

Drakes Estero Mariculture Production History and Management

**Department of Fish and Game
Kirsten Ramey
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Overview

- Department of Fish and Game's Management Authority in Drakes Estero
- 1992 Record of Agreement
- History of oyster and clam production in Drakes Estero

Department of Fish and Game's Management Authority

- 1934 – Leasing of state water bottoms in Drakes Estero dates to at least 1934
- 1965 – CA Legislature granted to the U.S. tide and submerged lands within PRNS (Chapter 983, Statutes of 1965)
- 1972 – Johnson Oyster Company conveyed its property to the U.S., subject to a reservation of occupancy and use in the grant deed

Management Authority cont.

- The reservation specifies a 40-year term and expires in November 2012
- The existing state water bottoms leases are contingent upon the reservation of use and occupancy, which after it expires, requires a special use permit



Management Authority cont.

- The state water bottoms leases in Drakes Estero were renewed by the Fish and Game Commission in 1979 and again in 2004
 - Made contingent upon compliance with the 1972 agreement and, after its expiration, with any PRNS special use permit

Management Authority cont.

- The 1965 legislative grant did not create an area of exclusive federal jurisdiction
 - The oyster farm continues to be subject to ongoing Department management, oversight and enforcement
- In July 2007, DFG, DBOC, NPS, and CCC met with U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein

1992 Record of Agreement

- June 1991 – PRNS expressed concerns on the impacts of JOC to harbor seal haul out areas in a letter to DFG
- October 1991 - DFG recommends notifying the NMFS of any perceived violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and a meeting with NPS, DFG, JOC, and NMFS

Record of Agreement cont.

- NMFS arranges an interagency meeting to discuss concerns surrounding JOC operations for December 1991
- January 1992 meeting with representatives from NPS, NMFS, JOC, DFG and DHS
- Understanding was reached during the meeting regarding harbor seal protection in Drakes Estero and a Record of Agreement was drafted

Record of Agreement cont.

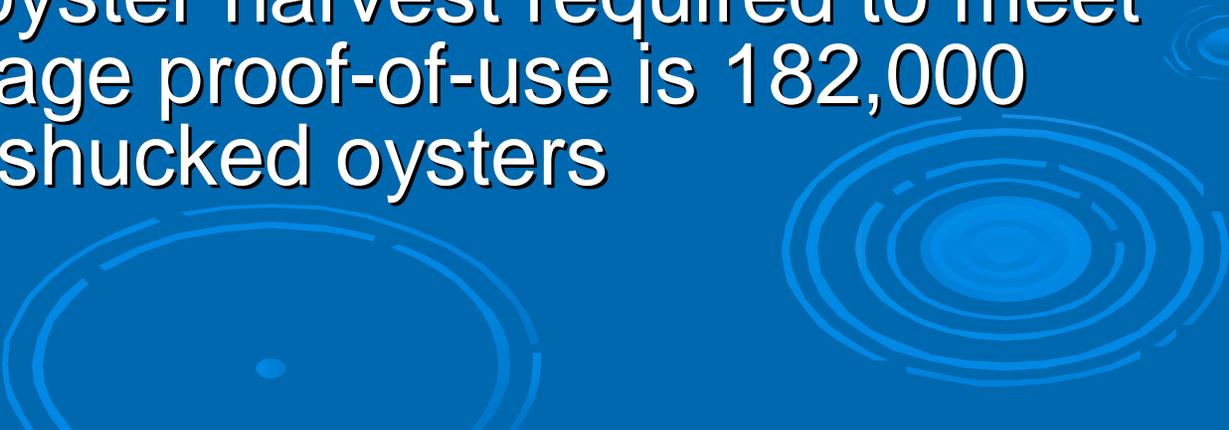
- A series of operating procedures was agreed upon to minimize the disturbance to harbor seals
 - During pupping season, March 15 – June 30, the main channel of Drakes Estero will be closed to boat traffic.
 - The “lateral channel” between beds 2, 3, and 1 are closed to boat traffic from March 15 – June 1.
 - Oyster seeding operations in beds 1, 2, and 3, located between Creamery bay and Barries Bay, be deferred until June 1, if possible. Earlier commencement dates, if any, should be coordinated between JOC and NPS.
 - The “lateral channel” should be used as little as possible between June 1 – June 30. Oyster beds 2 and 3 should be approached from the north at low speed, and the beds themselves planted from north to south so that disturbance near the “lateral channel” will occur toward the end of the pupping season.

Record of Agreement cont.

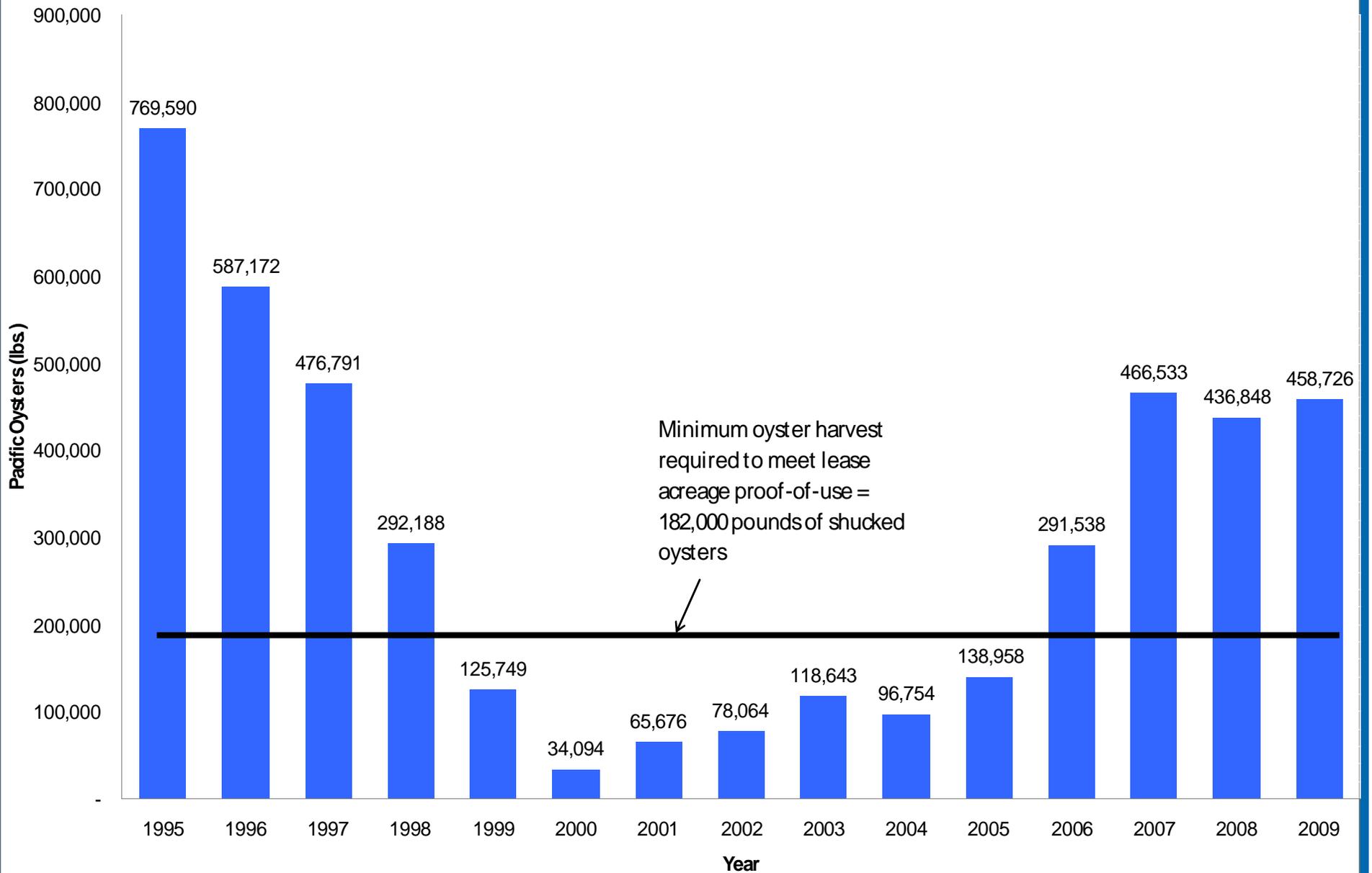
- The operating procedures have been in place and used by JOC and DBOC since 1992



History of Oyster Production

- A combination of economic and disease impacts resulted in a series of production declines in Drakes/Tomales Bay area beginning in 1996 through 2003
 - From 1984 to 1997 oyster production remained at a level equal to or above the current 2009 production
 - Minimum oyster harvest required to meet lease acreage proof-of-use is 182,000 pounds of shucked oysters
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Drakes Estero Oyster Production in Shucked Pounds from 1995 to 2009



History of Clam Production

- The Manila clam is the species cultured in California
- The culture of clams in CA began in 1981, but production levels were relatively low until the mid 1990s
- 2009 is the first year that DBOC has harvested Manila clams – 458 pounds



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