

Floating Bag Farms

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WORKSHEET

PRIOR TO HURRICANE SEASON

- Check stocking densities and reduce as necessary (though some farmers have had success by overstocking bags to achieve neutral buoyancy just prior to a storm).
- Check biofouling and control on a routine basis.
- Check all lines for chafing (especially near the clips) and repair as needed.
- Check all bag clips are secured and in good condition at attachment points.
- Have crew conduct timed practices to gauge time needed per line to prepare for a storm.
- For shoreside operations, pick up loose pieces of equipment and secure bags to reduce loss from flooding and wind.
- Review storm plan with crew and family so they can account for personal preparations alongside farm preparations.
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DURING HURRICANE SEASON

CODE YELLOW

- Re-check stocking densities and reduce as necessary. If opting to overstock bags to achieve slightly positive buoyancy, ensure stocking is appropriate.
- Farmers opting to sink their bags below the surface but still float off the bottom by overstocking bags should consider taking this step now.
- Re-check all lines for chafing (especially near the clips) and repair as needed.
- Ensure all bag clips are secured and in good condition.
- Secure any empty bags on shore or on lines.
- Document the condition of the farm with dated photographs and notes.
- Document the numbers of various sizes of oysters.
- Review workboat(s) plan.
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CODE ORANGE

- Sell product as market allows.
- Track the storm's progress frequently and carefully. When assessing whether to sink bags, keep in mind the amount of time necessary to carry out the sinking operation. Farmers should also weigh the risks of bags and oysters being buried in the substrate.
- Remember that the day before the storm is to make landfall, farmers should not plan to be on the water. They will need that day for other preparations and weather will likely not allow for it.
- If weather conditions do not warrant sinking bags, consider adding slack to anchor lines to allow for storm surge. Alternatively, some farmers opt to tighten their mainlines to pull bags under the water surface.
- If weather conditions warrant sinking bags, remove both floats from bags and allow them to rest on the bottom or remove one float or alternate floats to partially or completely submerge the bags to keep them just above the bottom. Store floats safely onshore.
- For systems that have floats with caps, remove caps from floats or alternate floats and ensure all air from floats is removed when sinking.
- Some growers suggest replacing caps on floats (once all air is removed) to prevent sediment from filling the floats (though this may depend on sediment type). This adds considerable time to preparations.
- If allowed by state regulations, some farmers opt to tow floating bags to more protected areas.
- Prepare to implement workboat(s) plan.
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CODE RED

- Conduct last check of farm.
- Implement workboat(s) plan.
- Get to safety.
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POST-STORM RECOVERY

- Assess risk of returning to farm and proceed only when safe.
- Patrol the area upstream and downstream of the farm for significant debris that could entangle or dislodge gear once it is refloated and remove or secure debris.
- Document the condition of the farm with dated photographs and notes.
- Refloat bags as soon as practically possible by adding flotation and/or reducing stocking densities.
- If caps were removed from floats, use systems designed for this task, with bags lifted from reinforced points, allowing water to drain out the end caps and being careful to work any bags out of the sea floor if necessary.
- If necessary, use an on-board washdown hose to rinse sediment off the bags or out of floats and recap once washed down.
- Assess and document oyster survival, gear condition, and losses.
- Once mortality risk has passed, resume normal biofouling regimen.
- Communicate with public agencies about closures and effects of the storm.
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