Oyster-Producing Bays in Texas
Texas Commercial Oyster Landings

- Galveston Bay makes up majority of landings
- Historically 76%
- Last 10 years 45%
- Increase in harvest from southern bays
Areas Under Location (a.k.a. Leases)

- Currently:
  - 43 locations
  - 2,322 acres

Objectives:
- Reduce illegal harvest in restricted waters and protect public health
- Opportunity to harvest reefs in restricted areas
Transplants

![Image of a boat with a person working on it.]

Graph showing the number of sacks transplanted and total transplant days from 1976 to 2018.

- Sacks Transplanted
- Total Transplant Days
Public Reefs vs. Private Leases

- Areas under location are 20-25% of Galveston Bay Harvest
- Decline in both public and private harvest since early 2000s
Why the decline?

Fishing

Reduced freshwater inflow

Drought

Flooding

Predators

Habitat Destruction

High Demand

Sedimentation

Disease
Restoration

• In the past we relied on donations, grants, and disaster relief
• 2011 – Shellfish recovery tag required ($0.20)
• 2017 – Regular contributions from oyster dealers
  • Dealers must plant cultch = 30% of volume of oysters purchased or pay a fee
• ~485 acres restored since 2009 (post Hurricane Ike)
Current Management

- TDSHS shellfish harvest areas
  - Closures based on public health
- TPWD started implementing area closures in 2014
  - Closures based on percent undersized oysters
- Traffic Light Precautionary Approach in 2015
  - Closures based on abundance and percent undersized
Summary of Recent Regulations

- No fishing on Saturday or Sunday
- Reduce sack limit to 30
- Closed 300 ft from shore
- Closed 6 environmentally sensitive bays
- Additional license requirements for deckhands and those harvesting by hand
- Buyback
- Authority to implement a Vessel Monitoring System
• 15 → 5% undersized tolerance
• Increased penalties for undersized oysters including the shell and fishing in closed waters
  • Fines, license suspensions, and jail time
  • For both fishermen and dealers
  • Those who posses a cargo of undersized oysters to return oysters to the bed from which they were taken
• Dealers must plant cultch = 30% of volume of oysters purchased or pay a fee
Results of Recent Management

Coastwide Abundance

Average Market Oysters per Hour

Year

Results of Recent Management

Galveston Bay vs. Southern Bays

Average Market Oysters per Hour Year

- Galveston Bay
- Southern Bays
Achieving Sustainable Harvest

- Currently open/close areas based on traffic light
- Shell budget
  - Provides estimate of sustainable harvest based on cultch availability
  - Implementation needs:
    - Way of projecting when an area reaches quota
    - More frequent reporting
- Data needs:
  - Density estimates (Oysters/m²)
  - Mapping data