



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 911

Natural Resources - Fishery Management Plans - Oysters

DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation supports House Bill 911 to maintain progress on development of an updated fishery management plan for oysters. HB 911 maintains the deadlines in fisheries management legislation passed last year to correct the delay resulting from the Governor's veto and subsequent enactment this January.

Progress toward development of a consensus-based fishery management plan is critical to oyster populations and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The 2018 oyster stock assessment revealed that oyster populations in Chesapeake Bay are continuing to decline and are subject to overfishing. The updated fishery management plan which must explicitly address rebuilding oyster populations and supporting sustainable harvest will be imperative to reversing this decline.

This legislation's timelines for the work of the re-established Oyster Advisory Commission ensure progress toward development of a consensus-based fishery management plan. The fisheries management legislation passed by the General Assembly in the 2019 Session and enacted over the Governor's veto this year included a deadline of June 1, 2019 for convening the first meeting of the re-established Oyster Advisory Commission. This legislation sets April 1, 2020 as the deadline for the new group to convene. As the Department of Natural Resources convened the re-established Commission on February 10, this deadline has already been met.

The legislation strikes the elapsed due date for the first interim report of the re-convened Oyster Advisory Commission and maintains the next two interim reports in August and December 2020. The legislation also requires that all deliberations of the Commission are conducted in an open and transparent fashion as they develop their recommendations. A friendly amendment adjusts the final deadline and adds an interim report in August 2021 acknowledging the possible need for additional time to refine the scientific model integral to the fishery management plan's development.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recommends a favorable report on HB 911 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. Please contact Dr. Allison Colden, Fisheries Scientist, at acolden@cbf.org should you require any additional information.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.