

By: Representative Ladner

To: Marine Resources

HOUSE BILL NO. 972

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A PILOT PROGRAM FOR BOTTOM LAND LEASING FOR
 2 OYSTER PRODUCTION; TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
 3 TO LEASE CERTAIN AREAS OF BOTTOM LAND FOR OYSTER PRODUCTION TO
 4 OYSTER AND/OR SEAFOOD PROCESSORS WHO ONLY OPERATE IN THE WATERS
 5 ADJACENT TO HANCOCK COUNTY; TO PROVIDE THE PRICE AND LENGTH OF THE
 6 LEASE; TO PROVIDE THAT FUNDS DERIVED FROM THE LEASE SHALL BE
 7 DEPOSITED INTO SEAFOOD FUND TO FURTHER OYSTER PRODUCTION IN THIS
 8 STATE, WHICH INCLUDES PLANTINGS OF OYSTERS AND CULTCH MATERIALS;
 9 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

11 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Department of Marine Resources,
 12 hereinafter called the "department," shall conduct a pilot program
 13 for bottom land leasing for oyster production. The department
 14 shall lease to oyster and/or seafood processors who only operate
 15 in the waters adjacent to Hancock County the following areas of
 16 bottom lands for oyster production:

17 (a) Area 1: The tonging area in Hancock County from
 18 the Bay St. Louis Railroad Bridge to Long Point, which is five
 19 hundred (500) feet offshore to one (1) mile offshore.

20 (b) Area 2: Telegraph Reef.



21 (2) (a) Before approving any leases for the two (2) areas,
22 the department must make an affirmative finding that the lessee is
23 an oyster and/or seafood processor who only operates in the waters
24 adjacent to Hancock County.

25 (b) The lease shall be for a term of five (5) years,
26 and the lessee shall have the first right to renew the lease for
27 an additional five (5) years. Before such renewal, the department
28 may adjust the acreage and price of the lease to reflect the total
29 number of acres of oyster production.

30 (c) Each lease shall set a price at Two Dollars (\$2.00)
31 per acre for at least the first five (5) years of the lease.

32 (d) All funds derived from leasing shall be paid to the
33 department for deposit into the Seafood Fund under Section
34 49-15-17, for use by the department to further oyster production
35 in this state, which includes plantings of oysters and cultch
36 materials.

37 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
38 and after its passage.

