

Louisiana Oyster Fishery Improvement Plan

American Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) Dredge, Scraper, and Tong Fishery in Louisiana State Waters

December 2012

Current Status:

The Louisiana Oyster Fishery has been pre-assessed to the MSC standards, and was not recommended to move on to a full-assessment at this time. Detailed information and a thorough understanding of the fishery was lacking in the pre-assessment. According to the certifying body, issues include a lack of biological reference points, insufficient data covering bycatch, ETP species and habitat loss, and a lack of an overarching state management plan for the fishery. The public resource stock size is below the long term average and no active management is apparent to allow for a rebuilding strategy.

Current management initiatives for the Oyster Fishery include the following:

- A “Shell Stock Budget” analysis researched by the University of New Orleans and incorporated into management by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
- Vessel Monitoring Systems required on all boats permitted to fish on the state seed grounds
- Installing cultch material onto public seed grounds
- Increased monitoring and data collection
- Increased interaction with the Oyster Task Force

The fishery is highly dependent on environmental factors and is greatly affected by high water events, salinity changes, predation and anthropogenic incidents. The managing agency collects a large amount of data on the fishery and does an annual stock assessment of the public seed grounds; as stated in the Pre-Assessment: “Louisiana has a well-developed system to collect information of the status of the oyster stock, and to monitor fishery landings. There are seven Coastal Study Areas, and within each area the status of the oyster resource is evaluated annually using well accepted fishery independent sampling procedures. Landings data is collect from a Trip Ticket system. The fishery independent survey data and fishery dependent landings data are summarized in the annual stock assessment”.

Sustainability issues:

- Abundance on public seed grounds currently well below the long term average
- No reference points or appropriate proxies exist to limit fishing mortality and initiate a stock rebuilding program
- Insufficient data covering bycatch, ETP species and habitat loss
- Lack of fishery management plan

TOPIC	DELIVERABLES	DEADLINE	STATUS
Identify FIP participants	Develop a stakeholder group of producers, management agencies, dealers, etc.	December 2012	Louisiana Oyster Task Force, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Pre-assessment	MSC pre-assessment publicly available	December 2012	Complete
Work with Certifying Body to update pre-assessment report to include current initiatives	A thorough and robust pre-assessment that identifies current sustainability issues	July 2013	Not complete
Develop a full FIP workplan	Detailed workplan and evidence of cooperation in a FIP	Dec 2013	Not complete