



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Tate Reeves
Governor

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Joe Spraggins, Executive Director

**ORDER BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
OPENING THE 2026 - 2027 MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC OYSTER SEASON FOR THE
HARVEST OF OYSTERS IN CERTAIN WATERS CLASSIFIED AS APPROVED AND
CONDITIONALLY APPROVED, AND PLACING CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS ON
OYSTER HARVESTING AND HANDLING ACTIVITIES**

In accordance with Mississippi Administrative Code Title 22, Part 1; the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) hereby orders that:

The 2026 - 2027 Mississippi Public Oyster Season shall open for harvest of oysters beginning at legal sunrise, the 1st day of October 2026, in Area I "B," Area II "B," Area II "E," and Area V "A" Conditionally Approved Waters. These areas will open to harvest provided they meet all criteria for opening as specified in Title 22, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Part 1 Rules and Regulations for Molluscan Shellfish Related Activities, and under the oyster season requirements set forth in this order.

All Mississippi waters and public or private reef areas therein shall remain closed on Sundays and on the following days:

- Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 26, 2026
- Christmas closure: harvest shall cease and all vessels shall check out no later than 12:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24, 2026. All waters shall remain closed through Sunday, December 27, 2026, and shall reopen at legal sunrise on Monday, December 28, 2026.
- New Year closure: harvest shall cease and all vessels shall check out no later than 12:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, Thursday, December 31, 2026. All waters shall remain closed through Sunday, January 3, 2027, and shall reopen at legal sunrise on Monday, January 4, 2027.

Said openings and closures of these areas will be in accordance with Title 22, Part 1. In addition to all provisions of Title 22, Part 1, the following regulations, restrictions, or procedures shall be in effect for the 2026 - 2027 Mississippi Oyster Season.

1. Check Stations and Check-In/Check-Out

- a. All fishermen must check-in prior to harvest at a designated check station. All fishermen must check-out at the same designated check station where they checked-in.
- b. The designated oyster check stations are located at the following sites and will be open whenever an area they serve is open to harvest:
 - i. MDMR Check Station, 5200 Shipyard Road, Bayou Caddy
 - ii. Pass Christian Harbor, 104 South Market Street, Pass Christian
 - iii. R/V Conservationist, 1310 Harbor Road, Ocean Springs, MS 39564
 - iv. Additional location as approved by the Executive Director
- c. For the month of October 2026, harvest shall begin no earlier than legal sunrise, and the check-out time shall be no later than 12:00 p.m.
- d. Harvesters shall check-in prior to harvest and check-out at a designated oyster check station. Harvesters, once checked in, may launch from a remote launch site south of the CSX Railroad bridges. Harvesters, upon return to remote launch sites, must transport untagged oysters to the same designated oyster check station for check-out, provided that:
 - i. The vessel travels by the most direct route, by trailer on land, with no stops other than those necessary for safe navigation or traffic;
 - ii. No oysters are unloaded, transferred, sold, or removed from the vessel until the vessel has been checked out and all sacks are properly tagged;
 - iii. The vessel arrives at the designated oyster check station no later than the established check-out time; and
 - iv. Any harvester that checked in at the designated oyster check station prior to harvest shall, upon request, provide their name, license number, and vessel information to any official of the Department of Marine Resources for verification.

2. Sack Limits

- a. On Mississippi public reefs the following sack limits shall be in effect for Mississippi residents:
 - i. RECREATIONAL: All recreational harvest is limited to three (3) sacks per recreationally licensed resident individual per seven (7) day period.
 - ii. COMMERCIAL: The MDMR has established the Mississippi resident commercial oyster tonging vessel daily limit of fifteen (15) sacks and a commercial oyster dredging vessel daily limit of twenty (20) sacks. Individual(s) must also harvest oysters from said licensed vessel. No commercial vessel shall

possess over the daily catch limit by any manner or exceed any experimental limit as may be established.

- iii. **COMMERCIAL PERSONAL USE:** All commercially licensed Mississippi resident individuals and/or vessels are allocated up to three (3) sacks for personal use per seven (7) day period; these sacks of oysters shall be counted towards the daily commercial sack limit for that boat or vessel. Said sacks shall be tagged with red tags, in accordance with Title 22, Part 1, Rule 5.5 and Rule 5.3, identifying them as "Personal Use" and may not be sold. "Personal Use" is hereby defined for purposes herein as "any use other than for sale or intent to sell."

- b. In an effort to conserve resource, all licensed nonresident commercial oyster tonging vessels will be held to the commercial sack limits for tonging oysters in their state, or the Mississippi resident commercial oyster tonging vessel daily limit, whichever is lower.

3. Gear, Tonging Only Areas, and Size Limit

- a. Allowable gear shall be limited to tongs and dredges meeting the specifications of Title 22, Part 1, Rule 4.1(D). Dredges shall weigh 115 pounds or less and have a tooth bar with 16 or fewer teeth, with all teeth five (5) inches or less. Hand dredges shall weigh 40 pounds or less and have a tooth bar with 10 or fewer teeth, with all teeth five and one quarter (5¼) inches or less and must be retrieved by hand without a mechanical advantage retrieval system. No harvester shall use more than two (2) dredges. Basket dredges are not permitted in Mississippi waters.
- b. The following location, known as Pass Christian Tonging, is designated for tonging only and is defined by the coordinates below: Beginning at 30.305286, -89.252012; thence running south to 30.285535, -89.252264; thence running easterly to 30.285583, -89.238978; thence running north to 30.309192, -89.238540; thence west to the starting point of 30.305286, -89.252012. The corner markers will be marked for reference, as well as a map provided with this public notice. Pursuant to Title 22, Part 1, Rule 4.2(K), it is unlawful for any harvester engaged in harvesting molluscan shellfish on a tonging reef to have an oyster dredge on board the boat or vessel.
- c. Area II "B" which includes St. Stanislaus, Waveland Reefs and Area V "A", which includes Biloxi Bay Reef are designated for tonging only. Pursuant to Title 22, Part 1, Rule 4.2(K), it is unlawful for any harvester engaged in harvesting molluscan shellfish in a tonging only area to have an oyster dredge on board the boat or vessel.
- d. Oysters of less than three (3) inches measured from hinge to bill shall not be taken from the reefs of Mississippi.

4. Trip Tickets and Tagging

- a. All fishermen checking-in at a check station must accurately and legibly print or enter the following information on a MDMR trip notification ticket (available at the check

station): date, check-in time, license number, harvester's name, captain's name, name of boat, boat registration or documentation number, intended harvest area, license type (commercial or recreational), gear type (tong or dredge), and number of individuals on board the boat.

- b. All fishermen shall retain the harvester's copy of the trip ticket, which shall indicate the check-out time, with the catch until final delivery, and said ticket shall be present and available for inspection upon request by any official of the Department of Marine Resources.
- c. All shellstock oysters landed in Mississippi must be landed and tagged on the date of harvest. Fishermen shall be responsible for ensuring that the following information appears accurately and legibly on all shellstock oyster tags and that the tag is securely affixed to the container of shellstock oysters: harvester's identification number as assigned by the MDMR, harvest date, harvest area, type of molluscan shellfish, and quantity of molluscan shellfish, in accordance with Title 22, Part 1, Rule 5.5(D).

5. Time/Temperature and Transport

- a. For the month of October 2026, all oysters must be placed under mechanical refrigeration within two (2) hours of their check-out time and cooled to a temperature of 55 degrees F or below within two (2) hours after being placed under mechanical refrigeration.
- b. Certified shellfish dealers, processors, and shippers are required to have in place and follow HACCP procedures and records documenting the time/temperature requirements.
- c. The Executive Director of the MDMR is authorized by Title 22, Part 1, to establish check-out times as required or necessary.
- d. All land transport vehicles used by licensed oyster harvesters to transport harvested oysters shall have shading over the oysters to protect the oysters from direct exposure to the sun, thus reducing the potential for an increase in the temperature of the oysters while held on a land transport vehicle. All transport must follow the guidelines in Section 5a.

6. Shell Retention Fees

- a. In accordance with §49-15-46 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, all harvesters (commercial and recreational) are required to pay on the day of harvest a shell retention fee of fifteen cents (\$0.15) per sack harvested. No tags will be issued to harvesters at the designated check station until the required shell retention fee is paid. The harvester shall be responsible for providing correct change for all shell retention fees due.
- b. In accordance with §49-15-46 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, the initial dealer, processor or factory first purchasing Mississippi oysters is required to pay a shell retention fee of fifteen cents (\$0.15) per sack to the MDMR, on forms submitted by the MDMR no later than the 10th day of the month following the purchase.

- c. In accordance with §49-15-46 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, commercial harvesters not selling their oysters to a Mississippi dealer are required to pay an additional shell retention fee of fifteen cents (\$0.15) per sack to the MDMR on the day of harvest, in addition to the fees in paragraphs 6(a) and 6(b) of this order.
- d. All commercial harvesters selling their oysters through interstate commerce are required to pay on the day of harvest a shell retention fee of fifty cents (\$0.50) per sack harvested. No tags will be issued to harvesters at the designated check station until the required shell retention fee is paid.

7. Private Leases

- a. All private lease owners must have prior written approval from the MDMR to conduct lease activities including harvest. All fishermen harvesting oysters on privately owned leases must have prior written approval from said lease owner in their possession and available for inspection upon request by an official of the Department of Marine Resources prior to harvesting.

8. Area Status and MDMR Authority

- a. Information with respect to open and closed areas may be obtained by calling the 24-hour Oyster Information Hotline at 1-228-374-5167 or 1-800-385-5902. Alternatively, the MDMR website will feature an interactive map providing real-time location services for harvesters, along with color-coded indicators (red or green) to show the current open or closed status of specific growing areas: <https://dmr.ms.gov/shellfish/2026-2027-public-oyster-season/>
- b. All fishermen must observe all instructions given at a check station, or by a Marine Patrol Officer, or any other official of the Department of Marine Resources. This shall include the authority to close or delay opening any reef area if the criteria for closing or delaying opening said area exists as specified in Title 22, Part 1; or, if in the opinion of the official of the MDMR, actual or pending weather conditions threaten or jeopardize the safe, orderly harvest of oysters.

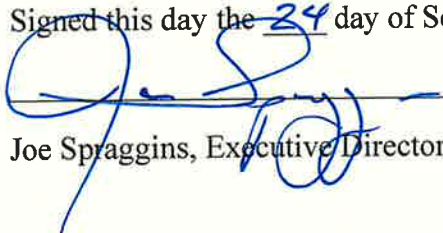
9. Standard Sack Measure

- a. The standard measure for said sack in accordance with [Title 22, Part 8, Official Standards of Measure](#), shall consist of a tub or other round vessel measuring 18 inches in diameter inside at the top, 14 inches in diameter inside at the bottom, and 17 inches from bottom to top, the unit of such tub or sack measure to be in the shape of a frustum of a cone. One (1) of these measures filled level to the top shall make one (1) sack.

All requirements set forth in orders, regulations or state laws will be in full force and effect and it shall be unlawful to violate said provisions of said orders, regulations or laws. Violations of said regulations or laws shall be punishable in accordance with the provisions of §49-15-63 of the

Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated and/or the provision(s) of any other specific section(s) of said order, regulation or law applying to the violation. Copies of Title 22, Part 1 and this Opening Order will be available at the Department of Marine Resources, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and at the designated check stations, as well as on the Department of Marine Resources website at <http://dmr.ms.gov/> and <https://dmr.ms.gov/category/public-notices/> .

Signed this day the 24 day of September 2026



Joe Spraggins, Executive Director