



Chesapeake
OYSTER ALLIANCE
10 Billion for the Bay

COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION MARYLAND – CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION – RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES
VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY – BIG ISLAND AQUACULTURE – SHORERIVERS – BLUE OYSTER ENVIRONMENTAL
ARUNDEL RIVERS FEDERATION – FRIENDS OF ST. CLEMENTS BAY

Senate Bill 437

Prohibition of Dredging Man-O-War Shoals

DATE: February 25, 2020

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance is a broad coalition of non-profits, community organizations, oyster growers, and business owners with the shared goal of adding 10 billion oysters in the Bay by the year 2025. With a focus on oyster restoration, science-based fishery management, and increased aquaculture, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance aims to accelerate oyster recovery efforts and in so doing the recovery of the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance strongly supports Senate Bill 437 and recommends a favorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Man O War Shoal is a popular fishing and boating location for many upper Bay residents, as well as an important area for commercial crabbing and the harvest of spat on shell oyster plantings. This bill would prohibit the dredging of Man O War Shoal (MOW) and protect these existing uses.

From 1960-2006 nearly 200 million bushels of buried shell were removed from numerous relic oyster bars or buried shell deposits in the upper Bay and used to supplement the wild harvest oyster industry throughout various portions of the middle and lower Chesapeake. The program, frequently called the shell or repletion program, was halted when available shell deposits were exhausted, and when public opposition of the program increased. The areas previously dredged lost their three-dimensional relief and are now largely covered by silt and degraded in value to local Bay stakeholders.

In 2008, legislation directed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to pursue a permit to continue dredging for buried shell in the upper Bay but did not specifically designate Man O War as a target for such efforts.

Shell is a valuable resource for oyster restoration, wild harvest subsidies, and some aquaculture operations, but DNR's plan for the use of buried shell from Man O War includes regional ecological and economic impacts that far outweigh the overall benefit to the state.

Since 2008, major advancements have been made in the use of alternatives to buried shell. Fresh shell recycling programs continue to grow in the region, and alternatives like limestone, granite, and environmentally clean concrete have all been proven as viable substrates to replace the use of buried shell in restoration, aquaculture, and wild harvest. Given the numerous alternatives to buried shell, the past impacts to the upper Bay, and irreversible changes proposed in DNR's plan, Man O War shoal should be removed as an option in any future oyster fisheries management plan.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance respectfully recommends a favorable report on Senate Bill 437 from the Education, Health Committee. Please contact David Sikorski (david@ccamd.org; (443)621-9186) with any questions.