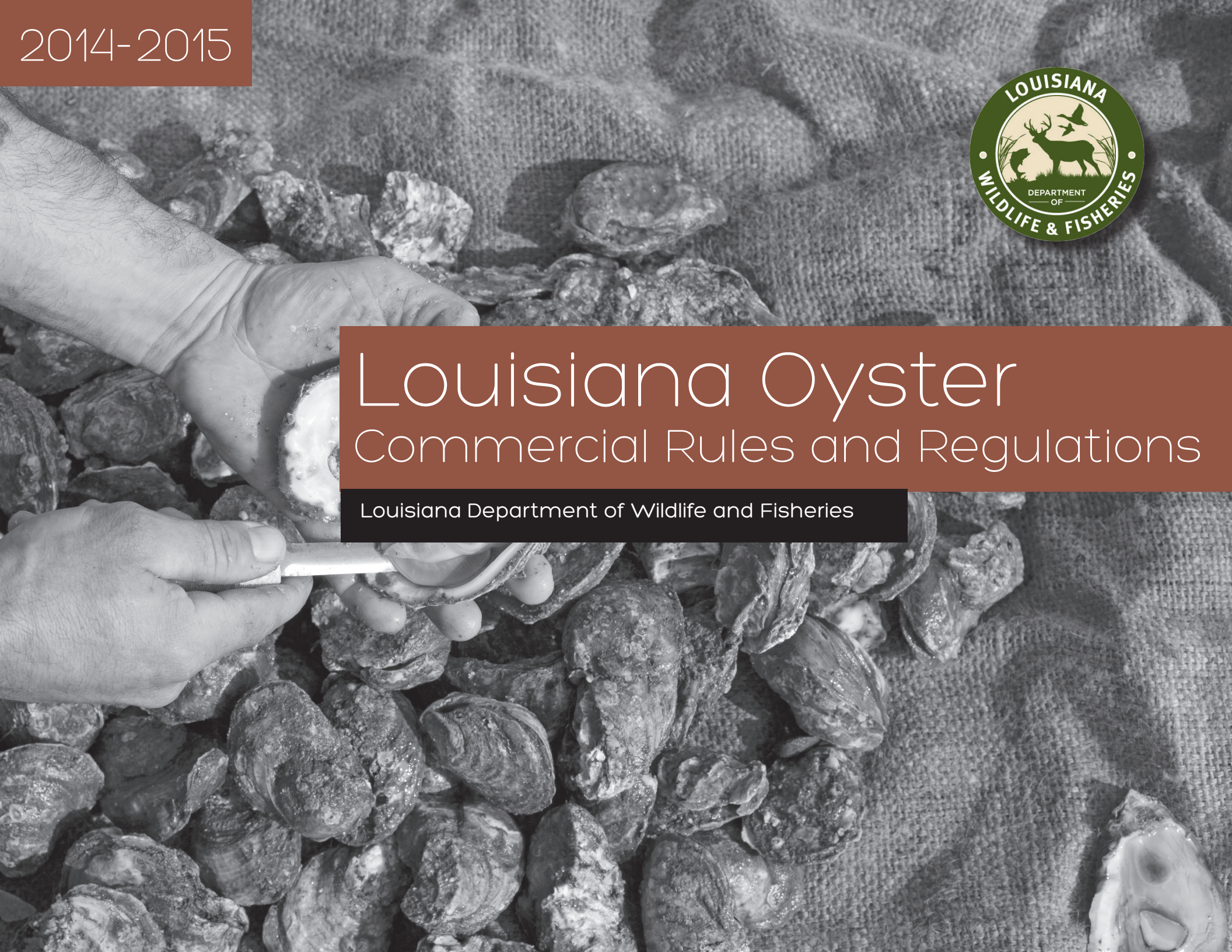
2014-2015



Louisiana Oyster
Commercial Rules and Regulations

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Contents

03 Harvesters
07 Oyster Harvest Tags
08 Dealers, Shuckers, & Retailers
10 Industry Support
11 Quick Facts

Harvesters

THIS PUBLICATION SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AN OFFICIAL COPY OF THE LAWS AND SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON AS SUCH. THIS PUBLICATION SUMMARIZES EXISTING LAWS IN EFFECT. AS LAWS MAY CHANGE FOLLOWING THE PRINTING OF THIS PUBLICATION, THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN IS NOT GUARANTEED. IT IS THE OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE READER TO BE AWARE OF CURRENT LAWS AT ALL TIMES, INCLUDING LOUISIANA REVISED STATUTES (TITLES 51 AND 56), NATIONAL SHELLFISH SANITATION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, OFFICIAL REGULATIONS OF THE LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION, LOCAL AND PARISH ORDINANCES, AND FEDERAL LAWS.

Commercial Harvest Licenses / Permits

To take or possess oysters in Louisiana waters for commercial purposes, you must have one or more of the following licenses issued by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). To apply for LDWF-issued licenses, contact 225-765-2898 or visit LDWF's Headquarters at 2000 Quail Drive in Baton Rouge. Renew your license on-line at www.la.wildlifelicense.com.

If you:	You must have a:	Notes:
Are operating a commercial fishing vessel	Commercial Fisherman's License or Senior Commercial Fisherman's License (if a resident age 70 or older)	$55 resident, $460 nonresident (regular); $20 resident (senior; includes gear license fee).This is a personal license and is not transferable. It allows you to transport and sell your catch to any wholesale/retail seafood dealer located in and licensed by the state of Louisiana.
Use or possess oyster dredges or tongs	Commercial Gear License	You must have a license for each piece of gear: • Dredge: $25 resident, $200 nonresident • Tong: $30 resident, $240 nonresident
Have a vessel fishing commercially in the saltwater areas of Louisiana OR carrying oysters for sale	Vessel License	This license is specific to the individual's vessel. $15 resident, $60 nonresident
Are a commercial fishermen harvesting or possessing oysters in Louisiana state waters	Oyster Harvester License	Only the vessel captain is required to hold this license. $100 resident, $400 nonresident
Are in charge of an oyster cargo vessel	Oyster Cargo Vessel Permit	$250 resident, $1,105 nonresident
Harvesting oysters from Calcasieu Lake	Calcasieu Lake Oyster Harvester Permit	No fee
Take oysters from the public natural reefs or the oyster seed grounds	Oyster Seed Ground Vessel permit	$15 resident, $60 nonresident; does not include those in Calcasieu or Sabine Lake

Seasons

Public grounds: The oyster harvest season for state public oyster beds generally runs from the first Wednesday following Labor Day in September through April 30 of the following year. However, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission can open and close the season when biological data indicate a need. Harvesters should go to **www.wlf.la.gov** for the most recent information regarding oyster seasons.

Private leases: The owner of an oyster lease or his agents may fish oysters on the lease at any time of year.

All areas: Taking of oysters is prohibited from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise.

Closed Areas

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) may close any oyster area for health reasons. Call **1-800-256-2775** for more information. If LDWF finds a vessel harvesting oysters within an unapproved or closed area, all oysters on board the vessel shall be deemed to have been taken from the unapproved or closed area. LDWF will seize these oysters and return them to the water. LDWF may also revoke the oyster harvester's license(s) under which the violation occurred.

Removing Oysters

Public grounds: You may use dredges, scrapers, and tongs to take oysters from public grounds. Dredges and scrapers shall be no longer than six feet wide measured along the tooth bar. Dredge teeth shall be no longer than five inches. Vessels shall use no more than seven dredges at a time.

Private leases: Lessees may use any implements or appliances they want as long as they do not impair or destroy the water bottom.

Calcasieu and Sabine Lakes: You may harvest oysters with the following:

- Tongs
- Hand dredge
- Single dredge with mechanical assist that has a tooth bar no longer than 3 feet
- Single scraper with mechanical assist with a flat bar no longer than 3 feet

In both lakes, your vessel must be self-propelled. Commercial harvest is restricted to a daily sack limit as set by the Commission. The daily sack limit applies per person per vessel per day.

Trawl, Seine, and Skimmer Use

You may not trawl, seine, or use skimmer nets over privately leased bedding grounds for one year immediately following the seeding of such area. The area must be marked or posted as required by law. If you knowingly trawl, seine, or use a skimmer net upon such marked areas, you are liable for damages caused to the lessee.

Unlawful Removal of Oysters or Signs

You are not allowed to knowingly or willfully take, carry away, or attempt to take or carry away any oysters, shell, or cultch from a leased area, unless you have permission from the lessee. Additionally, you are not allowed to willfully remove or alter any stake, monument, bounds, buoy, sign, or other designation of bedding or propagating ground placed by LDWF or in accordance with regulations.

Cleanliness of Shellfish Vessels

You must wash decks, holds, or binds used for storage of shellfish daily. Unless otherwise exempted in writing by LDHH, you must have a suspended awning (tarp) on your harvest vessel to protect shellfish from direct exposure to sun, birds, and other adverse conditions. It must be at least 12 inches high but no more than 7 feet high and extend to the outer edges of the vessel.

Sewage Disposal on Shellfish Vessels

Owners and operators of all vessels shall provide suitable waste receptacles with tight fitting lids. These receptacles must be properly labeled with the wording "FOR HUMAN WASTE ONLY" with letters at least 1- ½ inches tall. Waste receptacles must have a capacity of at least 2 gallons for each person on the vessel. You must dispose of the contents of such receptacles by means of a municipal sewer system, incineration, or burial in the ground.

Did you know?

In 2013, LDWF's Law Enforcement Division inspected about 4,275 of 36,182 oyster fishing trips, covering about 12% of total trips.

Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit

Only vessels with an LDWF-issued oyster seed ground vessel permit may carry oysters taken from public reefs, oyster seed grounds, or reservations, except those in Calcasieu and Sabine Lakes. The permit must be issued in the name of the vessel owner and identify the vessel permitted. The permit cannot be sold, exchanged, or transferred. Any vessels taking oysters from public seed grounds must have also an LDWF-issued vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit properly installed and operating.

Culling Oysters

You may only cull oysters from open state-designated public grounds or leases from which you are authorized to take oysters. When removing oysters from natural reefs, you must immediately return any oysters measuring less than three inches from hinge to mouth and any dead shell back to the natural reefs from which they were taken. This does not apply if you are lawfully removing seed oysters from natural reefs or if you are a lessee of private bedding grounds harvesting your own oysters.

LDWF may permit lessees to fish oysters of any size, without charge, from the natural reefs of the waters of Louisiana for bedding purposes only. LDWF may designate which natural reefs may be fished and the quantity of oysters that may be taken.

Harvester Log Sheet

Both the harvester and the first certified dealer must complete the Harvester-Dealer Time / Temperature Log Sheet to document compliance with time to refrigeration requirements. The log sheet must be maintained for one year. Log sheets for the previous 15 days must be kept aboard harvest vessel.

Cooler Log Sheet

Oysters harvested for raw consumption (white tag) must adhere to the applicable time and temperature controls established by the *Vibrio vulnificus* control plan. From May 1st to October 31st, harvesters are required to maintain a boat cooler log sheet. The harvester must provide harvest records to the original shellfish dealer demonstrating compliance with the time and temperature requirements. The record must include the date and time harvest began for each lot of shellfish harvested. It is the harvester's responsibilty to properly separate and identify each lot when they place it under refrigeration.

Separating White Tag Oysters into 'Lots'

Fishermen harvesting white tag oysters must attach a tag or label on all containers holding shell stock, with the corresponding lot identification number or character printed legibly on the tag or label, prior to refrigerating them. This tag or label shall be approved by the state health officer and the Secretary of LDWF.

Landing Oysters

If you're harvesting oysters from Louisiana's public reefs for sale or consumption, you must land them in Louisiana. You must properly tag and sack or containerize them and pay applicable severance taxes. Licensed oyster captains and harvesters of shell stock must verify that all oyster measurements are accurately reported by weight, count, or volume.

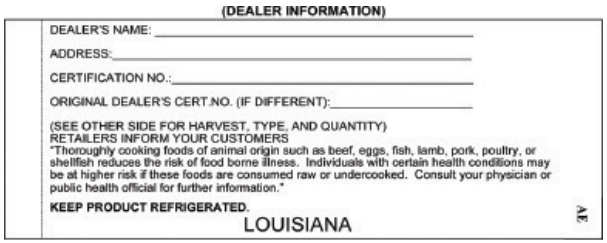
You may land oysters harvested from a private lease in Louisiana's waters outside the state, provided LDWF has permitted you to do so and the oysters are properly tagged. You must install a VMS unit on the vessel used to transport oysters to another state and allow LDWF to access the system.

Oyster Harvest Tags

If you are taking oysters from Louisiana state waters for sale, you must tag all of them with official oyster harvest tags purchased from LDWF. These tags are used to identify sacks and any other types of containers used to hold oysters while in their shells. If oysters are sacked or put into containers on the vessel, you must tag them appropriately prior to removing them from the vessel. Otherwise, you must tag oysters that are yet to be sacked or containerized immediately upon arrival at the dock prior to shipment.

If you are fishing white tag oysters (intended for raw, half-shell consumption) during March to November, you MAY NOT also possess oysters intended for shucking, post-harvest processing, relay, or bedding until all white tag oysters are offloaded (unless you follow refrigeration and time / temperature requirements for white tag oysters for all product on board).

White Tag


(DEALER INFORMATION)
DEALER'S NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CERTIFICATION NO.: _____
ORIGINAL DEALER'S CERT.NO. (IF DIFFERENT): _____
(SEE OTHER SIDE FOR HARVEST, TYPE, AND QUANTITY)
RETAILERS INFORM YOUR CUSTOMERS
"Thoroughly cooking foods of animal origin such as beef, eggs, fish, lamb, pork, poultry, or shellfish reduces the risk of food borne illness. Individuals with certain health conditions may be at higher risk if these foods are consumed raw or undercooked. Consult your physician or public health official for further information."
KEEP PRODUCT REFRIGERATED.
LOUISIANA
AE

Description & Use

For raw consumption. During March to November, you MAY NOT also possess green tag oysters unless you follow white tag time / temperature requirements for all oysters.

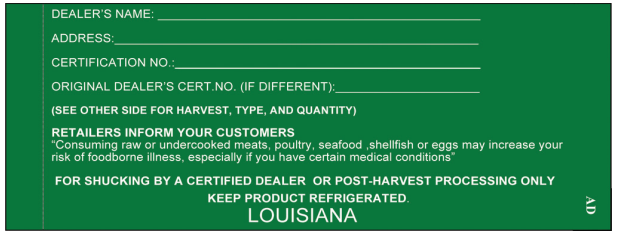
Refrigeration Air Temperature

Less than or equal to 45° F.

Requirements

Months	Hours Until Refrigeration	Internal Meat Temperature
Dec, Jan, Feb	36	10 hrs to 55° F
Mar, Apr, Nov	8	10 hrs to 55° F
May - Oct	1	6 hrs to 55° F

Green Tag


DEALER'S NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CERTIFICATION NO.: _____
ORIGINAL DEALER'S CERT.NO. (IF DIFFERENT): _____
(SEE OTHER SIDE FOR HARVEST, TYPE, AND QUANTITY)
RETAILERS INFORM YOUR CUSTOMERS
"Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood ,shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions"
FOR SHUCKING BY A CERTIFIED DEALER OR POST-HARVEST PROCESSING ONLY
KEEP PRODUCT REFRIGERATED.
LOUISIANA
AD

Description & Use

Must be consumed fully cooked. For shucking or Post-Harvest Processing (PHP) ONLY. During March to November, you MAY NOT also possess white tag oysters unless you follow white tag time / temperature requirements for all oysters.

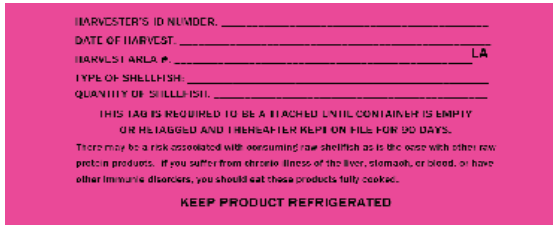
Refrigeration Air Temperature

Less than or equal to 45° F.

Requirements

Months	Hours Until Refrigeration	Internal Meat Temperature
Dec, Jan, Feb	24 hours	May not ship until internal temp. is 50° F or less, unless trip is under 4 hours. If temp. is not met, shipment can occur with a time / temp monitoring device.
Mar - May & Oct - Nov	18 Hours	
Jun - Sept	12 Hours	

Pink Tag


HARVESTER'S ID NUMBER. _____
DATE OF HARVEST. _____
HARVEST AREA #. _____ LA
TYPE OF SHELLFISH: _____
QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH. _____
THIS TAG IS REQUIRED TO BE ATTACHED UNTIL CONTAINER IS EMPTY OR RETAGGED AND THEREAFTER KEPT ON FILE FOR 90 DAYS.
There may be a risk associated with consuming raw shellfish as is the case with other raw protein products. If you suffer from chronic illness of the liver, stomach, or blood, or have other immune disorders, you should eat these products fully cooked.
KEEP PRODUCT REFRIGERATED

Description & Use

For use in Louisiana ONLY. Sacked, boxed, shucked, or frozen oysters with pink tags MAY NOT leave the state of Louisiana. MAY NOT possess white or green tag oysters during the same harvest period.

Refrigeration Air Temperature

Less than or equal to 45° F.

Requirements

Before leaving to fish pink tags, fishermen must call 800-442-2511 and press "0" for dispatch.

Months	Hours Until Refrigeration	Internal Meat Temperature
All	5	NONE

Dealers, Shuckers, and Retailers

THIS SECTION SUMMARIZES LOUISIANA RULES AND REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO DEALERS, SHUCKERS, AND RETAILERS.

Licenses and Permits

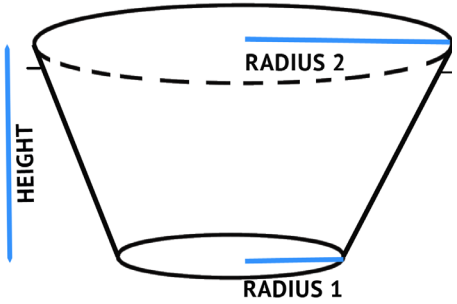
To purchase and resell oysters in Louisiana, you must have one of the following LDWF-issued licenses, unless otherwise noted:		
If you:	**You must have:**	**Notes:**
Buy seafood products directly from licensed harvesters	A Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealer License	$250 resident, $1,105 nonresident. There are no restrictions on whom these licenseholders may sell seafood products to.
Only purchase seafood from Wholesale/Retail Seafood Dealers and only sell to the public	A Retail Seafood Dealers License (or have your own Wholesale/Retail Dealer License - above)	$105 resident; $405 nonresident
*Restaurants selling seafood are exempt from dealer license requirements unless they are serving raw fish products such as raw oysters, sushi, or sashimi. These restaurants must purchase a Retail Seafood Dealers License to purchase products from a Wholesale / Retail Dealer. If a restaurant will be buying directly from the harvester, they will need an LDWF Wholesale / Retail Dealer license.		
Shuck oysters to sell to another dealer for resale	An LDHH-issued Shucker-Packer Permit	
Buy from harvesters and reship oysters	An LDHH Shellstock Shipper or Reshipper Permit	
Buy only from Wholesale / Retail Dealers	An LDHH Distribution and Reshipping Permit	
Are a seafood retailer shucking oysters for sale to the public	LDHH Retail Permit	Shucked oysters must be in an open container, displayed in the service case or stored in the cooler. Do not package them in closed containers except at the time of sale to the end consumer. You may also sell them on the half shell.

Standard Volume Measurements

A **Barrel** is equal to 6,451.26 cubic inches, or the equivalent of two sacks / baskets. A **Sack** (same as a 'Basket') is the equivalent of one-half Barrel or 1.5 bushels and is exactly 3,225.63 cubic inches.

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) certifies metal baskets to ensure accurate measurement. Contact LDAF's Weights and Measure Section at **225-925-3780**. LDAF and LDWF agents have the authority to inspect baskets to ensure volumetric measurements are accurate. Sacks must contain correct measurement at the time of delivery.

Formula for measuring the volume of a basket.



$$V = \pi \frac{(R2+R1*R2+R1^2)H}{3}$$

Labeling

The quantity of oysters for sale must be accurately labeled by volume, weight, or count (e.g. 1 sack, 35 pounds, or 120 count) in the 'Quantity' field on the harvest tag. If labeled as a 'sack,' they must meet the volumetric requirement of 1.5 bushels.

If oysters are removed from the shell, they must be clearly labeled by volume or weight. No more than fifteen percent of the stated net weight can be free liquid.

All oysters must be market size and wholesome.

If you are packaging, labeling, or distributing shucked oysters, you must follow the guidelines required by the National Shellfish Sanitation Program and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Half shell oysters may only be sold by weight (excluding weight of shell) or by count.

The state health officer must approve shucked oyster containers. When packing shucked oysters in Louisiana, you must mark the containers with your certified number preceded by the letters 'LA' and also indicate the packing date with a code or the actual date.

Tags / Reporting

If you are a dealer, you must keep the harvester's tag affixed to each container of shell stock until the container is shipped or emptied for washing, grading, or packing. Retain all tags for at least 90 days.

There is a zero tolerance policy for untagged oyster containers or sacks—any untagged or improperly tagged container or sack will be considered to have been taken from polluted waters and deemed a health hazard.

Containers of shucked oysters must be dated and have the name and address of the original processor, shucker-packer or repacker, and the Louisiana certification number.

You must keep oysters in the container in which they were received until they are used, unless displaying them for retail sale. You may not mix oysters from different lots.

Both the harvester and the first certified dealer must complete the Harvester-Dealer Time / Temperature Log Sheet to document compliance with time to refrigeration requirements. The log sheet must be maintained for one year. Log sheets for the previous 15 days must be kept aboard harvest vessel.

Processing

Oysters must be shucked and prepackaged in LDHH-certified facilities. The LDHH permit serial number must appear on every package, can, carton, or other container in which shellfish are packed for distribution and sale.

Every dealer must have and implement a written HACCP plan. Oysters must maintain a temperature of 45° F or below throughout transit.

Did you know?

During the 2013 regular legislative session, legislators passed House Bill 236, increasing penalties for violations of laws regulating oyster harvest during health closures and health time restrictions.

Industry Support

Certified Authentic Louisiana Wild Seafood

LDWF has launched the Louisiana Wild Seafood Certification Program (LWSCP) to build a brand that guarantees the origin of Louisiana wild-caught seafood. The program establishes rules and guidelines throughout the seafood supply chain that ensure all seafood products bearing the program's logo have been caught in Louisiana waters or the Gulf of Mexico by licensed Louisiana fishermen, then landed, processed, and packaged in our state. The program's goal is not only to increase consumer confidence in the source of their seafood but also to establish Louisiana seafood as a premium product and ensure our industry remains competitive in the constantly changing global marketplace.

The program requires participating seafood dealers and processors to be trained on the program guidelines, state and federal regulations, and best practices for quality and safety. It also requires that participating seafood retailers demonstrate that their seafood products registered and labeled with the LWSCP logo can be traced back to participating dealers and processors. The requirements for this origin-based brand help ensure the integrity and reputation of Louisiana seafood—when buyers see the program's logo, they know they're purchasing authentic Louisiana wild seafood, a product known for fresh flavor, consistent quality, and sustainability.

Find out more at **Certified.LouisianaSeafood.com**.

Seafood Technology Equipment Program

LDWF is developing support for all aspects of the industry, from fishing vessels to processing plants, to modernize their equipment and facilities to improve the quality and safety of seafood. For example, through the program's oyster refrigeration funding, LDWF provides financial assistance to oyster harvesters to purchase advanced refrigeration equipment for their vessels. Improving post-harvest refrigeration not only helps harvesters meet FDA guidelines but also significantly increases the quality of their seafood products. For more information about the grant program and its requirements, please contact us at **225.765.3980**.

Did you know?

Each July, LDWF takes a census of the oysters found on public grounds. They collect nearly 500 samples from multiple areas and use these data to estimate the annual oyster stock size and to make yearly oyster season recommendations.

Throughout the year, LDWF uses dredges to sample oyster reefs. LDWF uses these data to monitor the overall health of the oyster resource during the year and to assess the growth and survival of newly born oysters.

Louisiana Oyster Harvest Facts

Harvest Areas

LDHH separates Louisiana into 30 harvest areas, set forth by the Louisiana Sanitary Code and the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

Public Seed Grounds

LDWF manages approximately 1.7 million acres of public oyster seed grounds

Private Leases

There are roughly 8,040 private water bottom leases in Louisiana, totaling 400,000 acres.

Get Involved!

To manage Louisiana's oyster fishery, LDWF and the Commission rely not only on data from scientific studies and landings records but also on input from the public. Our decisions directly impact you, so it's important that we have your input as we define management goals and strategies.

We encourage you to participate throughout the management process to ensure that your interests are considered and that you understand the regulatory process and resulting management actions.

The Oyster Task Force, a group of representatives from the oyster industry and relevant state agencies, meets regularly and is responsible for studying and monitoring the oyster industry and making recommendations that maximize its benefit to Louisiana and its citizens. Task force meetings are open to the public. To receive information about upcoming task force meetings, please email **aroth@wlf.la.gov**.

The Commission's monthly meetings and our open regulatory process provide additional opportunities for public input.

Illegal Activity

Report illegal harvest activity, day or night, to LDWF at **1-800-442-2511**.

This public document was published at a total cost of $2,383.86. 2,000 copies of this public document were published in the first printing at a total cost of $2,383.86. This document was published by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA to inform Louisiana residents and nonresidents of the rules and regulations pertaining to commercial oyster harvesting, dealing and shucking in Louisiana. This material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S.43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

Drop us a line

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive | Baton Rouge, LA 70808
Ph. 225.765.2800
wlf.la.gov

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
628 N. 4th Street | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Ph. 225.342.9500
dhh.louisiana.gov

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Weights and Measures
5825 Florida Boulevard | Baton Rouge, LA 70806
Ph. 225.925.3780
ldaf.state.la.us