

Date: March 16, 2022 Position: SUPPORT for SB 979, Man O War Dredging Prohibition To: Senate  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee From: Lani Hummel, lanihummel@aol.com, Annapolis  
Roads Man O War Shoal is an important fishing and crabbing location that supports the local ecology and economy. Oyster harvesting also occurs on the shoal. Local county watermen invest in oyster plantings on the shoal that they harvest when the oysters reach market size. The vertical relief of the shoal helps to break up tidal flows, oxygenating the water, and thereby creates thriving habitat for fish, crabs, oysters, mussels, and more. The proposed shell dredging will cut large holes on either side of the shoal, forever impacting its stability and value as habitat and structure. From 1960 to 2006, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) spent nearly 49 million dollars mining nearly 200 million bushels of buried shell from the Upper Bay. The mined shell was then barged into the southern Bay to be used to improve habitat for oyster plantings. This program was a major subsidy for the public oyster fishery. When concentrated shell deposits were exhausted and public opposition to dredging developed, the program was halted. By then, the Upper Bay bottom had been forever altered. The program failed to produce long-term benefits for the oyster industry or the oyster resource. So, the public had nothing to show for the use of this valuable, finite natural resource. In summary, since oyster shell degrades over time, there are no long lasting public benefits in using buried shell to enhance habitat elsewhere. Maryland leaders should focus on other actions that can improve oyster habitat without destroying existing habitat in other portions of the Bay. Finally, efforts should be undertaken to encourage the growth of the aquaculture fishery as a more permanent solution to the harvest pressure on the wild oyster fishery. Thank you for your consideration, Lani Hummel 901 Bay Ridge Road Annapolis, MD 21403