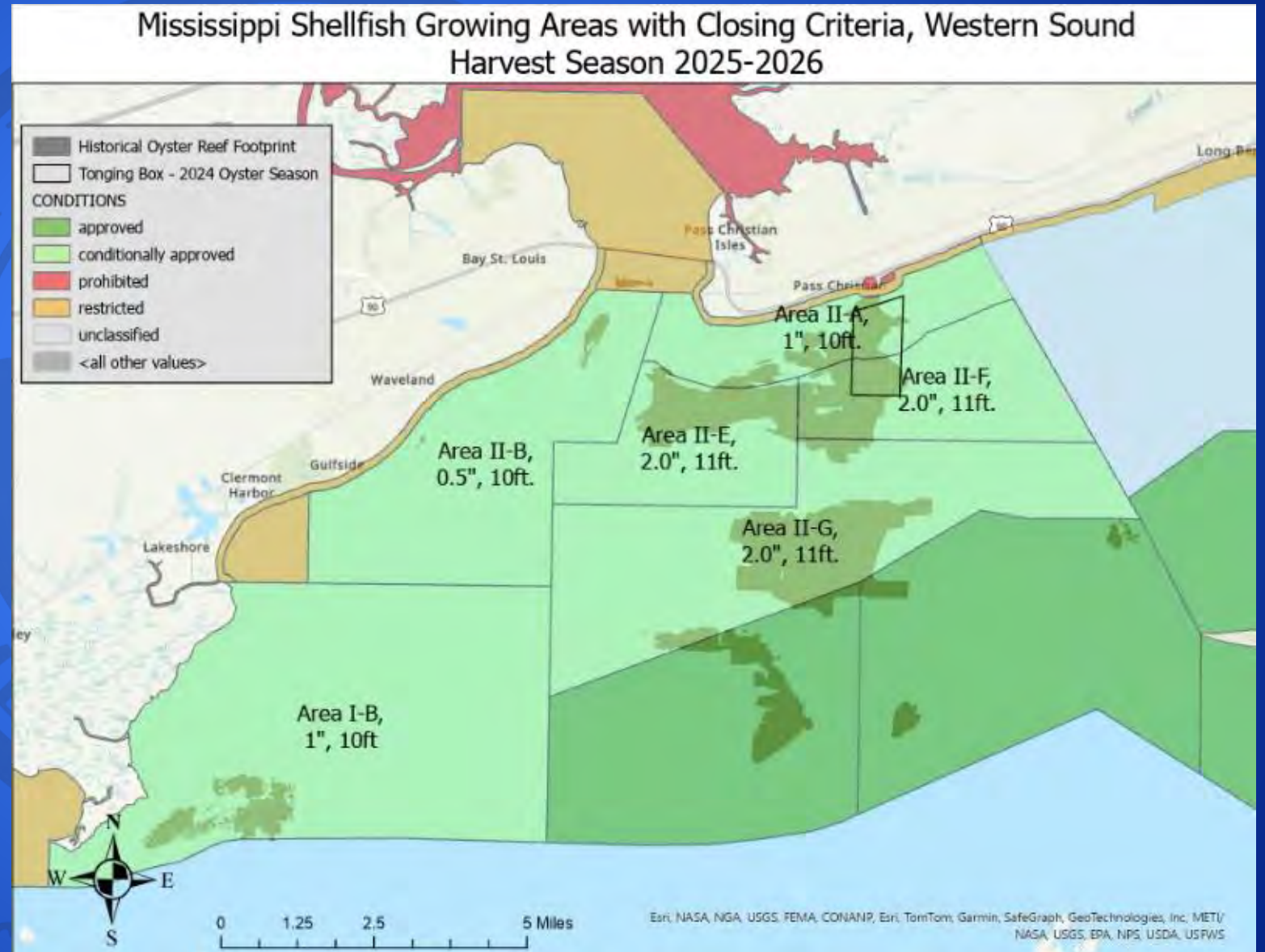
SAMPLING REQUIREMENTS DUE TO RAINFALL

Rainfall Closures

- If rainfall exceeds the threshold for a given area **before 4 p.m.**, the area closes **the same day by 4 p.m.**
- If rainfall exceeds the threshold for a given area **after 4 p.m.**, the area closes **by 4 p.m. the next day.**

Reopening Process :

- If rainfall totals exceed closing thresholds, MDMR Shellfish Bureau will begin sampling 2 days after the event ends.



ONLINE HARVESTER EDUCATION



Mississippi Oyster Harvester Training Video



Watch later

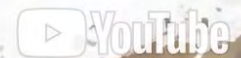


Share



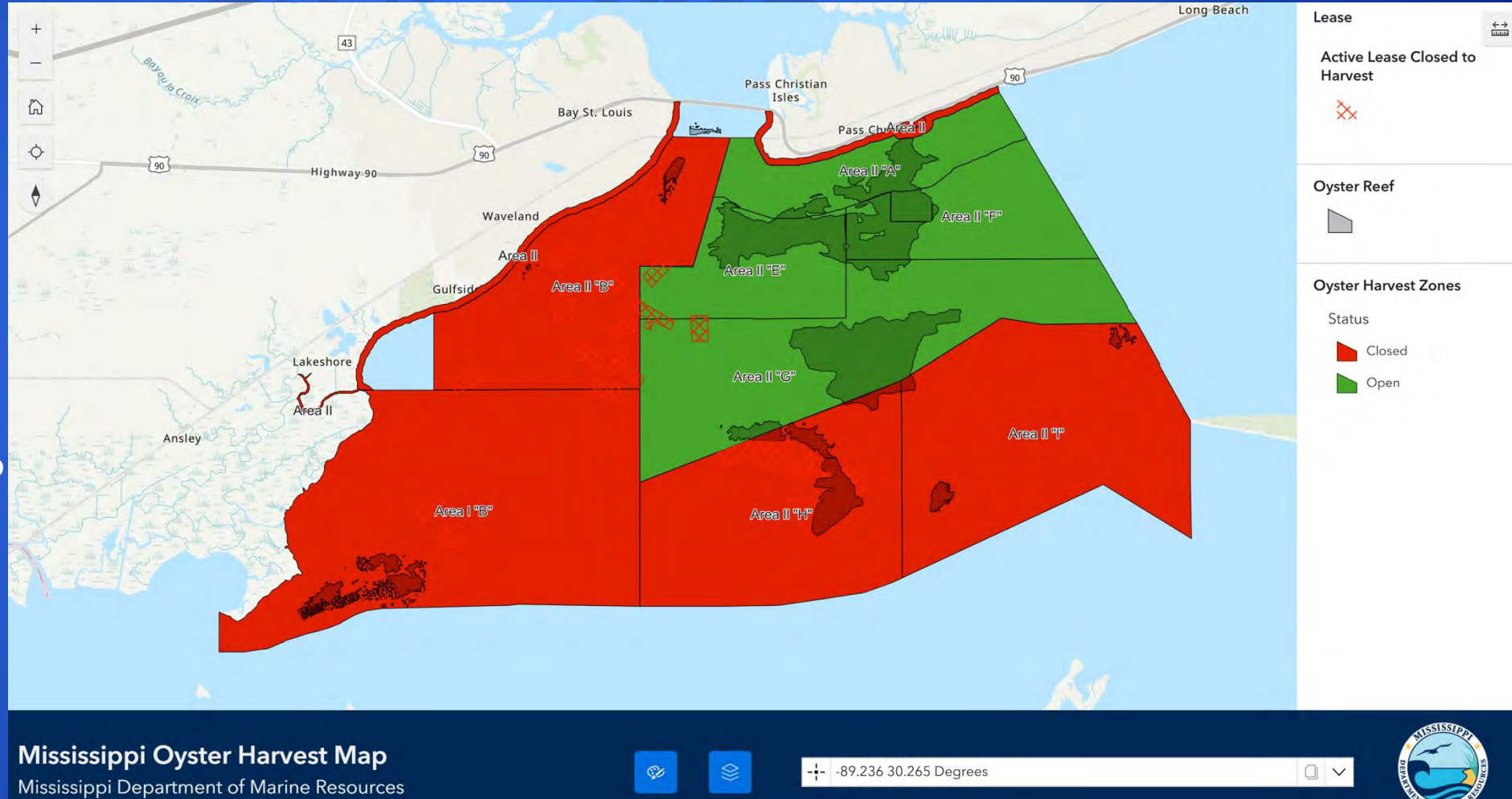
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Mississippi Oyster Harvesting EDUCATION & TRAINING



DIGITAL HARVEST MAP

- Available Online @ dmr.ms.gov/shellfish
- If additional assistance is needed please reach out to Shellfish Bureau at oyster@dmr.ms.gov or 228.374.5000



MDMR CONTACT INFORMATION

- Oyster Hotline
 - For oyster harvest updates and check station info. Call before you go.
 - The oyster hotline will be updated no later than 4PM each day for the next harvest day
- Text Messaging
 - Sign up and receive all harvest information directly to your phone

INFORMATION CONTACT

PHONE NUMBER

Shellfish Bureau

(228) 374-5000 or oyster@dmr.ms.gov

Marine Patrol Dispatch

(228) 523-4134

Oyster Information Hotline

(228) 374-5167 or 1-800-385-5902

Pass Christian Check Station –
104 South Market Street, Pass Christian, MS 39571

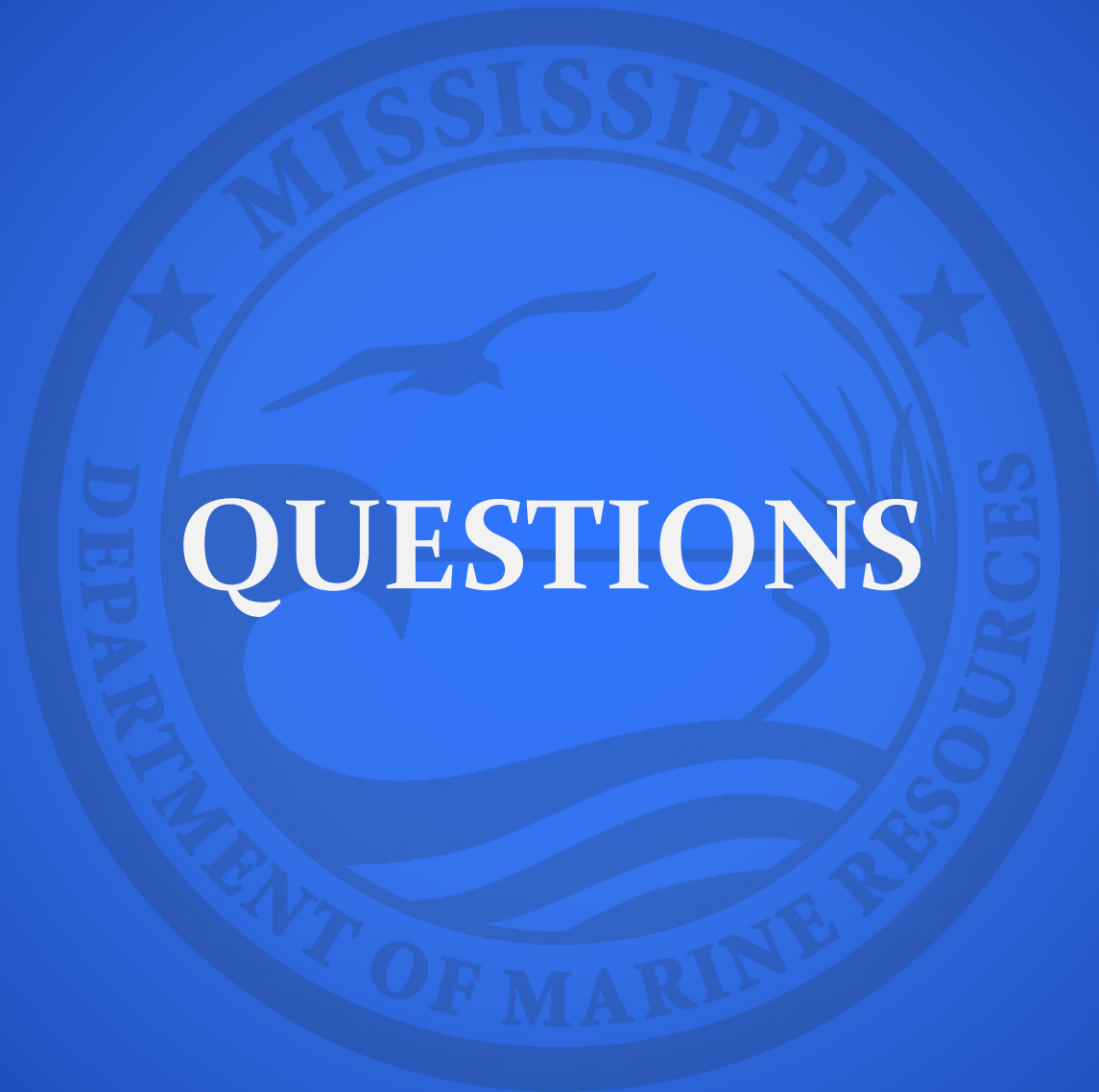
(228) 293-4653

Bayou Caddy Check Station –
5200 Shipyard Road, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

(228) 293-4654

Staff Recommendation

- Staff recommends to the Executive Director that the agency open Area II “A”, Area I “B”, Area II “B”, Area II “E”, Area II “F”, Area II “G”, Area II “H” and Area II “I” in the Western MS Sound for oyster season. The season will open on October 13th. The daily sack limit will be set at 15 sacks per day/per vessel for tongers and 20 sacks per day/per vessel for dredgers.
- All approved methods of harvesting, along with designated harvest areas, will be detailed in the official opening order issued by the MDMR.



QUESTIONS

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MS CREEL: OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Finfish Staff

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

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BACKGROUND: BASIS FOR CREEL SURVEYS

Data Collection and Estimates

- Difficult to develop and maintain accurate mandatory catch reporting for the entire fleet
 - Large population size: continually increasing saltwater angler population
 - Over 100 thousand anglers in Mississippi
 - Fluctuations in participation rates, angler behavior, and targeted catches
- Solution for large populations = Survey-based methods
 - Interview/interact with a small, representative portion of the population
 - Scale the observations to the entire fleet
 - Considerations made in calculating effort vs. catch
 - Probability of interaction vs representativeness
- Unique challenges for fishery-based surveys
 - Understanding the scope and make-up of the universe (License Universe)
 - Maximizing efficiency and encounters while minimizing bias (Site Pressure and Probability-based sampling)
 - Knowing the fishery

$$\text{Dockside Catch} \times \text{Fishing Effort} = \text{Estimated Harvest}$$



BACKGROUND: MRIP & MS CREEL

MRIP

Marine Recreational Information Program

- Federal survey that began in the 1980s
 - Multiple phases/revisions (MRFSS, APAIS, CHTS, FES)
- Currently the main currency used in federal and most state assessments of various species
 - States typically administer the dockside portion (APAIS)
 - Office of Science and Technology conducts the effort portion (FES & FHS)

MS Creel

Mississippi-specific survey program

- Adapted methodology from the successful LA Creel program
- Effort sampling began in 2024
- Dockside sampling began in 2025
- Entire estimate process (dockside sampling, effort callouts, and producing estimates) is directed in-house



METHODOLOGY: MRIP & MS CREEL

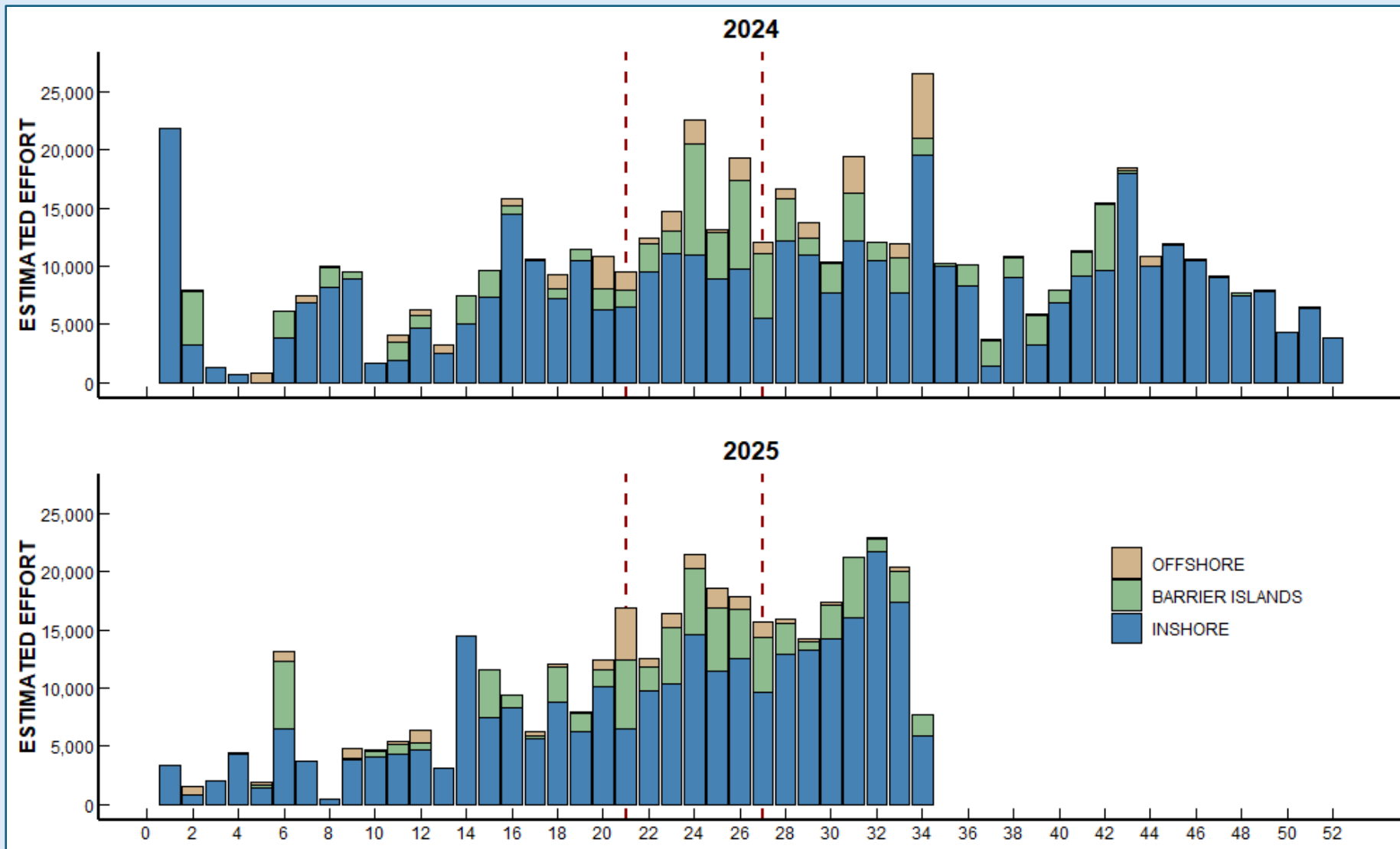
EFFORT	MRIP (FES)	MS Creel
Delivery	Mailout	Phone-based (email option)
Frequency	Bimonthly	Weekly
Population Pool	USPS registered MS households	MS saltwater recreational fishing license holders
Demographic Strata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal / Matched • Coastal / Unmatched • Non-coastal / Matched • Non-coastal / Unmatched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal • Non-coastal • Out-of-State • ROLP*
Sample Size	Variance-based	200 per strata (*300 during snapper season)

CATCH	MRIP (AP AIS)	MS Creel
Frequency	Probability-based by month	9 per week
Mode	Proportionally allocated	1 Shore / 1 Charter / 7 Private
Day Type	Probability-based	3 Weekday / 6 Weekend
Survey Length	Individual- 2-page questionnaire (~10 min. / intercept)	Party based – Half page questionnaire (~3 min. / intercept)
Site Selection Pressure	Categorical probabilities (1 – 5)	Continuous probability (informed by trailer counts)



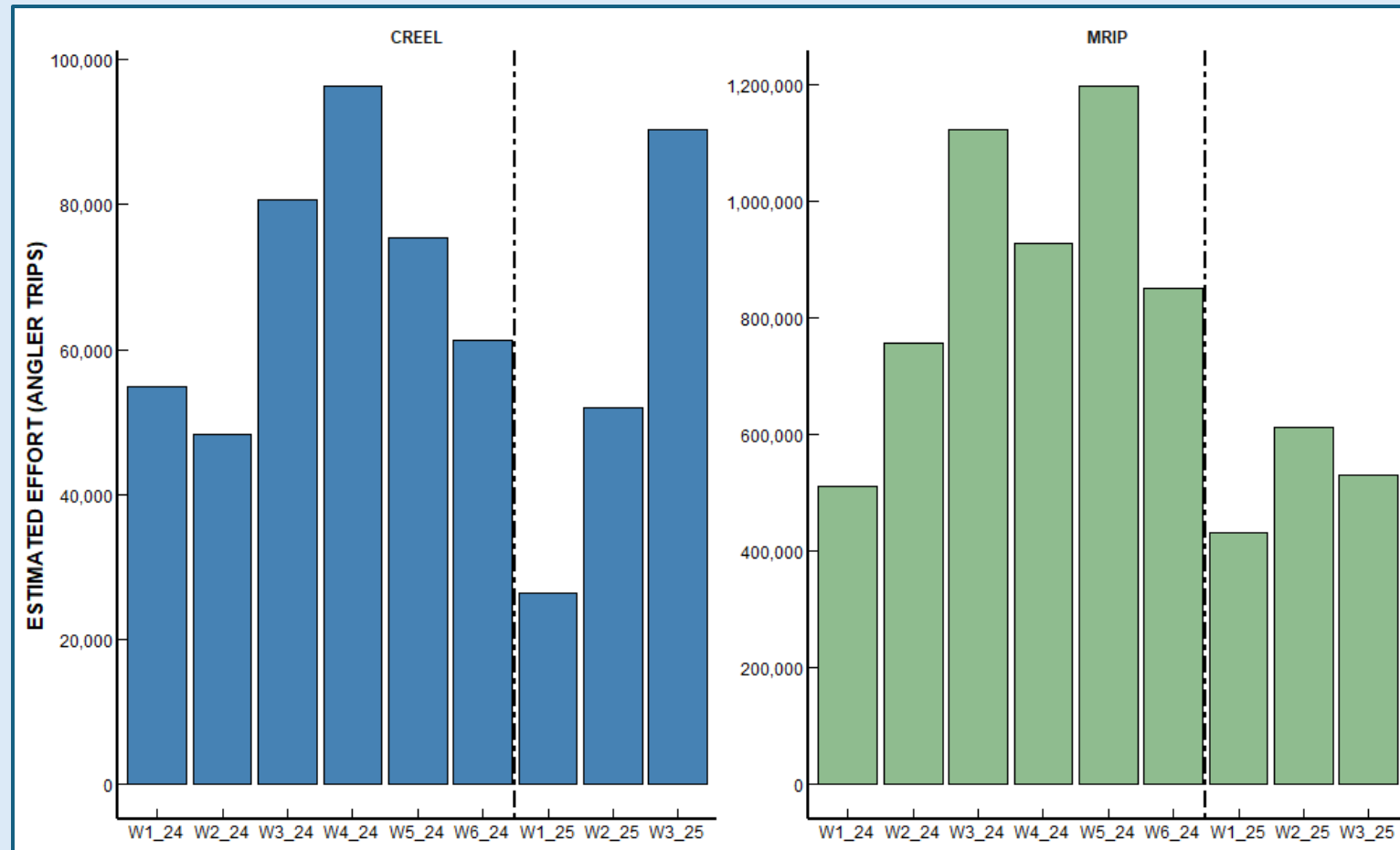
ESTIMATED EFFORT FROM MS CREEL

Weekly estimated number of angler trips by area fished in 2024 and 2025.



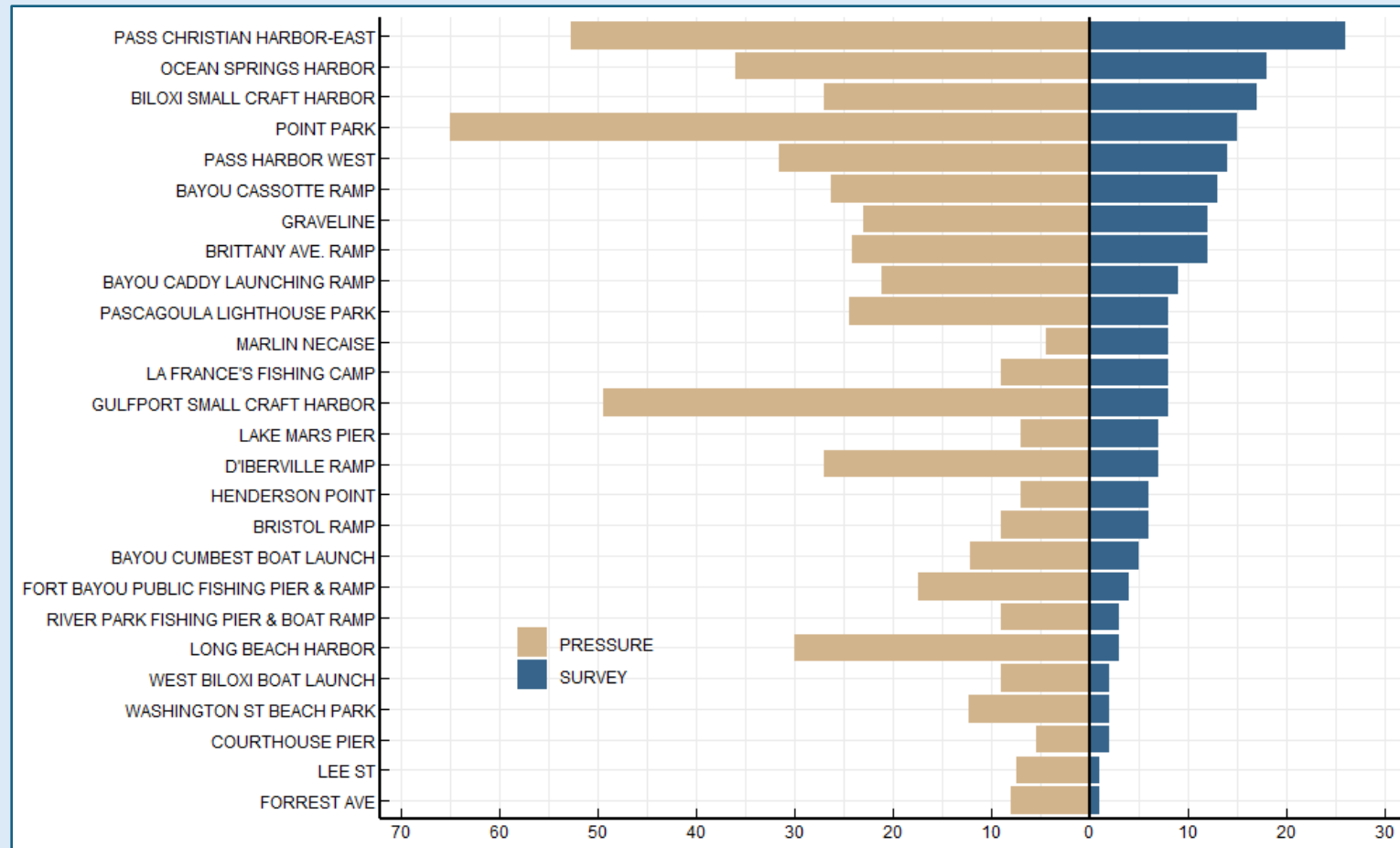
COMPARING MRIP & MS CREEL: ESTIMATED EFFORT

Estimated number of **inshore** angler trips by wave in 2024 and 2025.



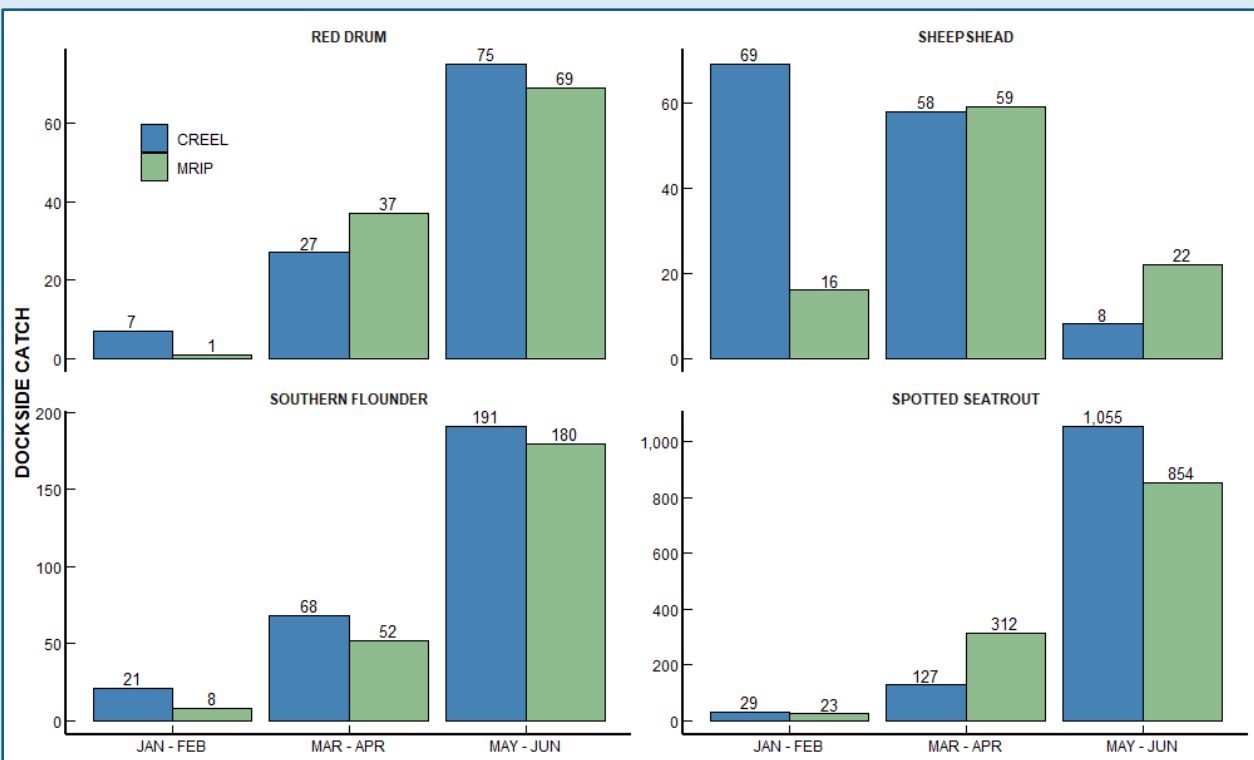
A CASE FOR MS CREEL: DOCKSIDE ASSIGNMENTS

A priori pressure for dockside survey site selection compared to average number of surveys per assignment.

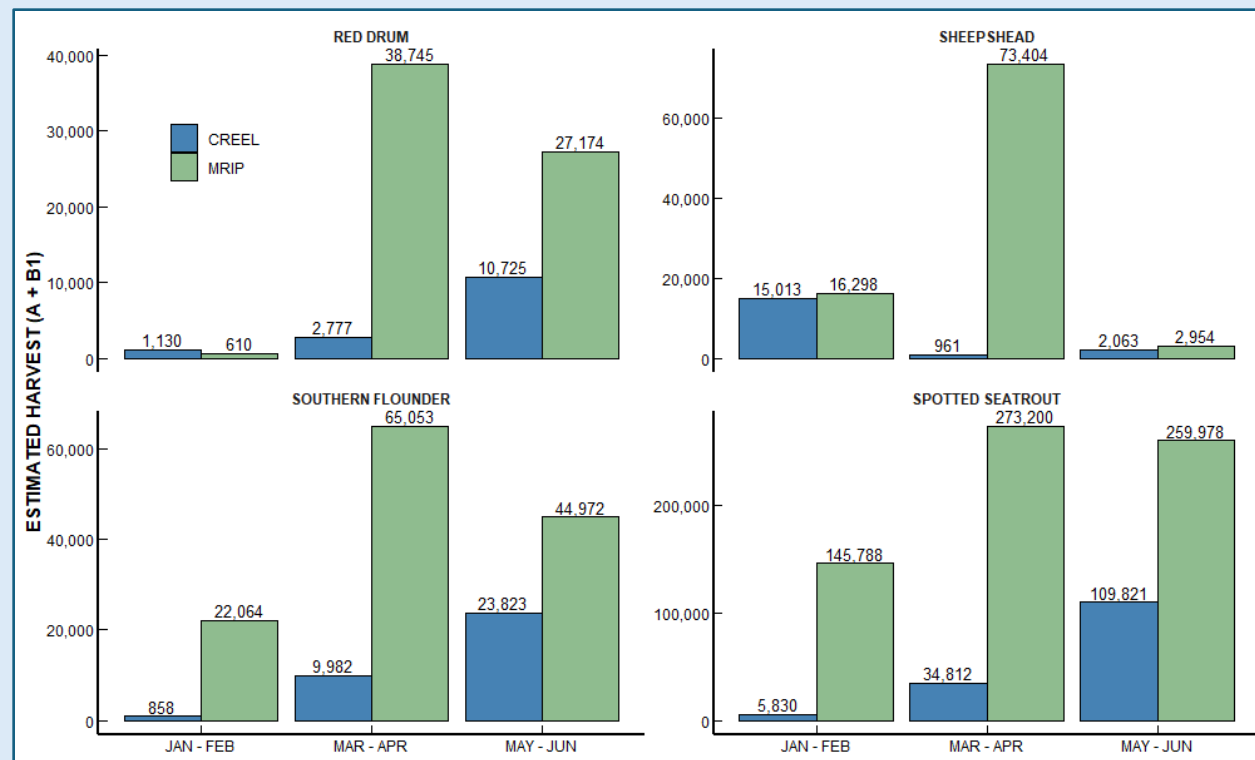


COMPARING MRIP & MS CREEL

Observations of key fish species by wave in 2025



Harvest Estimates of key species by wave in 2025



Summary and Moving Forward

- Primary driver of differences between MRIP and MS Creel exist in estimations of fishing effort
 - Consistent with arguments and findings of the last decade
- MS Creel results are overall positive
 - Increased survey efficiency and interactions per survey
 - Demographic strata, dockside site selection, etc.
 - More constrained and relative estimates of catch and effort
- Continued improvement of the MS Creel Program
 - Re-evaluation of site pressures and assumptions of the program annually
 - Evaluation of harvest estimates in comparison to fishery performance
 - Benefit the overall management of state fishery resources
- Submission of program for certification by NOAA
 - Thus far, staff have submitted preliminary documentation including draft survey manuals, program overviews and preliminary results
 - We have collaborated with our state partners to ensure consistent documentation and process, to ease the transition and review process
 - Final documentation for certification should be submitted within the month
 - Upon certification there will then be a concerted effort on transition, calibration and fundamental changes to gulf-wide assessment and management of federally managed species



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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NOAA
FISHERIES

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Alabama Marine Resources Division, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Gulf Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA Office of Science and Technology, Southeast Fisheries Science Center

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Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources

September 16, 2025



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State Saltwater Finfish Records

Trevor Moncrief
September 16, 2025

K.3.

The seal of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is a circular emblem. It features a central illustration of a bird in flight over a body of water with waves. The text "MISSISSIPPI" is arched across the top, and "DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES" is arched across the bottom. Two stars are positioned on either side of the central illustration.

Conventional Tackle

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Conventional Tackle Fishing Record

Wenchman Snapper

Pristipomoides aquilonaris

New Record: 0 lbs. 4.80 oz.

Angler: Chris Barlow

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All Tackle

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All Tackle Fishing Record

Yellowedge Grouper
Hyporthodus flavolimbatus

Old Record: 41 lbs. 12.80 oz.

New Record: 44 lbs. 9.60 oz.

Angler: Holt Gammel

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All Tackle Fishing Record

Southern Hake
Urophycis floridana

Old Record: 1 lb. 0.00 oz.

New Record: 2 lbs. 8.80 oz.

Angler: Cooper Wrightson

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The seal of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is a circular emblem. It features a central illustration of a fish leaping from the water, with a sun rising behind it. The words "MISSISSIPPI" and "DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES" are inscribed around the perimeter of the seal, separated by two stars.

Required Action:
Motion to recommend the approval of the
State Records

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