Baylor Grounds (public oyster grounds)

In 1894 a massive two-year survey was conducted throughout State tidal waters (in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries as well as on the Atlantic coast) to locate and map the naturally productive oyster beds, rocks, and shoals. Known as the "Baylor Survey," these areas are reserved for public shellfish harvesting and cannot be leased or used for other purposes.The Baylor Survey is still in use, and is shown on current oyster planting ground maps.

Status of the data
2015

Data Source
Baylor Grounds. Virginia Marine Resources Commission

A deck boat on the Bay. Photo by Shep Moon.

To access this data layer/tool directly, please visit:

https://webapps.mrc.virginia.gov/public/maps/chesapeakebay_map.php

For original datasets, please contact:

Erik Barth
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607.00000000
Phone: (757) 247-2262
Fax:
Email: Erik.Barth@mrc.virginia.gov

Why should we care?
Public shellfish grounds, particularly oyster grounds, used to provide ecological services such as filtering coastal waters of algae and fine sediment, helping to reduce shoreline erosion by breaking up wave energy before it hit the shore and providing food and habitat for other sea life. Unfortunately the 3-dimensional oyster reefs of the past and now even the 2-dimensional oyster "beds" have been severely reduced due to diseases, and over 100 years of heavy harvesting.Oysters continue to fetch a high price in the market and are prized items on restaurant menus. In 1973 the annual oyster harvest in Virginia was about 4.9 million pounds In 2004 the total harvest was only 23,800 pounds. Oysters are still a part of Virginia's heritage and the independent, hard-working lifestyle of the waterman is often romanticized. The oyster continues to be an important part of our cherished holiday meals and local festivals.

Links to find more information:
General Oyster Info
Oyster Landings Data
Urbanna Oyster Festival

How is this resource managed?
The Constitution of Virginia, Article XI, guarantees that the natural oyster beds, rocks and shoals be reserved for public shellfishing use. Virginia's Marine Patrol Officers regularly patrol the public grounds to ensure compliance.

Links to find more information about how this resource is managed:
Oyster Regulations
Oystering Licenses
Shellfish Harvest Permits

Why was the GIS data created?
The Marine Resources Commission maintains the Baylor ground boundaries in an AutoCAD system for legal enforcement purposes. The boundaries in this system were converted to an ArcInfo GIS format to be viewable along with other mapped data.

Links to projects that funded this data acquisition:
Blue Infrastructure Maps Grant

How was the GIS data created?
This data layer was created by VIMS using ARCInfo topology with converted AutoCad files from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission combined with shoreline data at a scale of 1:5,000.This data layer was created by VIMS using ARCInfo topology with converted AutoCad files from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission combined with shoreline data at a scale of 1:5,000.

Future Directions?
This data layer was created by VIMS using ARCInfo topology with converted AutoCad files from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission combined with shoreline data at a scale of 1:5,000.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are public oyster grounds called "Baylor Grounds"?
Baylor was the last name of the surveyor who mapped these areas in 1894.