Eastern Oyster Fishery Management Plan: Draft Amendment 5

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Marine Fisheries

NC Marine Fisheries Commission | Joe Facendola, Bennett Paradis | May 2025

Eastern Oyster FMP Amendment 5

Timeline

- Division holds public scoping period
- MFC approves goal and objectives of FMP Amendment 5
- Division drafts FMP
- FMP advisory committee workshop to further develop draft FMP
- Division updates draft plan
- MFC votes to send draft FMP for AC review and public comment
- Public and MFC AC review
- MFC selects preferred management options
- Legislative review of draft FMP
- **MFC votes on final adoption of FMP Amendment 5**
- Division implements management strategies

You are here

Outline

- Recreational Shellfish Harvest
- Mechanical Oyster Harvest
- MFC Preferred Management Options
- Legislative Review
- Action Item: Vote on Final Adoption of Amendment 5 to the Eastern Oyster FMP

Management Options and MFC Selection

Appendix 1: Recreational Shellfish Harvest: Shared issue between Hard Clam & Eastern Oyster FMPs

Option 1: Recreational Shellfish Harvest

Option 1.a: Status Quo

Option 1.b: Support the NCDMF to further explore options outside the FMP process to develop solutions regarding recreational shellfish, including participation & landings estimates, and distributing health-safety information to participants.

Appendix 2: Mechanical Oyster Harvest Management

Addressing management for the mechanical fishery for subtidal oyster stocks (wild) in Pamlico Sound

<u>Origination:</u>

DMF and MFC via selected management strategies adopted in CHPP

Potential Management for Mechanical Oyster Harvest

Strategy 1: Deep-Water Oyster Recovery Areas (DORAs)
(habitat value > fishery value)

Strategy 2: Cultch Supported Harvest
(habitat value = fishery value)

Strategy 3: Rotational Cultch Sites
(habitat value < fishery value)

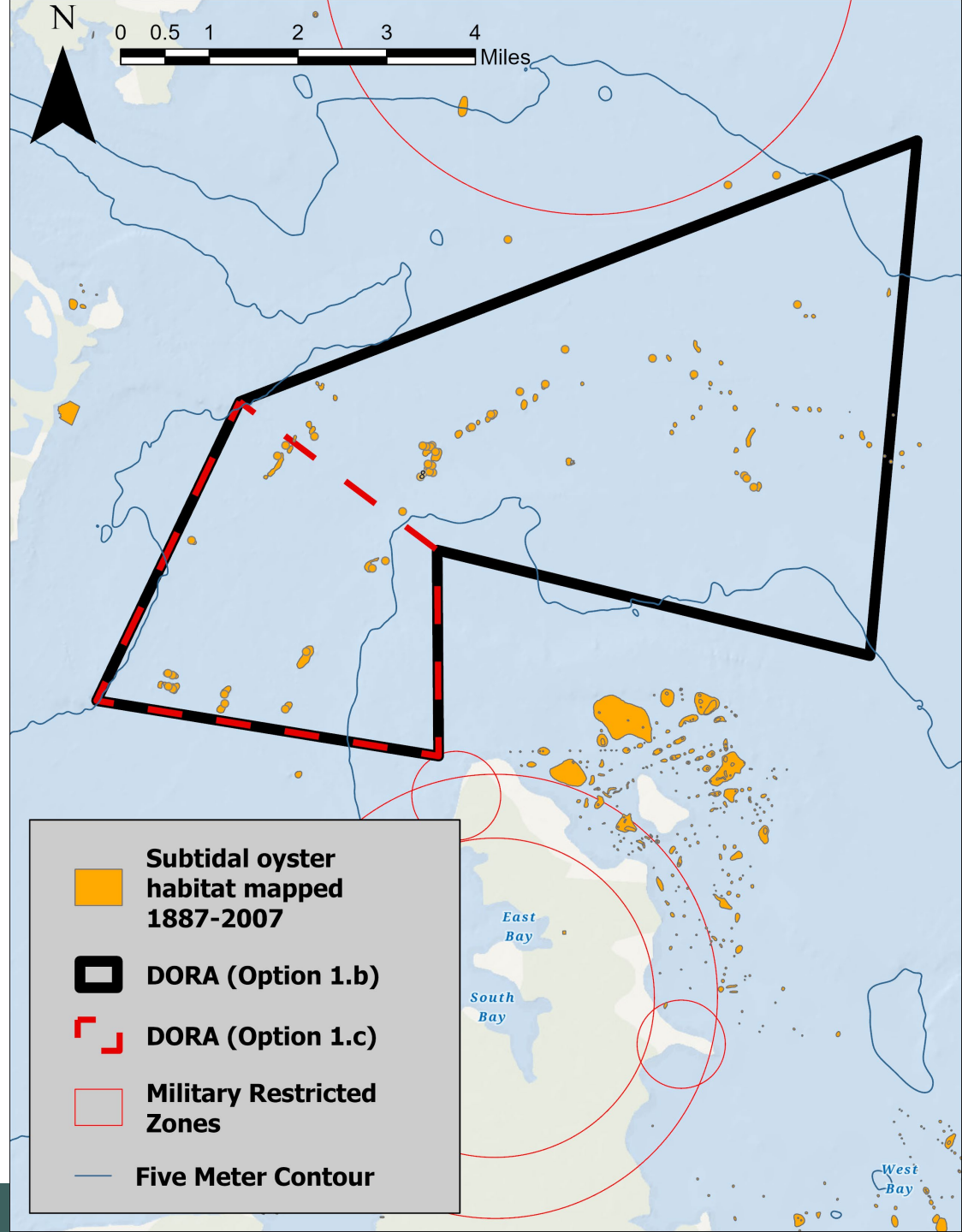
Strategy 1: Deep-Water Oyster Recovery Areas (DORAs)

- Deep-water reefs suffer mass mortality from low oxygen events in Pamlico and Neuse rivers
- 845 acres of historical deep-water reefs that overlap with the CHPP's strategic habitat areas
- DMF proposes to establish two DORAs that would be closed to mechanical oyster harvest
- **Goals:**
  - Reduce gear disturbance to allow for recovery and vertical growth of valuable habitat
  - Evaluate effectiveness of closure for future sustainable harvest
  - Indirect reef habitat benefits

Strategy 1: Deep-Water Oyster Recovery Areas

- Neuse River DORA options
  - Option 1.a: Status Quo
  - Option 1.b: Larger Areas
  - Option 1.c: Smaller Areas

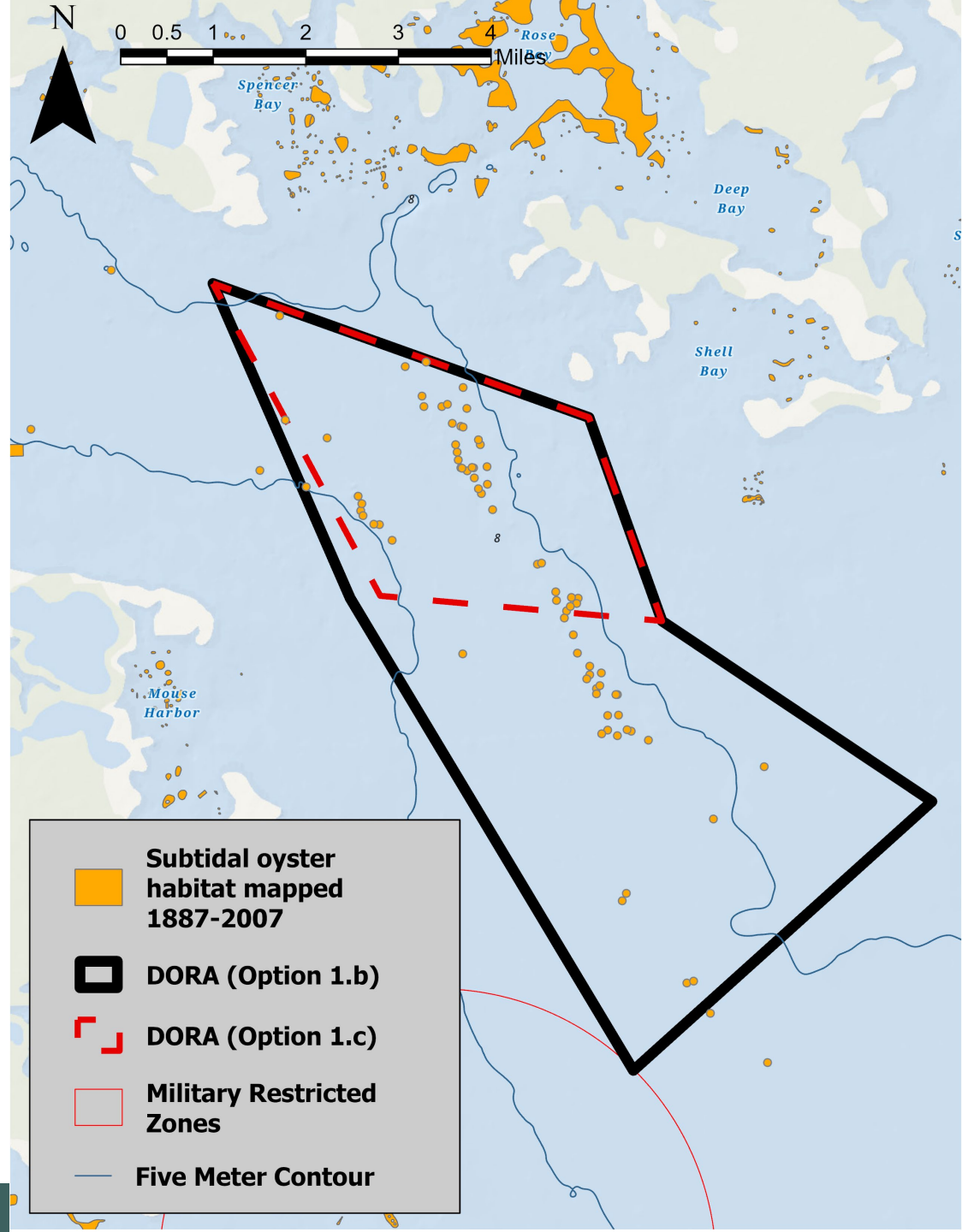
- Potential Neuse River oyster habitat protected =
  - Option 1.a: 0 acres
  - Option 1.b: 180 acres (73% oyster habitat)
  - Option 1.c: 71 acres (29% oyster habitat)



Strategy 1: Deep-Water Oyster Recovery Areas

- Pamlico River DORA options
  - Option 1.a: Status Quo
  - Option 1.b: Larger Areas
  - Option 1.c: Smaller Areas

- Potential Pamlico River oyster habitat protected =
  - Option 1.a: 0 acres
  - Option 1.b: 500 acres (88% oyster habitat)
  - Option 1.c: 200 acres (33% oyster habitat)



Management Options and MFC Selection

Appendix 2: Mechanical Harvest

Option 1: Deepwater Oyster Recover Areas (DORAs)

Option 1.a: Status Quo

Option 1.b: Adopt the larger proposed Deepwater Oyster Recover Areas

Option 1.c: Adopt the smaller proposed Deepwater Oyster Recover Areas

Strategy 2: Cultch Supported Harvest Areas

- Significant cultch planting effort in bays and eastern sound to make up for harvest removal
- Proposed areas aim to encompass all cultch sites
- Use existing bushel limits, areas and season dates
- Redesign trigger monitoring to use industry input for sampling locations to determine fixed season lengths

Management Options and MFC Selection

Appendix 2: Mechanical Harvest

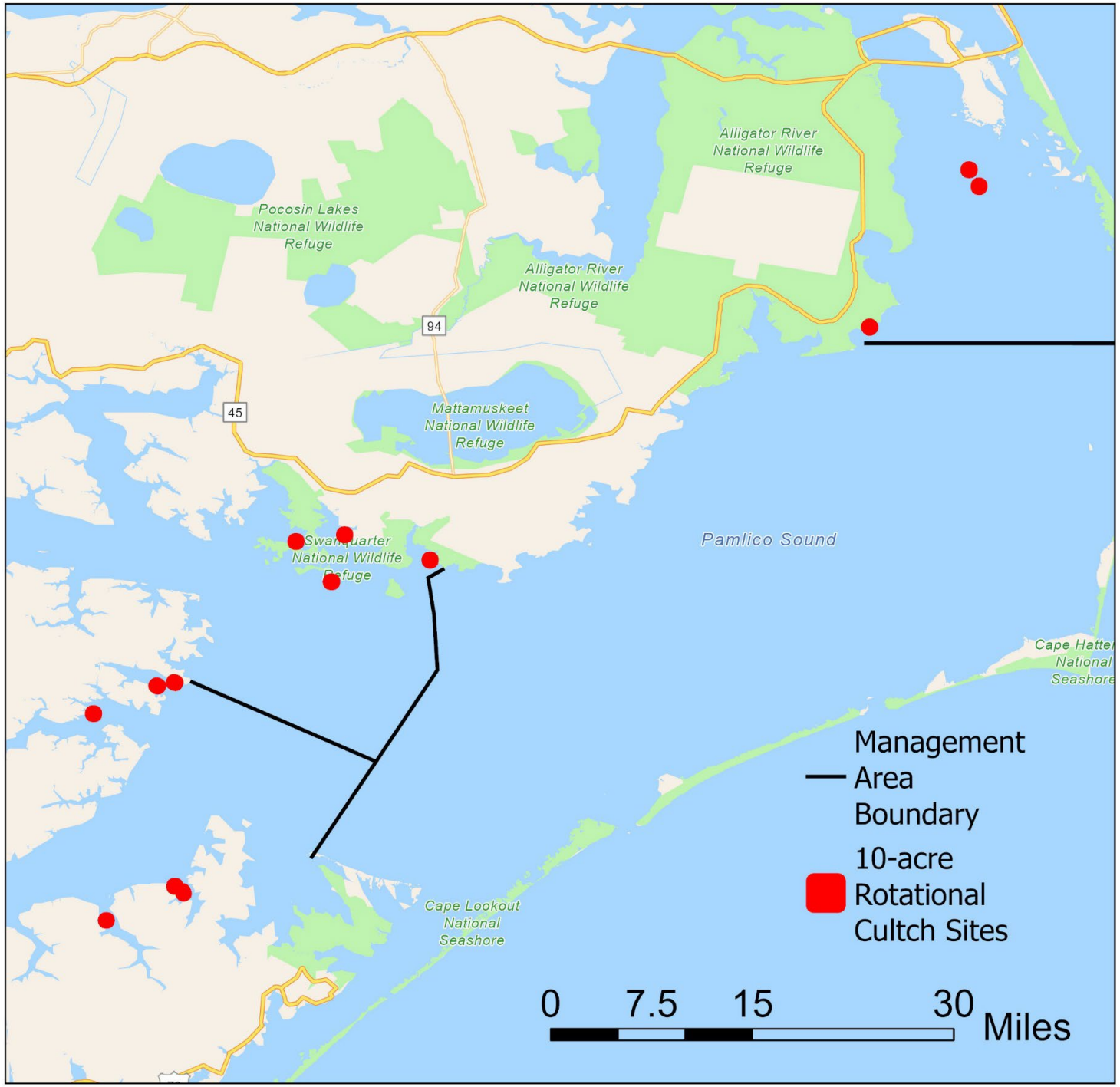
Option 2: Cultch Supported Harvest Strategy

Option 2.a: Status Quo

Option 2.b: Adopt proposed Cultch Supported Harvest Strategy

Strategy 3: Rotational Cultch Sites

- Large 10-acre cultch sites
- Goal: 16 sites by 2026 (13 constructed to date)
- Rotational opening strategy, replenish sites as needed
- Open full potential season (Nov-Mar) bushel limit depends on area



Management Options and MFC Selection

Appendix 2: Mechanical Harvest

Option 3: Rotational Cultch Site Strategy

Option 3.a: Status Quo

Option 3.b: Adopt proposed Rotational Cultch Site Strategy

Adaptive Management
Cultch Supported Harvest Areas

- Adaptive Management Option needed
- Large changes in effort could result in fixed season length being too short or too long
- “Large change” identified as 25% more (> 116) or less (<70) average participants over a three-year period
- Triggers examination of oyster sampling data and potential adjustment to fixed season lengths for Cultch Supported Harvest Areas

Management Options and MFC Selection

Appendix 2: Mechanical Harvest

Option 4: Adaptive Management for Cultch Supported Harvest Strategy

Option 4.a: Status Quo

Option 4.b: Adopt proposed Adaptive Management to allow for modifying season length based on participation fluctuations

Amendment 5: MFC Selected Management Strategies

Appendix 1: Recreational Harvest

- Adopt **Option 1.b:** Support the NCDMF to further explore options outside the FMP process to develop solutions regarding recreational shellfish, including participation & landings estimates, and distributing health-safety information to participants.

Appendix 2: Mechanical Harvest

- Adopt **Option 1.b** for Deepwater Oyster Recover Areas (Larger DORAs)
- Adopt **Option 2.b** for proposed Cultch Supported Harvest Strategy
- Adopt **Option 3.b** for Rotational Cultch Site Strategy
- Adopt **Option 4.b** Adaptive Management to allow for modifying season length based on participation fluctuations

Action Item: Final Adoption

Vote on final adoption of Eastern Oyster Fishery Management Plan Amendment 5

Questions

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