

LEC/LETC State Report – 10/18/23
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Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to work closely with our State and Federal Partners to provide effective and efficient conservation law enforcement across the State of Texas as well as within the EEZ.

2022-2023 JEA Priority Hours Completed

JEA 2022 CONTRACT HOURS (SEPT 16, 2022 - AUG 31, 2023)								
TEDS		REEF FISH		IFQ	IUU	FLOWER GARDEN	GENERAL ENF. / HMS	
NEARSHORE	LONG-RANGE	MID-RANGE	LONG-RANGE	DOCKSIDE	DOCKSIDE	LONG-RANGE	MID-RANGE	LONG-RANGE
287	240	72	48	60	60	128	72	128

Grants/Projects

In addition to JEA funded patrols, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department participates in NRDA funded patrols which concentrate on Ted Enforcement along the Texas Coast.

The Department is also working with the Texas Trustees on the implementation of two new NRDA projects. One that will provide additional funding for equipment and operating to remove illegal fishing gear from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico - South of Corpus Christi and another that will provide funding to assist with sea turtle stranding events along the Texas Coast.

Texas Regulatory /Legislation Changes

- **Senate Bill 1839 - Sale or Purchase of Shark Fins** - Amended Parks and Wildlife Code (PWC) Section 66.2161 to address enforcement and prosecutorial concerns within the statutory language related to the sale or purchase of shark fins by:
 - Explicitly expressing prohibited actions related to the sale and purchase of shark fins.
 - Providing clear and direct requirements related to the destruction and disposal of shark fins.
 - Explicitly expressing that noncompliance is an offense.
 - Adding prima facie evidence language that addresses concerns of, does the product contain actual shark fin and/or is it being possessed for a commercial purpose.

- **House Bill 1333 – Sale and Purchase of Certain Fish**- Amended Parks and Wildlife Code (PWC) Section 66.020 and 66.111 to:
 - Exempt Texas wholesalers, retailers, and restaurants from Texas Finfish Import License requirements when selling fish raised by an operator of a Texas Commercial Aquaculture Facility.
 - Allow for the purchase, sell, or offer to sell, possess for the purpose of sale, transport, or ship for the purpose of sale, barter, or exchange of:
 - Fish sold by licensed wholesale fish dealers, licensed retail fish dealers and/or restaurants, so long as, the fish were raised by being continuously fed a prepared feed and sold by an operator of a Texas Commercial Aquaculture Facility
 - Bass of the genus *Micropterus* and crappie not being fed a prepared feed, if the fish were reared in private water and sold by an operator of a Texas Commercial Aquaculture Facility for the purpose of stocking water under a permit or private water with permitted under the Agriculture Code.
 - Fish lawfully imported by a holder of a Texas finfish import license from the exclusive economic zone.
 - Amends PWC Section 66.020 by removing provisions that imported fish must not be alive.

- **Senate Bill 1032 – Oyster Certificate of Location Expansion:**
 - Amends Parks and Wildlife Code (PWC) Chapter 76 to allow TPWD to expand and create guidelines for the program to be used for restoration purposes for groups that want to help support oyster restoration.
 - Amends PWC Chapter 76 by changing the definition of “Natural Oyster Bed”, thus allowing for the expansion of certificate of locations.

- **House Bill 1809 – Commercial Oyster Mariculture Advisory Board**
 - Establishes a seven-member advisory board, appointed by the Governor, to advise all state agencies with regulatory authority over commercial oyster mariculture (COM).
- **Shortfin Mako Shark** – Were added to the State prohibited list of shark species.
- **Cobia** – The State bag limit was lowered to 1 fish per person per day.
- **New Venting Tool/Descending Device Requirements** – Requires reef fish anglers fishing state waters to have a venting tool or descending device rigged and ready and requires the use of the tool/device if releasing a reef fish exhibiting signs of barotrauma.
- **Spotted Seatrout Update** – As a result of the widespread impact to spotted seatrout from the winter freeze of 2021, an emergency rule was enacted to temporarily established a 3 fish bag limit with an increase in the minimum size limit to 17 inches and created a maximum size limit of 23 inches. This rule recently reached its sunset date on August 31, 2023, and has since reverted to the prior statewide size and bag limits.

IUU Enforcement

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to focus on IUU enforcement at our Ports of Entry and on our waterways along the Texas/ Mexico border. IUU fishing continues to be a concern along the Texas/Mexico border as the lancha fleet continues to negatively impact our natural resources. In addition to JEA funding, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to provide State funding to increase IUU enforcement. As mentioned above, the Department is also working with the Texas Trustees on the implementation of a new NRDA project that will provide additional funding for equipment and operating to be focused on the removal of illegal fishing gear from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico - South of Corpus Christi.



