

ASSESSING THE FEASIBILITY OF THE CO-CULTURE OF PEELER CRAB FOR SOFT-SHELL BLUE CRAB (*Callinectes sapidus*) PRODUCERS ON OFF-BOTTOM OYSTER (*Crassostrea virginica*) FARMS IN LOUISIANA

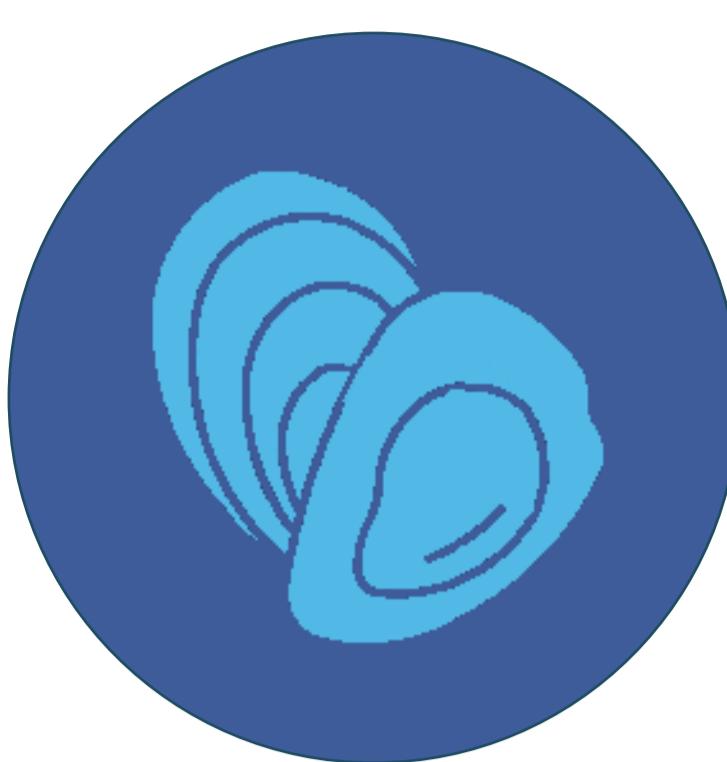
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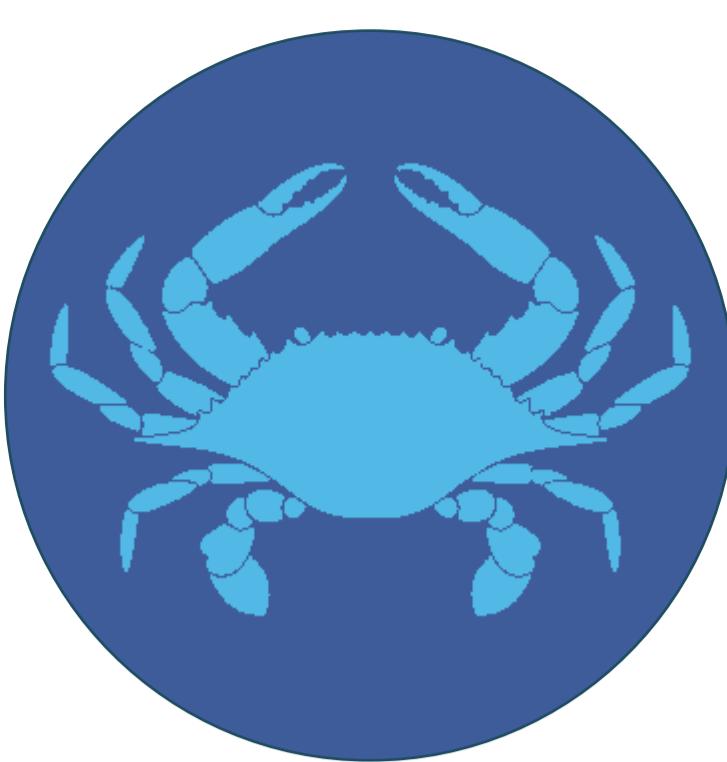
In 2024, Louisiana led the country in both Eastern Oyster (*C. virginica*) and Blue Crab (*C. sapidus*) landings.



The oyster and soft-shell crab industries have been declining due to natural and anthropogenic factors.



Alternative oyster culture (AOC; off-bottom aquaculture) is an alternative method to producing oysters and has significant labor and gear costs.

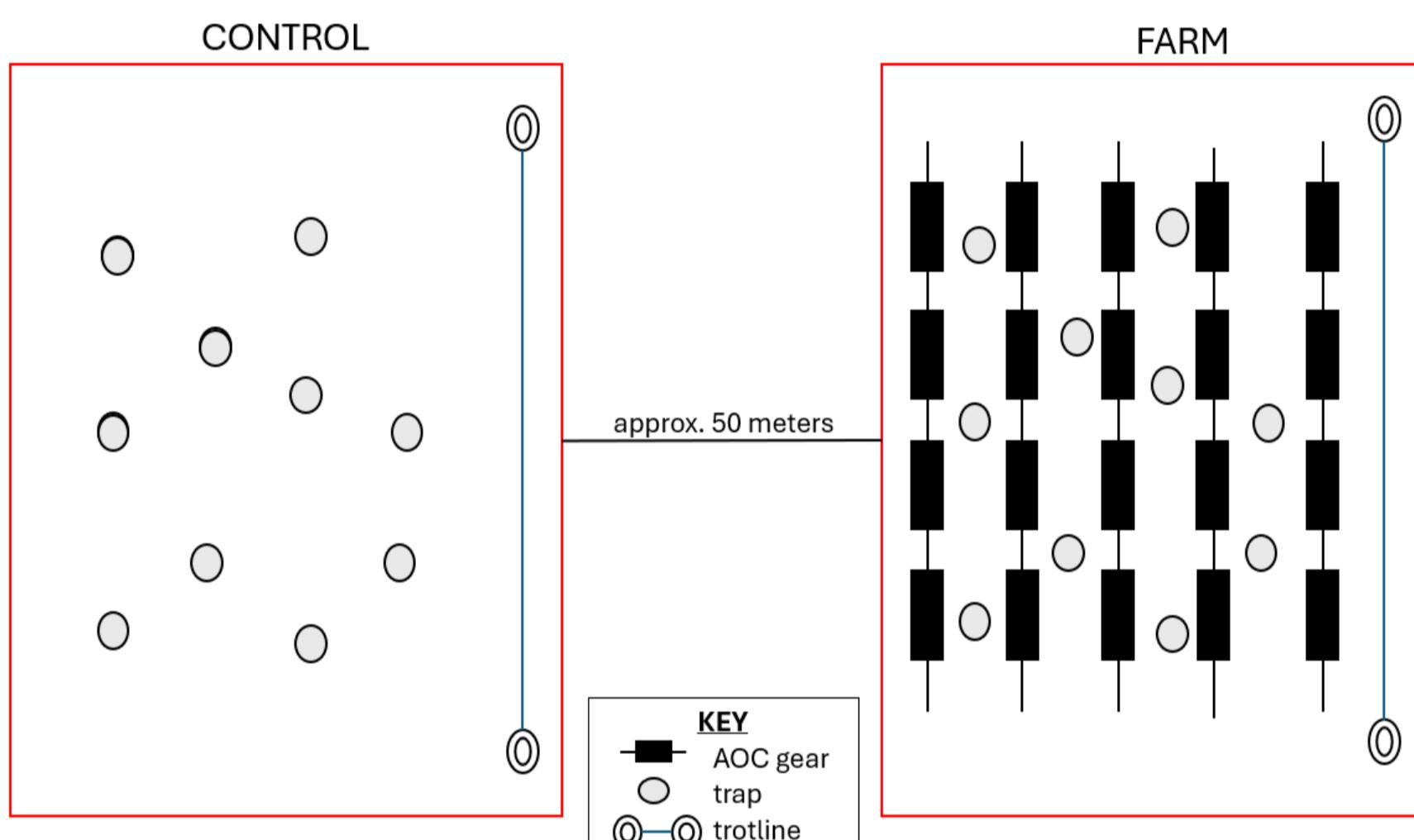
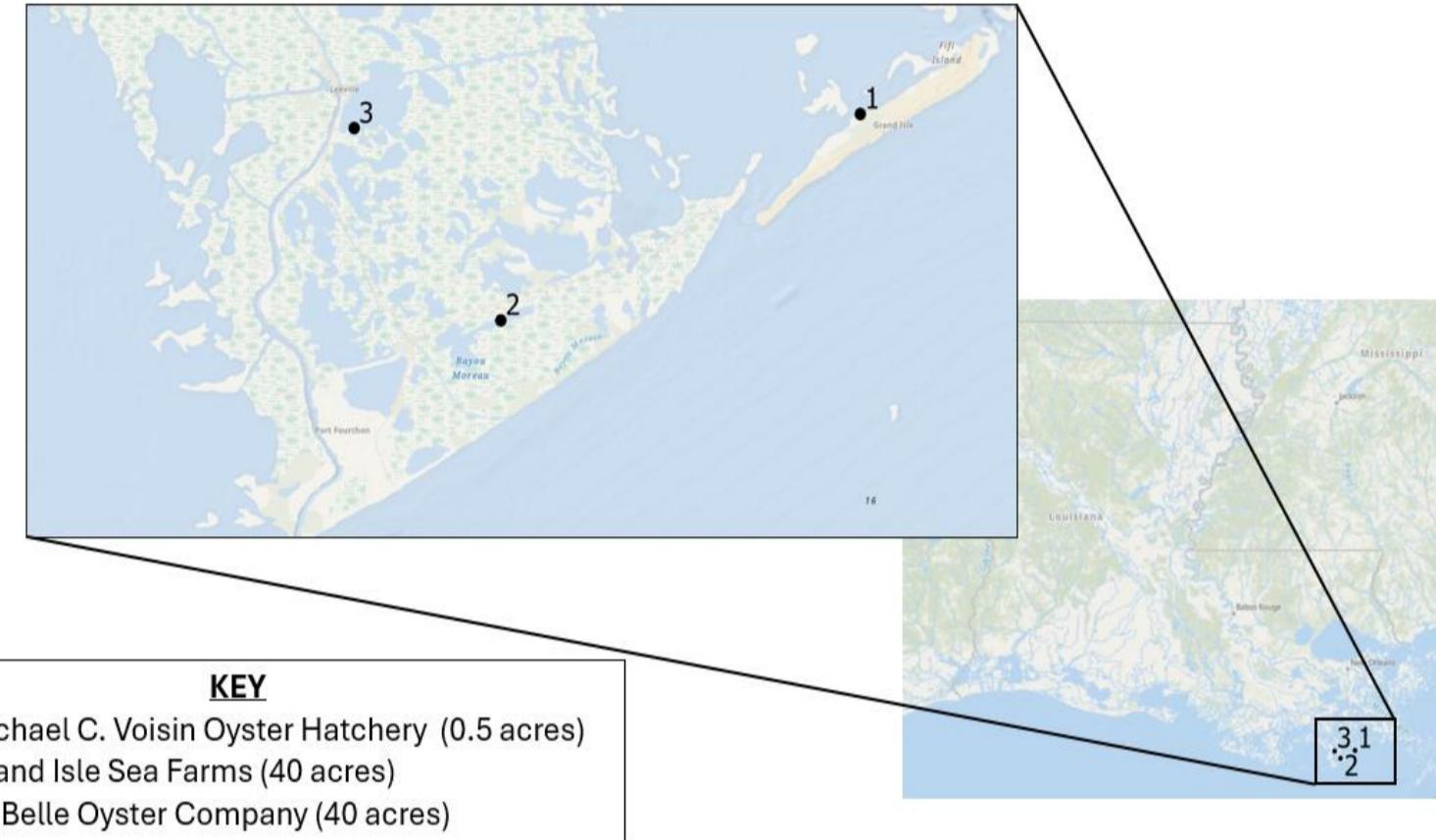


When preparing to molt, *C. sapidus* seeks shelter. A possible place for refuge is an AOC farm.



A possible alternative market for AOC farmers to boost their income is through harvesting blue crabs on their farms and selling them through the hard- or soft-shell markets.

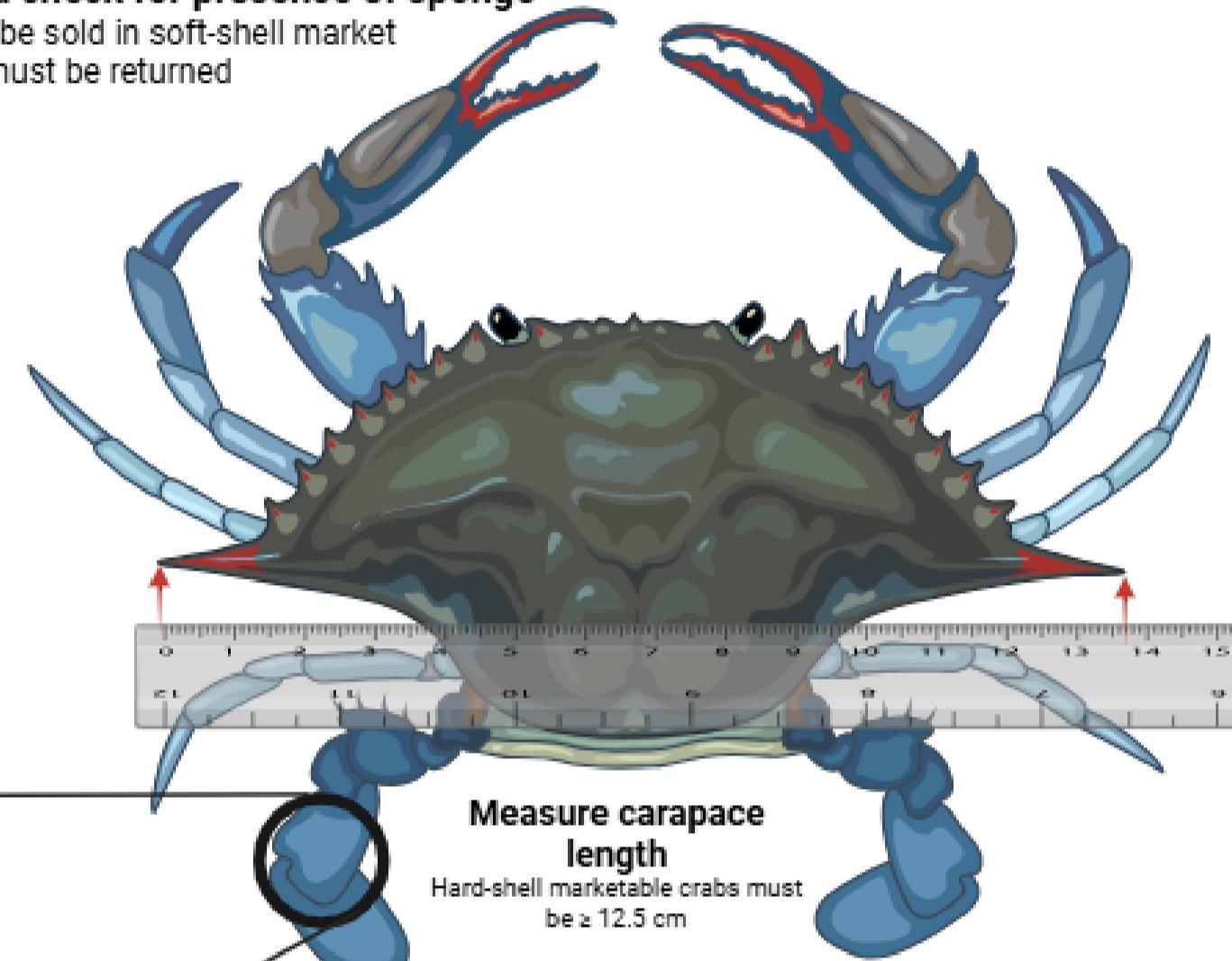
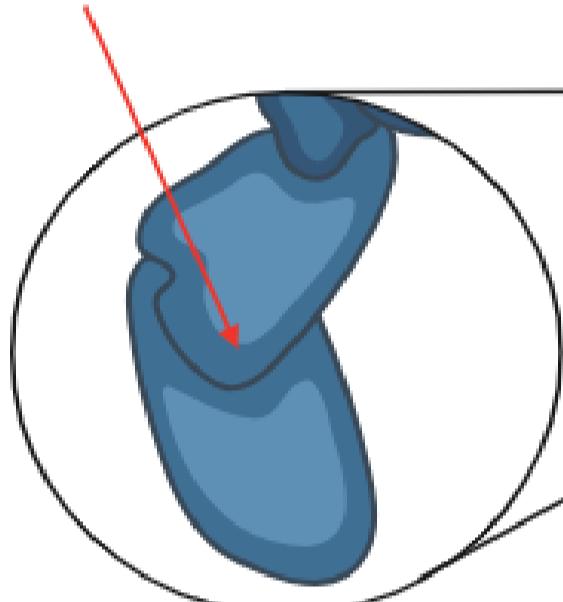
Methods



Determine sex, maturity level, and check for presence of sponge

Mature females are unable to be sold in soft-shell market
Sponged females must be returned

Check for molting stage using swimming fin [mid-cycle, white line, pink line, red line]



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DAY 1: Traps are placed around 4 pm and left to soak overnight
DAY 2: Traps are checked and put back out around 9 am (~17-hour soak)
Trotlines are placed around 9 am
Traps are checked and pulled around 3 pm (~7-hour soak)
Trotlines are run until no more crabs are being caught around 3 pm (~7-hour soak)

Can blue crab be a value-added product on off-bottom oyster farms?

