



Life's better outside.®

February 1, 2018

VIA EMAIL

Re: Oyster Shell Recovery Program – Austin, TX

Dear Mr. Col,

The commercial oyster industry represents a multimillion-dollar industry in the state of Texas. During 2017, over 3.4 million pounds of oyster meats were harvested from Texas estuaries with an ex-vessel value of \$20.2 million. This represents a total annual economic impact to the state of Texas that exceeds \$36 million.

In addition to the value of the commercial fishery, oysters provide significant value through the ecosystem services they provide to Texas' estuaries. These ecosystem services include enhancing water quality, stabilizing shorelines, providing habitat for many other species and reducing excessive nutrients from that water that can contribute to harmful algal blooms. The value of these ecosystem services has been conservatively estimated to range between \$13,000 and \$240,000 per acre per year.

As oysters are harvested, the shell upon which the next generation of oysters grow is also removed. Since the 1950's, over 2 million cubic yards of shell has been removed from Texas' bay systems; over 40% of that quantity has been removed in the last 20 years. As such, returning oyster shell or other suitable materials to oyster reefs is a priority with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

Your proposed project to collect oyster shells from participating restaurants for the purpose of returning to Texas' coastal bay systems is commendable. As we discussed on Friday, January 27, 2018, TPWD is willing to work with you regarding the logistics of getting this material returned to the bay if you're able to accumulate a sufficient quantity to justify shipping costs.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lance Robinson
Coastal Fisheries Division
Deputy Division Director
(512) 389-4649
lance.robinson@tpwd.texas.gov

Commissioners

T. Dan Friedkin
Chairman
Houston

Ralph H. Duggins
Vice-Chairman
Fort Worth

Anna B. Galo
Laredo

Bill Jones
Austin

Jeanne W. Latimer
San Antonio

James H. Lee
Houston

S. Reed Morian
Houston

Dick Scott
Wimberley

Kelcy L. Warren
Dallas

Lee M. Bass
Chairman-Emeritus
Fort Worth

Carter P. Smith
Executive Director