

Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration: A Synopsis and Synthesis of Approaches

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Proceedings from the Symposium

Williamsburg, Virginia

April 1995



The decline of stocks of the eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) throughout most of its range and the collapse of fisheries in some areas has led to enhancement efforts by many U.S. states directed towards increasing or sustaining oyster harvest. A growing body of evidence indicates that oysters and the habitats that they generate provide important ecosystem services, and that declines in oyster stocks have had significant ecological consequences beyond the loss of the oyster fishery. From their role in affecting water column dynamics through benthic-pelagic coupling to their support of biodiversity as ecosystem engineers, oysters would appear to qualify as keystone species in many estuarine environments.

This volume brings together contributions from fisheries managers and research scientists in an attempt to develop a common information base and a convergence of objectives and approaches towards oyster fisheries enhancement and reef habitat restoration. The 24 chapters in this volume review the historical distribution and morphology of unexploited oyster reefs, current fisheries enhancement efforts, some of the ecological benefits of oyster reefs, as well as ideas for new approaches towards restoring reefs and sustaining their associated fisheries.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview.....by Mark W. Luckenbach,
Roger Mann and James A. Wesson

Part I. Historical Perspectives

Chapter 1 - The Evolution of the Chesapeake Oyster Reef System During the Holocene Epoch.....by William J. Hargis, Jr.

Chapter 2 - Characteristics of Relatively Unexploited Beds of the Eastern Oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, and Early Restoration Programs..... by Victor S. Kennedy and Lawrence P. Sanford

Chapter 3 - Oyster Bottom: Surface Geomorphology and Twentieth Century Changes in the Maryland Chesapeake Bayby Gary F. Smith, Kelly N. Geenhawk and Dorothy L. Jensen

Part II. Synopsis of Ongoing Efforts

Chapter 4 - Resource Management Programs for the Eastern Oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, in the U. S. Gulf of Mexico...Past, Present and Future....by Richard L. Leard, Ronald Dugas and Mark Berrigan

Chapter 5 - Oyster Habitat Restoration: A Response to Hurricane Andrew.....by William S. Perret, Ronald Dugas, John Roussel, Charles A. Wilson, and John Supan

Chapter 6 - Oyster Restoration in Alabama....by Richard K. Wallace, Kenneth Heck and Mark Van Hoose

Chapter 7 - A History of Oyster Reef Restoration in North Carolina.....by Michael D. Marshall, Jeffrey E. French and Stephen W. Shelton

Chapter 8 - Oyster Restoration Efforts in Virginiaby James Wesson, Roger Mann and Mark Luckenbach

Part III. Reef Morphology and Function Questions of Scale

Chapter 9 - South Carolina Intertidal Oyster Reef Studies: Design, Sampling and Focus for Evaluating Habitat Value and Function.....by Loren D. Coen, David M. Knott, Elizabeth L. Wenner, Nancy H. Hadley, Amy H. Ringwood and M. Yvonne Bobo

Chapter 10 - Small-scale Patterns of Recruitment on a Constructed Intertidal Reef: The Role of Spatial Refugiaby Ian K. Bartol and Roger Mann

Chapter 11 - Perspectives on Induced Settlement and Metamorphosis as a Tool for Oyster Reef Enhancementby Stephen Coon and William K. Fitt

Chapter 12 - Processes Controlling Local and Regional Patterns of Invertebrate Colonization: Applications to the Design of Artificial Oyster Habitat.....by Richard W. Osman and Robert B. Whitlatch

Chapter 13 - Reefs as Metapopulations: Approaches for Restoring and Managing Spatially Fragmented Habitatsby Robert B. Whitlatch and Richard W. Osman

Chapter 14 - Application of Landscape Ecological Principles to Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration.....by David B. Eggleston

Chapter 15 - Use of Oyster Reefs as a Habitat for Epibenthic Fish and Decapods.....by Martin H. Posey, Troy D. Alphin, Christopher M. Powell and Edward Townsend

Chapter 16 - Are Three Dimensional Structure and Healthy Oyster Populations the Keys to an Ecologically Interesting and Important Fish Community?..... by Denise L. Breitbart

Chapter 17 - Materials Processing by Oysters in Patches: Interactive Roles of Current Speed and Seston Compositionby Deborah Harsh and Mark W. Luckenbach

Chapter 18 - Oyster Reefs as Components in Estuarine Nutrient Cycling: Incidental or Controlling?.....by Richard F. Dame

Part IV. Alternative Substrates

Chapter 19 - Use of Dredged Material for Oyster Habitat Creation in Coastal Virginiaby Walter I. Priest, III, Janet Nestlerode and Christopher W. Frye

Chapter 20 - Alternatives to Clam and Oyster Shell as Cultch for Eastern Oystersby Haywood, E. L., III, T. M. Soniat and R. C. Broadhurst, III

Chapter 21 - Dredged Material as a Substrate for Fisheries Habitat Establishment in Coastal Waters.....by Douglas Clarke, David Meyer, Allison Veishlow and Michael LaCroix

Part V. Management Options and Economic Considerations

Chapter 22 - Managing Around Oyster Diseases in Maryland and Maryland Oyster Roundtable Strategiesby Kennedy T. Paynter

Chapter 23 - Chesapeake Bay Oyster Reefs, Their Importance, Destruction and Guidelines for Restoring Themby William J. Hargis, Jr. and Dexter S. Haven

Chapter 24 - Economics of Augmentation of Natural Production Using Remote Setting Techniquesby John E. Supan, Charles A. Wilson and Kenneth J. Robert