



To: Chairman Aplin and Members of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission

Re: Statewide Oyster Fishery Proclamation

Position: Support

Date: March 23, 2022

Chairman Aplin and Honorable Members of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I write to express our support for the Statewide Oyster Fishery Proclamation that includes a prohibition of oyster harvest in Carlos Bay, Mesquite Bay, and Ayres Bay, collectively representing less than 3% of the total coastal oyster habitat. Given the recent challenges faced by these ecologically important oyster reefs, we support the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) ability to open and close areas to harvest based on the best available science, which has indicated a moratorium is currently necessary for these bays. Doing so will ensure these reefs are able to recover and remain healthy for the benefit of Texas' fish and wildlife resources, as well as the sportsmen and women who pursue them.

Since 1989, CSF has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

CSF has long maintained the support for the use of well-regulated fishing as a viable management tool that provides important opportunities for sportsmen and women. However, with this passion for the conservation for our shared fisheries resources comes the acknowledgement that harvest closures are sometimes necessary for the recovery and long-term conservation of fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The oyster fisheries in Carlos, Mesquite, and Ayres Bays represent one such example in which a moratorium on oyster harvest is necessary. The recent, significant environmental stressors from tropical storms, prolonged freshwater inflows, and drought, combined with an increase in commercial fishing activities in these bays, has resulted in lower oyster recruitment and overall reef health. A moratorium on

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oyster harvest is necessary to allow the reefs to rebuild and seed other nearby reefs that remain open for commercial harvest. While the closure will have some short-term impacts on commercial oyster harvest, a moratorium will be beneficial to the long-term sustainability of the commercial oyster industry in Texas.

In addition to the cultural and economic importance of this fishery, Texas oyster reefs play a critical role in estuarine ecosystem health through vital services such as habitat for a variety of fish and invertebrate species, shoreline stabilization, water quality improvements, wave attenuation during storms, and overall coastal resiliency in the face of climate variability. While the bays in question represent a relatively small percentage of the total Texas oyster habitat; closing them to oyster harvest will play an important role in the state's coastwide conservation and restoration efforts.

Given the challenges faced by this ecosystem and the potential negative impacts associated with continued oyster harvest on these reefs, we support the TPWD's Statewide Oyster Fishery Proclamation and the proposed closure of Carlos Bay, Mesquite Bay, and Ayres Bay to oyster fishing. Thank you again for your time and consideration on these matters. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,



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