Floating Cage Farms
HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WORKSHEET

PRIOR TO HURRICANE SEASON

- ☐ Maintain appropriate stocking densities so that cages are not crowded and heavy.
- ☐ Air dry cages to control biofouling on a routine basis.
- ☐ Make it a habit to check bridles and lines when flipping to ensure lines do not get tangled.
- ☐ Check all lines for chafing, and repair as needed.
- ☐ Check all door closures to ensure that the attachments are secure and not worn.
- ☐ Have extra caps on hand in workboat.
- ☐ Remove empty cages from the line, as these are prone to come off the line in bad weather.
- ☐ Have crew conduct timed sinking practices (including in less than ideal weather conditions) to gauge time needed per line to correctly sink cages.
- ☐ For shoreside operations, pick up loose pieces of equipment, and secure cages and 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, taking special care with any bags of seed as the smaller mesh can produce more water resistance.
- ☐ Re-check all lines for chafing and repair as needed.
- ☐ Re-check that all bridles and pucks are in good condition.
- ☐ Re-check that all bag and cage closures are in good condition.
- ☐ Consider consolidating all small seed (e.g., seed held in 2 mm bags) to one section of cages so that you can re-float those cages first once the threat has passed
- ☐ Secure any empty bags and cages 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 cages, keep in mind the amount of time necessary to carry out the sinking operation.
- ☐ 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 the weather will likely not allow it.
- ☐ If weather conditions do not warrant sinking cages based on personal judgement, consider adding slack to anchor lines to allow for storm surge.
- ☐ If weather conditions warrant sinking cages, ensure that cages sit "float down" on the bottom, with the wire mesh off the bottom (though this may depend on sediment type).
- ☐ Ensure all air from floats is removed when sinking, and walk or dive over the cages to be sure the pontoons are down, with adjustments made as needed.
- ☐ 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).
- ☐ 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 cages as soon as practically possible, using the systems designed for this task, with cages lifted from reinforced points, allowing the water to drain out the end caps and being careful to work any cages out of the sea floor if necessary.
- ☐ If necessary, use an on-board washdown hose to rinse sediment 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.
- ☐ Communicate with buyers and suppliers to provide situation and outlook reports.
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