How are harvest waters classified?

DHH/OPH provides the classification and reclassification of oyster growing waters. These may be classified as:

- Approved
- Restricted
- Conditionally approved
- Conditionally restricted
- Closed
- Prohibited

loose dumping of human waste out of any boat into or near to oyster growing waters.

Did you know?

Eating raw oysters, clams or mussels taken from contaminated waters can make people very sick.

Diseases caused by tainted raw oysters

Diseases caused by consuming contaminated shellfish include typhoid fever, infectious hepatitis, gastroenteritis and cholera. These illnesses are caused by viruses and bacteria, which enter oysters and other mollusks through water contaminated by the faecal oral discharges of humans and marine animals. Gastroenteritis is a disease of the intestinal tract that is transmitted by people. Its symptoms include diarrhea, cramps, vomiting and headaches which begin 3 to 12 hours after eating contaminated oysters. The disease lasts an average of 36 hours, but can persist for up to nine days. Safe harvesting, handling and processing of shellfish is vital to good health, which is why Louisiana belongs to the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) of the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) (www.ISSC.org).

This brochure was developed by the Department of Health and Hospitals/Office of Public Health (DHH/OPH). It will provide you information about harvesting oysters in Louisiana, and let you know how you can help the Shellfish Harvest Program make harvesting and consumption safer for everyone. For the purposes of this brochure, oysters are officially included under the general term “molluscan shellfish.”

The Oyster Harvest Program is managed by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals/Office of Public Health. This program is considered one of the premier programs in the nation. The purpose of the NSSP is to promote, and improve the sanitation of shellfish rearing in interstate commerce throughout federal/state cooperation and uniformity of State shellfish programs. Other components of the NSSP include program guidelines, State growing area classifications, and shellfish certification programs. For information about enforcement contact: Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division 3305 Dole Dr. Baton Rouge, LA 70808 Ph: 225-765-2469 Fax: 225-763-3571 1-800-442-2832 www.wildlife.la.gov

The role of the NSSP

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) is the federal/state cooperative program recognized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) for the sanitary control of shellfish produced and sold for human consumption. The purpose of the NSSP is to promote, and improve the sanitation of shellfish rearing in interstate commerce throughout federal/state cooperation and uniformity of State shellfish programs. Other components of the NSSP include program guidelines, State growing area classifications, and shellfish certification programs. Under the NSSP (ISSC) determines Louisiana shellfish growing water classifications as well as certifies shellfish dealers.

Lousiana Oyster Harvesting Regulations

To obtain a permit to transplant oysters call: 1-800-256-2775...

For information on becoming the person who made the appeal. If the complaint is not satisfied with the explanation of the appeals committee, he may ask for an...
General Harvesting Rules

Because regulations for harvesting oysters can change, this document is intended for use only as a guide. It does not have the effect of law.

The following general harvest rules apply to all classified or reclassified harvest areas.

1. All shell stock harvested for either commercial or recreational purposes must come from waters classified or reclassified as approved or conditionally approved by the state health officer.

2. Unless otherwise specified, a 50-yard radius (150 ft.) closure, as measured from the point of waste discharge, exists around all man-made habitable structures. It is illegal to harvest shellfish within this designation.

3. The State Health Officer can order immediate closures to protect public health or welfare.

4. When harvesting is affected by a classification/reclassification, the harvester is responsible for knowing if he is in approved waters.

5. Sometimes buoys or other field markers are used to show the boundaries of classified or reclassified areas. They follow the approximate positions shown on the official classified/classified area maps.

6. Any removal of buoys or other field markers by unauthorized personnel will result in immediate closure of the area until such time as the proper boundary can be determined.

7. It is the harvester’s responsibility to know the classification of the growing area before conducting any harvest activity. If the area is conditionally managed, it is the harvester’s duty to know if the area is approved for harvesting before performing any type of harvest activity.

8. All oysters onboard a harvest vessel in Louisiana waters shall be considered to be oysters taken from state waters.

9. Vessel captains are required to possess valid oyster harvesting licenses.

10. Oysters for sale or consumption that are harvested from public and private grounds in state- or federal-managed areas must be landed in Louisiana.

11. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries shall be notified of the date and location of any harvest activity of oysters.

12. An official Louisiana molluscan shellfish harvest tag must be applied to each container of shellfish.

13. Oysters shall be refrigerated in accordance with a time-temperature matrix that changes seasonally. This information may be obtained from seasonal classification maps.

Illegal harvest activity may be reported day or night to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries 800-442-2511.