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THE IMPACT OF THE EXTENDED SEASON FOR TONGING SEED
OYSTERS IN THE JAMES RIVER VIRGINIA.

(A revision of the Marine Resource Report
#81-11 dated November 23, 1981.)

By

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May 24, 1982

Marine Resource Report #82-8

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INTRODUCTION

The seed oyster season was extended one month during the 1979-80 and 1980-81 seasons (from 30 May to 30 June). This report is the result of a request from the VMRC to update and consider again our November 23, 1981 report to the Commission.

Our November 1981 report concluded:

"We recommend that the 1981-82 season end on 30 June since there is no firm evidence of a negative impact of the added month of harvest. We advise, however, that the catch per unit of effort be monitored closely during the 1982-83 season to show any possible adverse impact on the extended season."

In the light of our re-analysis, we see no reason to change our original recommendations.

Data

Since November 1981, additional data have become available and some of the older data have been updated. None of these changes or modifications have changed our original conclusions (Table 1).

Our November 23, 1981 report considered only seed oyster harvest in relation to catch per boat day. This was the best complete information we had at the time. The revised report considers, in addition, harvest of soup and shucking oysters (Table 2).

An examination of Table 2 shows that when the harvest of all oysters is considered (seed, soup and shucking), there was a slight increase in the catch per unit of effort from 59 to 67 bushels/day during the 1981-82 season (Oct-Feb).

In collecting these data, it becomes clear that Area 137 on the VMRC Segmentation Map should be modified by the addition of another area (the clean cull area). This would eliminate uncertainty which now exists as to where the market oysters are coming from.

Conclusion (Recommendation)

From a biological aspect there is no reason why the season can not be extended to 30 June. However, conditions should be monitored closely in respect to catch, region and boat days.

Table 1¹

Harvest of seed oysters by month in Virginia bushels from the James River, Virginia from 1976 to 1982.^{1, 2}

	<u>1976-77</u>	<u>1977-78</u>	<u>1978-79</u>	<u>1979-80</u>	<u>1980-81</u>	<u>1981-82</u>
Oct	90,294	25,062	74,675	68,405	30,582	82,943
Nov	75,105	58,873	69,870	40,294	28,063	39,025
Dec	56,063	39,533	39,364	26,558	23,647	20,948
Jan	0	13,201	12,643	17,868	156	8,225
Feb	4,725	1,603	3,106	2,785	10,202	24,921
Mar	57,185	20,983	21,445	15,215	7,670	60,501
Apr	57,207	54,854	75,827	48,874	14,974	93,056
May	79,824	146,309	77,564	59,381	29,657	56,405
Jun	0	0	0	30,682	52,148	--
Total	420,403	350,418	374,494	310,062	201,992 ³	386,015
% harvested in June				10%	27%	--

¹Data does not agree with White Paper from 1976 to 1978 due to differences in data reports between NMFS and VMRC. Totals reported in White Paper are NMFS. The data shown here were supplied by VMRC on 20 November 1981.

²Data preliminary.

³Plus 4,883 bushels which can not be assigned to any one month.

Table 2¹

Catch per boat day for total oysters taken from the James River
1976-1982. Total is for seed, soups and shucking.

<u>Season</u>	<u>Seed Oyster Harvest (bu)</u>	<u>Soup and Shucking Oysters (bu)</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total No. Boat Days Worked</u>	<u>Catch/Boat/Day</u>	
					<u>Seed</u>	<u>All Oysters</u>
1976-77	420,403	3,302	423,705	MSG	--	--
1977-78	350,368	13,196	363,564	3,769	93	96
1978-79	374,494	42,669	417,163	4,445	84	94
1979-80	310,062	68,352	378,414	4,911	63	77
1980-81	201,992	135,959	337,951	5,623	36	59
1981-82 ²	Data Not Tabulated		386,015	5,742	--	67

¹Data from VMRC (revised since November 1981, VMRR #81-11).

²Data for Oct 1981 to 21 May 1982 only.