

By: Representative Ladner

To: Marine Resources

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
HOUSE BILL NO. 972

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

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

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

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

19 (b) Area 2: Telegraph Reef.

20 (2) (a) Before approving any leases for the two (2) areas,
21 which shall include any natural reefs within the areas, the



22 Secretary of State must make an affirmative finding that the
23 lessee is an oyster and/or seafood processor who only operates in
24 the waters 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 Secretary
28 of State may adjust the acreage and price of the lease to reflect
29 the total 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 Secretary of State for deposit into the Seafood Fund under Section
34 49-15-17, for use by the Department of Marine Resources to further
35 oyster production in this state, which includes plantings of
36 oysters and cultch materials.

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

