

December 2017 Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team Meeting

Virginia Marine Resources Commission Member Update

Virginia Oyster Fishery

With the recent adoption of a limited entry public fishery, the use of a rotational harvest strategy, and ongoing replenishment activities, the Virginia public oyster fishery has seen its recent rapid expansion stabilize somewhat. Limiting any further increase in fishing effort should be helpful in sustaining this fishery at its current level and may allow for a continued and sustainable increases in the public oyster resource. Oyster production on both public and private ground remains close to its highest point in recent decades.

Virginia Oyster Stock Assessment

This year's fall patent tong survey was recently completed. This is a collaborative effort between VMRC and VIMS and has been undertaken annually since 1993. In the fall of 2017 over 190 areas were surveyed and over 8000 individual samples taken. This annual survey is used to inform fisheries management and replenishment strategies in the upcoming year. Previous survey reports are available at <http://cmap2.vims.edu/VOSARA/viewer/VOSARA.html> and this year's report should be available by May of 2018.

Replenishment Activities

In the 2017 calendar year, VMRC contracted for the placement of more than 600,000 Virginia bushels (38,709 cubic yards) of shells on harvest and non-harvest areas. These shells were planted in locations on the Chesapeake Bay, multiple tributaries, and the seaside of the Eastern Shore. The majority of this activity was maintenance shelling on areas with an existing oyster resource. This quantity of shell placement covers approximately half of the areas in current need of replenishment.