



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 24, 2026

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 558 - FIRST READER

SHORT TITLE: CHESAPEAKE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM - ESTABLISHED

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

Since 1997, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has provided a grant to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to be used solely for the purpose of oyster recovery within Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay. This funding has been used to fund shellfish program operations such as;

- Planting of oyster shell, seed, and alternate substrate
- Development and implementation of restoration and replenishment plans
- Conducting surveys to monitor oyster bars to assess oyster population size, recruitment, growth, disease, mortality, shell volume, and other environmental parameters
- Running data analysis to assess the status and trends of oyster population size, recruitment, growth, disease, mortality, shell volume, and other environmental parameters
- Processing, conducting quality assurance – quality control procedures, and analysis on harvest data
- Producing and publishing the Annual Fall Oyster Survey Report
- Coordination of the Oyster Advisory Commission and the Statewide Oyster Industry Committee
- Administering the County Oyster Committees

DNR has worked closely with MDOT over the past several months to not only fully restore all \$2 million in funding for FY 2026 oyster reseeding program, but has also initiated the process of entering into a new, multi-year MOU.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is a history of agreements between MDOT and DNR since 1997 for the purposes of funding oyster recovery in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill would add \$2 million to the annual budget bill for FY 28 and each FY after for an appropriation to the program from the Transportation Trust Fund in the Transportation Article. The bill states that the funding is used for oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the effects on the state's oyster population of transportation projects that maintain or expand the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore.

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