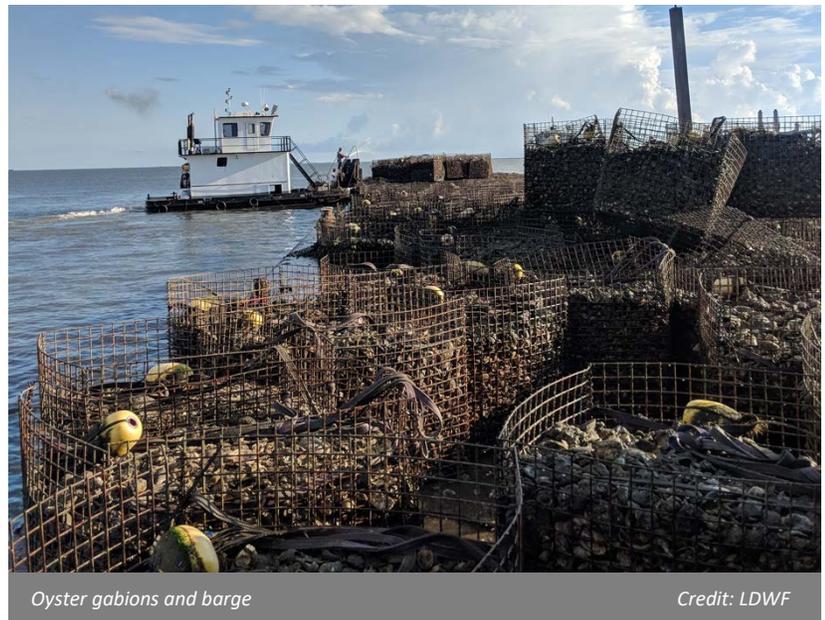


Louisiana TIG Draft Restoration Plan/ Environmental Assessment #5

Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Marine Mammals and Oysters Cultch Plant Oyster Restoration

PLAN DESCRIPTION

The *Draft Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment (RP/EA) #5: Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Marine Mammals and Oysters* describes the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill restoration planning process, evaluates a reasonable range of alternatives, and identifies four preferred alternatives that would best help compensate the public for injuries to marine mammals and oysters caused by the DWH oil spill in the Louisiana restoration area. The oyster alternatives selected in the Draft RP/EA #5 would help restore living coastal and marine resources by enhancing oyster reef productivity.



Oyster gabions and barge

Credit: LDWF

OYSTER RESTORATION TYPE

During and after the DWH oil spill, nearshore and subtidal oyster cover in the Gulf of Mexico was significantly reduced. An estimated 8.3 million adult-equivalent oysters were lost, and approximately 5.7 million oysters per year are still unable to settle because of the loss of oyster shell cover in reef habitats. The loss of oyster reef habitat has contributed to a lack of recruitment and recovery for oysters and has also contributed to shoreline erosion rates and wetland loss.

The *DWH Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* identifies the following techniques for oyster restoration:

- Restore or create oyster reefs through placement of cultch in nearshore and subtidal areas.
- Construct living shorelines.
- Enhance oyster reef productivity through spawning stock enhancement projects.
- Develop a network of oyster reef spawning reserves.

Cultch Plant Oyster Restoration

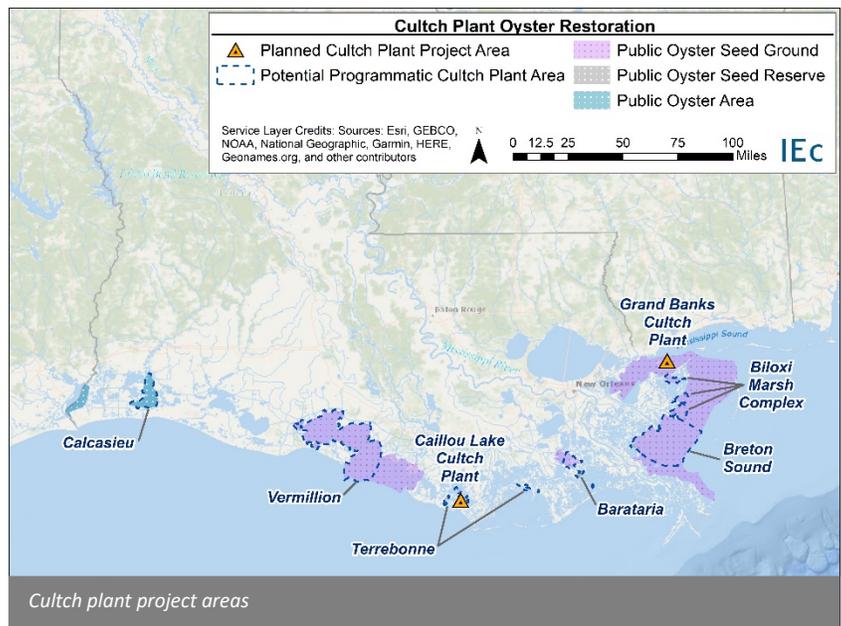
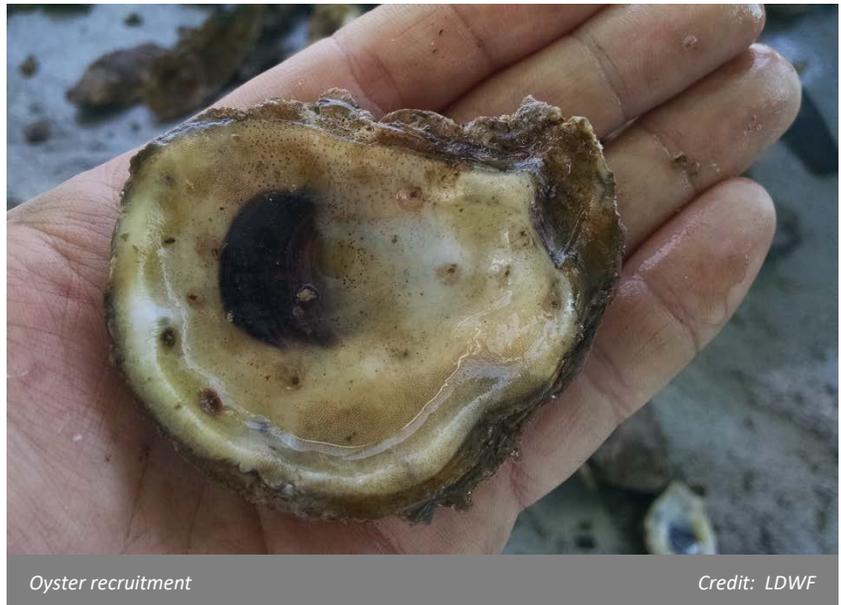
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group proposes the “Cultch Plant Oyster Restoration” project as a preferred alternative to help restore oysters. The objective of this alternative is to increase oyster abundance and spawning stock by placing cultch material. Cultch material provides a substrate for free floating oyster larvae to attach and grow, which in time results in a mature, productive oyster reef.

Planned components of this alternative would construct two cultch plants, one on the Public Oyster Seed Ground (POSG) in the Grand Banks area of Mississippi Sound, and another on the Public Oyster Seed Reserve (POSR) in Caillou Lake. This alternative would also include a programmatic component that sites additional oyster cultch plant projects in the Biloxi Marsh Complex and on other state-managed POSG or POSR in Louisiana. Specific locations would be selected based on environmental characteristics to optimize site conditions.

ESTIMATED COSTS

The estimated total project cost for the Cultch Plant Oyster Restoration project is \$10.1 million. These funds are for permitting, project construction, project oversight, supervision, monitoring, reporting, and contingency.



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