

2016 Maryland Fall Oyster Survey

Preliminary Results

Recruitment

- The Spat Index of 30.9 spat per bushel was almost 50% higher than the 32-yr median
 - o Compared to recent spatsets:
 - 2010 78
 - 2011 20.1
 - 2012 59.9
 - 2013 22.7
 - 2014 11.3
 - 2015 34.2
 - **2016 30.9**
- The 2016 Index is slightly lower than the 2015 Index but it is more evenly distributed around the bay.
- As in past years, the better spatset was observed downbay from the Choptank region, although in 2016 a light spatset occurred in the Eastern Bay region.
- Harris and Broad creeks had similar spat averages.
- The highest recruitment (586 spat/bu) was observed on Susquehanna bar at the mouth of the Little Choptank River where the Florida fossil shell was planted.
- There was no repeat of last year's strong year class in the lower Potomac. Recruitment in this region was only in double digits: the high counts were 92 spat/bu on Cornfield Harbor (Potomac R) and 91 spat/bu on Pagan (St. Marys R. sanctuary).

Observed Mortality

- The Observed Mortality Index of 16% remained well below the 32-yr average (23%). However, it has steadily risen over the past three years.
 - o Compared to recent years
 - 2010 12%
 - 2011 8 %
 - 2012 7 %
 - 2013 8 %
 - 2014 11%
 - 2015 14%
 - **2016 16%**
- Generally, elevated mortalities were spotty, with large variations among bars within the same region e.g. St. Marys River bars ranged from 14% to 64% – Langley Hollow (64%), Coppage (33%), Gravelly Run (14%).
- Regional highlights:
 - o The highest regional mortalities were on the north shore of the lower Potomac, ranging from 27% to 46% (avg. 36%).
 - o Tangier Sound averaged about 19% with a range of 0% to 46% (extremes in mortalities were on bars with few oysters);
 - o Manokin Sanctuary averaged 12.5%, which was below the overall 2016 Index. The highest Index bar (43 bar subset) mortalities were observed on Cook Pt in the Choptank R. (48%) and Ragged Pt in the Little Choptank R (45%).