

We have been going through a drought and it is predicted we are in for another drought this coming year. The "red tide" which has been around forever, entered the entire Texas coast bay systems. It usually enters the areas with the least fresh water available. It entered because the drought caused severe shortages of fresh water inflow and the bays and inland waters became saltier than the Gulf of Mexico waters. Though the drought caused this to happen fast, without a steady amount of fresh water this is what will happen to the bays in the future at a slower pace, even without a drought. The "red tide" algae stays away from the bays when there is enough fresh water mixture in the bays to keep the salinity levels lower than in the Gulf outside waters. For those of you who want to understand, the commercial fisheries, specifically the oyster fisheries, have once again shown that the bay systems cannot survive without a significant amount of fresh water inflow. The Texas oyster industry has opened for harvesting in most of the Texas bays. What we are seeing is a lot of dead reefs and what oysters are alive are at least 2 months off of what they should be. We are harvesting December oysters in February. East Matagorda Bay oyster reefs are now about 90 o/o dead, this has been "my example" bay to you guys. As I have said before, the fresh water inflow to this bay has been all but shut off. The bay has no major activity except a few game fish. Taking away the recommended inflow to these other bay systems is something that you will see results from, and it won't be pretty. For those of you who think the bays will evolve and adapt to having less fresh water inflow, if this drought didn't show you something, then the next drought surely will. The recent drought should have shown everyone in this room that less fresh water inflow will not allow a bay system to evolve into whatever becomes of it naturally and still remain healthy. Mother Nature may surely not have intended today's society to be short on water, but I don't think she wanted the natural environment to be short changed. The natural environment only has me and you to make sure of this. I hope for the next group of stakeholders that the states bays and estuaries will not have deteriorated enough that the process we have gone through will be too late to help. This is not like trying to save a certain species that maybe someone doesn't really care about; this is about trying to preserve the whole Texas coast and its bays and estuaries and delicate eco system. Lots of folks have lots of views, but no one is on the water everyday like a commercial fisherman, there are a few of us that pay attention, I wish others would.

Buddy Treybig

Commercial Fisheries Representative