

**SB0558-BT\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND**  
*Association of*  
**COUNTIES**

## **Senate Bill 558**

### *Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program – Established*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

Date: February 24, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 558. This bill would establish the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program to support oyster propagation and replenishment projects in areas of the Chesapeake Bay affected by development associated with the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore. By directing resources to targeted restoration efforts, SB 558 offers a practical strategy to help offset impacts and strengthen the long-term health of the Bay.

Oysters are a cornerstone of Maryland’s identity and a critical component of the Bay’s ecosystem and local economies. As natural filter feeders, oysters improve water clarity and quality—advancing restoration goals and supporting underwater grasses and the broader food web. Oyster reefs also function as “living infrastructure,” helping buffer shorelines from wave action, reducing erosion, and increasing resilience for coastal communities. Beyond these environmental benefits, oysters sustain working waterfronts through aquaculture, seafood markets, and heritage industries that remain central to many county economies.

SB 558 helps move the needle toward ensuring the Chesapeake Bay remains a thriving environmental and economic asset for Maryland. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 558.

# **Guzzone.pdf**

Uploaded by: Grace Wittig

Position: FAV

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY**  
COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
501 Court Lane, P.O. Box 26  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613  
(410) 228-1700

GEORGE L. PFEFFER, JR., PRESIDENT  
MIKE DETMER, VICE PRESIDENT  
ROB KRAMER, JR.  
WILLIAM V. NICHOLS  
RICKY C. TRAVERS



JERRY JONES  
COUNTY MANAGER  
MACLEOD LAW GROUP LLC  
COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Senator  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 558 - Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Committee Members:

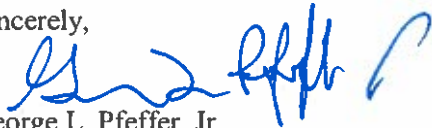
On behalf of the Dorchester County Council, I respectfully offer its support for Senate Bill 558 entitled, “Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established,” for the purpose of establishing the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program to provide funding for certain oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the effects on the State’s oyster population of certain transportation projects; and generally relating to the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program.

Dorchester County strongly supports SB 558 because it creates a dedicated and predictable funding source to offset environmental impacts associated with major transportation and port infrastructure projects. As a Chesapeake Bay community with a long-standing economic and cultural connection to the seafood industry, the County understands the importance of sustaining healthy oyster populations that contribute to water quality, habitat restoration, and the vitality of Maryland’s commercial fisheries.

By reinvesting in oyster propagation and replenishment efforts, this legislation helps ensure that economic growth and infrastructure improvements are balanced with responsible environmental stewardship and long-term resource sustainability. The proposed annual appropriation also provides accountability and stability for ongoing restoration efforts that benefit the entire Bay region. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you look favorably upon this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support. If you have any questions, please contact the Council’s Office at (410) 228-1700

Sincerely,

  
George L. Pfeffer, Jr.  
President

cc: The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Senator  
The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate  
The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate  
The Honorable Tom Hutchinson, Delegate

**SenatorBailey\_FAV\_SB558.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jack Bailey

Position: FAV

**JACK BAILEY**  
*Legislative District 29*  
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Budget & Taxation Committee



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 401  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3673  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673  
Jack.Bailey@senate.maryland.gov

*District Office*  
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101  
Hollywood, Maryland 20636  
240-309-4238

February 24, 2026

**Senate Bill 558 – Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established**

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 558. This bill would codify the existing Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program and ensure that the funds spent as part of this program are used in accordance with the Maryland Constitution.

In 1996, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agreed to the first of what would be a series of memorandums of understanding to dedicate a portion of the Port of Baltimore's revenue to projects that would help replenish Maryland's oyster population. This was done to address the natural and unavoidable effects that construction at the Port and the maintenance of shipping channels would have on oysters in our waterways. The most recent of these agreements was signed in 2022 and continued to dedicate \$2 million from the revenues generated by the Port to oyster recovery each year until Fiscal Year 2026. I believe it is important that the General Assembly codify this Program and make it permanent to provide a level of certainty that these critical funds for oyster recovery will continue that can only be done by placing this program in law.

When I began the process of having this legislation drafted, I was informed that continuing the program in its current form could violate the Maryland Constitution. As you are aware, in 2014, the voters of Maryland approved a constitutional amendment to ensure that funds in the Transportation Trust Fund would be used solely for purposes relating to transportation. Because the revenue that the Port generates for the State goes into the Transportation Trust Fund, it would likely be unconstitutional to continue to appropriate these funds for general oyster recovery programs. For that reason, and after consultation with our Attorney General's office, I have introduced Senate Bill 558 with the intent of ensuring that these funds are used solely for oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the effects on the state's oyster population of transportation projects that maintain or expand the Port of Baltimore. This narrow focus that links these funds directly to the effects of the Port is intended to ensure that these funds are used in accordance with the Maryland Constitution and make legal challenges that could jeopardize the future of the Program less likely.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 558. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Bailey'.

Senator Jack Bailey

# **HB1599 SB558 Chesapeake Bay Enhancement MDOT Fundi**

Uploaded by: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio

Position: FAV



**Talbot Watermen Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 324 • Bozman, MD 21612 • (410) 745-9759 • info@talbotwatermen.org

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our strong **support** for **Senate Bill 558/House Bill 1599 – Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program**.

For more than thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, last year and again this year, MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have



**Talbot Watermen Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 324 • Bozman, MD 21612 • (410) 745-9759 • [info@talbotwatermen.org](mailto:info@talbotwatermen.org)

been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget last year so that planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals. The attached document provides an example of the success and positive impact that this program has had on our local waterways.

We are therefore respectfully requesting that the committee issue a favorable report on this bill to help ensure that MPA keeps their commitment and to help ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities as evidenced by the attached letters. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Herman Jeffrey Harrison  
President

Contact: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio  
R&R Solutions, LLC  
(443) 786-2137  
[jeannie@randrsolutions.us](mailto:jeannie@randrsolutions.us)

Talbot Watermen Association, Inc. is a component fund of the  
Mid-Shore Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) public charity.



## INNOVATIVE & SUSTAINABLE COMMERCIAL FISHING RESTORATION AND REPLENISHMENT BY THE NUMBERS



Annual replenishment of harvested areas is an important practice to ensure long-term resource health. The Talbot County Oystershell Committee leads our local replenishment efforts. Working in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Oyster Recovery Partnership, the committee begins planning each February and conducts plantings from April through September. **Funding from the oyster bushel tax and an MOU between DNR and MDOT are crucial to this program's success.**

**98M** Spat-on-Shell  
Planted on 24.8 Acres

**46,338** Pounds of Nitrogen Removed in 10 Years  
At a Cost of Only \$739,000

**33,880** Bushels of Shell  
Planted on 17.7 Acres

**2,109** Bushels of Seed Oysters  
Planted on 6.7 Acres



February 10, 2026

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

I am writing to respectfully request your support for the continued funding and advancement of oyster restoration initiatives in Maryland, specifically those guided by the longstanding partnership between the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA).

Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the ongoing stewardship of our state's vital oyster populations. The success of these collaborative efforts not only benefits our natural resources but also supports local economies and communities that depend on healthy fisheries.

As we look to the future, your support is essential for safeguarding Maryland's environmental and economic well-being. I urge you to champion these critical programs and help secure the resources necessary for their continued success.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information or wish to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Sincerely,

*Dan Worrell*

*Representing Fallen Pine Oyster Company*

- **Positions held in Maryland Oyster Aquaculture**
  - Chairman Aquaculture Coordinating Council of Maryland
  - Vice Chairman of the Maryland Seafood Marketing Commission

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY**  
COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
501 Court Lane, P.O. Box 26  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613  
(410) 228-1700

GEORGE L. PFEFFER, JR., PRESIDENT  
MIKE DETMER, VICE PRESIDENT  
ROB KRAMER, JR.  
WILLIAM V. NICHOLS  
RICKY C. TRAVERS



JERRY JONES  
COUNTY MANAGER  
MACLEOD LAW GROUP LLC  
COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Senator  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 558 - Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Committee Members:

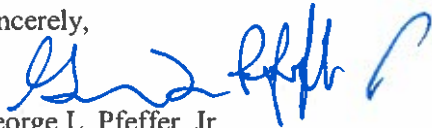
On behalf of the Dorchester County Council, I respectfully offer its support for Senate Bill 558 entitled, “Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established,” for the purpose of establishing the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program to provide funding for certain oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the effects on the State’s oyster population of certain transportation projects; and generally relating to the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program.

Dorchester County strongly supports SB 558 because it creates a dedicated and predictable funding source to offset environmental impacts associated with major transportation and port infrastructure projects. As a Chesapeake Bay community with a long-standing economic and cultural connection to the seafood industry, the County understands the importance of sustaining healthy oyster populations that contribute to water quality, habitat restoration, and the vitality of Maryland’s commercial fisheries.

By reinvesting in oyster propagation and replenishment efforts, this legislation helps ensure that economic growth and infrastructure improvements are balanced with responsible environmental stewardship and long-term resource sustainability. The proposed annual appropriation also provides accountability and stability for ongoing restoration efforts that benefit the entire Bay region. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you look favorably upon this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support. If you have any questions, please contact the Council’s Office at (410) 228-1700

Sincerely,

  
George L. Pfeffer, Jr.  
President

cc: The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Senator  
The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate  
The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate  
The Honorable Tom Hutchinson, Delegate



**August 21, 2025**

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

Since 1996, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have worked under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide vital funding to both Maryland's aquaculture industry and the commercial wild harvest industry for the purchase of seed, shell, and spat-on-shell. This partnership has been a cornerstone in strengthening Maryland's coastal economies, enhancing oyster restoration, and supporting workforce development.

This year, without notice, MDOT chose to discontinue its participation in the program. While we are grateful that DNR remains strongly supportive and has provided temporary resources to sustain projects, MDOT's withdrawal creates significant uncertainty for aquaculture operators, coastal communities, and conservation partners who rely on these funds. We respectfully emphasize that it should not fall solely on DNR to mitigate the broader impacts of state-level decisions that directly affect the Chesapeake Bay and the aquaculture workforce.

The funding at issue supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell, the management and monitoring of restoration projects, and critical opportunities for new entrants into aquaculture—including women and minorities. Every investment in this program pays

dividends by advancing sustainable seafood production, creating jobs, and helping Maryland achieve its Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

Minorities In Aquaculture (MIA) strongly supports restoring this funding in the upcoming budget. The program clearly strengthens Maryland's aquaculture workforce and contributes to the long-term resilience of our environment and economy. We respectfully urge your leadership in ensuring that MDOT recommits to this effort alongside DNR so these essential programs can continue without interruption.

Thank you for your continued attention to this issue and your commitment to Maryland's working waterfronts, natural resources, and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Imani Black". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Imani" being more prominent than the last name "Black".

Imani Black  
Founder & CEO  
Minorities In Aquaculture

President: B. Baltus  
410-952-6249  
Vice President: R.  
Spangler  
410-477-3291  
Second Vice-President:  
M. Blake



Treasurer: E. Miller  
410-686-0545

Secretary: A. Ashwell  
7840 Denton Ave.  
Baltimore Md. 21219  
410-477-0798

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

There has been a mutual agreement between the Maryland Department of Transportation and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources since 1996, for oyster propagation.

The watermen of the state and Baltimore County would like to see this relationship continue for the health of the bay and economy.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blair Baltus', written in a cursive style.

Blair Baltus  
President  
Baltimore County Watermen's Association  
410-952-6249



## Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association

311-A Third Street \* Annapolis, MD 21403 \* Phone: 410-507-3249 \* CBSIA@comcast.net

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual-work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR

President, Jack Brooks; Vice President, Robin Hall; Secretary Treasurer, Bill Brooks; Executive Vice President, Bill Stelling  
Board Members: Clay Brooks, Jerry Harris, Jay Newcomb, Casey Todd, Roy Todd, Aubrey Vincent, and Joe Spurry

---

provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Brooks  
President  
Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association

---



5209 Walnut Landing Road  
Vienna, Maryland 21069  
443-521-1938

July 31, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
103 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
14 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone:

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations for the transportation of waterborne commerce Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, Maryland's aquaculture industry and improving water quality for additional bay species. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with

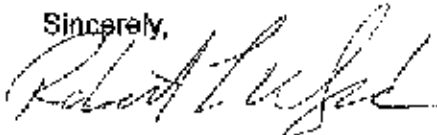
conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Whaples  
President



August 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
II-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) have collaborated with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. Dredging in the Port of Baltimore is still being conducted and continues to impact on the oyster resource and watermen community whose livelihood is tied to the Bay. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

The funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed, substrate and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an aquaculture best management practice. The replenishment projects plants over one-hundred thousand bushels of aged oyster shell and hundreds of millions spat on shell annually, by privately-operated Maryland shellfish businesses who have the equipment, vessels, and knowledge to cost effectively conduct these aquaculture activities. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and

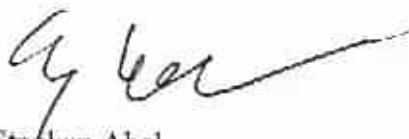
aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MDOT / MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental and economic importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, the community at large feels strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not often that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this issue. Therefore, we are urging MDOT / MPA to keep their financial commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue on behalf of the businesses, like Ferry Cove, who have dedicated our time, efforts and resources to achieve these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephan Abel  
President / CEO  
Ferry Cove Shellfish



**Green Pearl, LLC**  
Easton, Maryland

July 24, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

Green Pearl LLC is a seven-year-old aquaculture company on Maryland's Eastern Shore. We have three aquaculture leases with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) where we grow and harvest oysters. Being involved in this industry we continuously apply spat on shell to our lease areas. Oysters are not only a revenue source to those in the industry, but far more important perhaps the best and most natural method for cleaning the waters of the Chesapeake.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of the lack of funding for the Oyster Recovery Agreement. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Green Pearl, LLC



By: William F. Cockayne, Authorized Member



MARYLAND  
OYSTERMEN  
ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 290  
ROCK HALL, MD 21661  
www.MDOYSTERMEN.org

**MOA BOD Members**

Jim Mullin  
Executive Director

Bunky Chance  
Jimmy Eline  
Jimmy Kahl  
Chuckie White  
Wayne Wilson

"The Bay's A Big Place  
And There's Room For  
Everybody"

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson & Chair Guzzone,

Since 1996 there has been a mutual agreement between the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program (Oyster Recovery). The goals and objectives of the agreement address mitigation for the environmental impacts from state dredging to enhance the transportation of waterborne commerce. The mitigation process has had a positive impact on the resource-based economies of the tidewater counties of the state.

The agreement and its overall goals and objectives of providing economic development, sustainable employment and recovery from impacts of state dredging for improved water quality are in danger of being extinguished and we respectfully request that the overall program be continued for the health of the state's economy and the health of the bay.

Thank you for your time & consideration,

James T. Mullin, Executive Director

Cc: Robert T. Brown, President  
Maryland Waterman's Association



# The Maryland Watermen's Association, Inc.

3 August 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone

The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the past 20 years under the Oyster Recovery Agreement to mitigate the channel dredging operations (which is degrading of water quality with silt and other unknown hazard waste).

The funds have improved the Oyster Industry by planting spat on shells, wild seed, and oyster shells. These oyster shells are of high value as sub straight, which rebuild the Natural Oyster bars. These funds are distributed to tidal Counties of Maryland. In conjunction with the DNR, the County Oyster Committee's and the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) have developed best management plan that enhances a sustainable oyster industry.

Harvest fell to an all-time recorded low of 26,000 (25,843) bushels in 2003- 2004 season. This recorded decline was due to the 4-year drought that occurred from 1999 to 2002. The prolonged drought elevated salinity and accelerated oyster disease and mortality.

With funding from MPA and best management practices our oyster industry is not only sustainable but has increased the water quality and helped increase natural spat set. These funds need to be reinstated to continue this valuable industry's recovery, as harvest has been proven with the latest data from 2022-2023 of 722,850 bushels harvest and 2023-2024 of 437,536 due only decreasing due to demand. The Maryland Watermen's Association asks the legislators to assist in reinstalling these valuable funds for the environment, economy, and continued sustainability. Thank you for your time in this matter and we look forward to speaking with you.

Very Respectfully,

ROBERT T BROWN, SR.  
PRESIDENT  
MARYLAND WATERMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.



## MILES RIVER YACHT CLUB

PH 410-745-9511

P. O. Box 158

[www.milesriveryc.org](http://www.milesriveryc.org)

FX 410-745-2602

St. Michaels, MD 21663

Commodore Nick Simpson  
Vice Commodore Dennis Kelly  
Rear Commodore Matt Kealy

Fleet Captain Andrew Southworth  
Secretary Jennifer Williams  
Treasurer John Hines

July 29, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Oyster Recovery Agreement

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

The Miles River Yacht Club ("MRYC") was founded on the shores of the Miles River in 1921 and is now a thriving club with over 800 members. Our mission is to stimulate interest in boating, sailing, and swimming, to promote social recreation, and to enhance the general welfare of the community.

Our membership spends much of their time on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, our children swim on the river and learn to sail on its waters. We strongly believe

that enhancing the general welfare of our community involves protecting and improving the quality of the waters of the Bay.

We strongly believe that by far the best and most natural method for cleaning the waters of the Chesapeake is to encourage and support oyster restoration. To that end many of our members, and the club itself, have participated in the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program.

It is not every day that recreational boaters, conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of the lack of funding for the Oyster Recovery Agreement. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

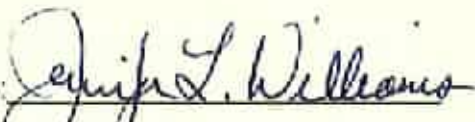
For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Miles River Yacht Club

By:   
Jennifer L. Williams, Secretary



July 22, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone:

The Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP), based in Annapolis and founded in 1994, is a nonprofit organization that manages much of Maryland's in-water oyster restoration efforts. Under contract with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), ORP has planted more than 13 billion juvenile oysters on both sanctuary and public reefs throughout the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay. We are proud to play a central role in the successful restoration of one of Maryland's most vital natural resources.

For more than 20 years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has been an essential partner in funding Maryland's oyster restoration strategy. This funding serves to mitigate the environmental impact of the Port's ongoing channel dredging activities on native oyster populations. Along with per-bushel harvest taxes paid by the commercial industry, MPA funding has supported the planting of more than 2.4 billion juvenile oysters ("spat-on-shell") and over 1.8 million bushels of shell on public, harvestable reefs.

Since 2014, ORP has partnered with DNR to administer these public fishery repletion funds. Each year, under DNR contract, we engage commercial watermen to plant spat-on-shell and recycled oyster shells on reefs identified by Maryland's 11 County Oyster Committees. This Port-funded repletion program has contributed directly to four consecutive years of the largest commercial oyster harvests in more than 30 years.

Historically, MPA has demonstrated a strong commitment to balancing the Bay's economic and environmental priorities. However, earlier this year, MPA unexpectedly withdrew its support



for public oyster repletion. While DNR stepped in to provide limited gap funding to continue this year's projects, that funding is both partial and temporary. We greatly appreciate DNR's efforts but believe strongly that it is not the agency's responsibility to mitigate the Port's environmental impacts from dredging in the Bay.

A recent DNR study shows that Maryland's oyster population has tripled over the past two decades. Combined with record harvests, this progress clearly demonstrates that Maryland's restoration strategy is working. In recognition of this success, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now identifies oyster restoration as a Best Management Practice (BMP), enabling the state and local governments to earn valuable nutrient reduction credits toward their Watershed Implementation Plans.

ORP is proud to stand with DNR, Maryland's commercial watermen, County Oyster Committees, conservation partners, and the seafood industry in urging the MPA to reinstate critical funding for public oyster repletion. We respectfully request your support in ensuring the continuation of this vital program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Slacum', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ward Slacum  
Executive Director  
Oyster Recovery Partnership  
Office: 410.990.4970 (ext 1015)  
[wslacum@oysterrecovery.org](mailto:wslacum@oysterrecovery.org)



# Phillips Wharf Environmental Center

July 25th, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
II-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Oyster Recovery Agreement

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

The Phillips Wharf Environmental Center (PWEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that focuses on environmental education. Our mission is to encourage, educate, and engage people of all ages with Chesapeake Bay stewardship. Our vision is a healthy Chesapeake Bay with thriving fisheries, clean water, and access for all.

Founded in 2005 in a former crab shanty on Tilghman Island, PWEC relocated to Easton Point Park in Easton, Maryland in 2022. Since 2011, PWEC has continuously worked with support of the Marylanders Grow Oysters program and the Oyster Recovery Partnership to run a participatory oyster restoration program known as Tilghman Islanders Grow Oysters. Juvenile oysters, known as spat on shell, are provided to Phillips Wharf to distribute to volunteer growers in Tilghman and along Broad and Harris Creek. Volunteers sign up to host these juvenile oysters by hanging them from their docks in cages for approximately 9 months. During this time, the volunteer growers are expected to occasionally shake the cages to help keep the oysters clean of any dirt and other debris.

At the end of the program, the cages are collected, and the juvenile oysters are planted on wild oyster reefs. Specifically, our program plants oysters in the Harris Creek Sanctuary at the direction of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and we have done so since the beginning of the oyster restoration project in Harris Creek called for in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



---

Dr. Kristen Lycett, Executive Director

Phillips Wharf Environmental Center



Queen Anne's County Watermen's Association  
108 Spruce Drive  
Queen Anne, MD 21657



August 19, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with [these replenishment](#) and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery [seed](#) and [spat-on-shell](#) in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would [have been](#) halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in [the Chesapeake Bay](#).

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ian Horney,  
President  
Queen Anne's County Watermen's Association.



July 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*John A. Horgan*      *T. Lynn Federal Sealord*



10448 Azalea Rd Berlin Md 21811

August 15, 2025

Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 Sate Circle  
Annapolis Md 21401

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

I am writing to express my support for the continuation of the Oyster Mitigation Program, a mutual agreement between MDDOT and MD DNR for the Chesapeake Bay enhancement program (Oyster Recovery). This program has been instrumental in mitigating environmental impacts from state dredging to enhance transportation while having a positive impact on the resource-based economies of counties in Maryland.

The Oyster Recovery Program has not only contributed to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay but has also played a significant role in maintaining the economy of our state. By supporting the oyster population, we are not only protecting a vital natural resource but also contributing to the livelihoods of countless Marylanders who rely on the seafood industry.

As a resident of Maryland and a waterman, I am deeply concerned about the future of our state's environment and economy. I strongly believe that the continuation of the Oyster Recovery Program is essential for the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay and the well-being of our state.

I kindly request that you, as a legislator, assist in reinstalling these valuable funds for the environment, economy, and continued oyster sustainability. Your support for this program will not only benefit the Chesapeake Bay and the people who depend on it but also ensure the long-term health and prosperity of our great state.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to your support in continuing the Oyster Recovery Program for the benefit of all Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Earl R Gwin, Jr  
President  
Waterman's Association of Worcester County, Md

# **SB 558 MD State Oyster Chair\_Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Dean

Position: FAV

February 19, 2026

Members of the Senate,

I'm writing about SB 558 as the chairman of the Maryland State Oyster Committee. This bill is incredibly important to Maryland's oyster industry. It would allow oyster propagation and replenishment work to keep moving forward. I've seen firsthand how the mitigation programs tied to transportation projects have helped oysters throughout the Bay, which in turn supports both our industry and the Bay's ecosystem.

I'm asking for a favorable vote on SB 558, the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program.

Respectfully,

Dale "Simon" Dean

Maryland State Oyster Committee, Chair

**SB 558 Letter of Support\_QAC001.pdf**

Uploaded by: Stephanie Jarrell

Position: FAV



Queen Anne's County

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

The Liberty Building
107 North Liberty Street
Centreville, MD 21617

e-mail: QACCommissioners&Administrator@gac.org

County Commissioners:

- James J. Moran, At Large
Jack N. Wilson, Jr., District 1
J. Patrick McLaughlin, District 2
Philip L. Dumenil, District 3
Christopher M. Corchiarino, District 4

County Administrator: Todd R. Mohn, PE
Executive Assistant to County Commissioners: Stephanie L. Jarrell
County Attorney: Patrick Thompson, Esquire

February 22, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Queen Anne's County Commissioners, we respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill 558. SB 558 establishes the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program within the Department of Natural Resources to provide funding for oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the impacts of transportation-related activities. The bill legislates the annual appropriation of \$2 million.

Importantly, this funding has been provided under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Transportation since 1996. Senate Bill 558 does not create a new programmatic obligation; rather, it codifies a long-standing mitigation framework that has balanced transportation infrastructure needs with protection of Maryland's oyster resources.

Oyster restoration is both an environmental and economic priority of counties located on the Chesapeake Bay. The oyster industry supports commercial watermen, aquaculture operations, seafood processors, and working waterfront businesses that contribute to local employment and tax bases. When dredging and channel maintenance activities affect oyster habitat, the economic consequences are realized locally. A dedicated mitigation program ensures that those impacts are addressed in a structured and consistent manner.

In addition to supporting the fishery, oyster restoration provides broader public benefits, including improved water quality, habitat enhancement, and ecosystem resilience within the Chesapeake Bay. The annual appropriation is modest relative to overall transportation infrastructure investment, yet it yields measurable returns for Bay-dependent communities and supports long-term restoration planning. For these reasons, Queen Anne's County respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 558.

Respectfully,

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

James J. Moran, President

Christopher M. Corchiarino

Jack N. Wilson, Jr.

Philip L. Dumenil

J. Patrick McLaughlin

# **SB558 Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program-Oyster Re**

Uploaded by: Ward Slacum

Position: FAV



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oyster Recovery Partnership, we respectfully submit this letter in support of Senate Bill 558. SB 558 establishes the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program within the Department of Natural Resources to provide funding for oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the impacts of transportation-related activities. The bill legislates the annual appropriation of \$2 million.

The Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) is a 30-year-old Annapolis-based nonprofit organization that helps execute Maryland's oyster restoration agenda. ORP's mission is to support and promote both the economic and ecosystem benefits of oysters. We carry out our mission by working with the Department of Natural Resources, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Maryland Watermen, and other partners. Each year ORP coordinates the production of billions of new oysters planted in Chesapeake Bay.

For over a decade ORP has collaborated with the Department of Natural Resources and Maryland's county oyster committees to administer and effectively use funding provided by Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). The funds are used to support the practice of shell repletion and to produce and plant new oysters. These practices are considered best management practices to maintain a sustainable oyster fishery and to restore the broader population of oysters. These practices also mitigate dredging and channel maintenance activities known to affect oyster habitat. A dedicated mitigation program ensures that those impacts are addressed in a structured and consistent manner.

In addition to supporting the fishery, oyster restoration provides broader public benefits, including improved water quality, habitat enhancement, and ecosystem resilience within the Chesapeake Bay.

For these reasons, the Oyster Recovery Partnership respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 558.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Ward Slacum'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

H. Ward Slacum  
Executive Director  
wslacum@oysterrecovery.org  
Oyster Recovery Partnership

**SB 558 - CBF - FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Allison Colden

Position: FWA



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

---

## Senate Bill 558 Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

**Date:** February 24, 2026

**To:** Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

**Position:** **Favorable with Amendment**

**From:** Dr. Allison Colden,  
MD Executive Director

---

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SENATE BILL 558 WITH AMENDMENTS**. As drafted, SB 558 codifies an existing memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Port of Baltimore and the Department of Natural Resources which provides \$2 million in funding annually for oyster replenishment activities in the public oyster fishery.

The first iteration of this agreement was ratified in 1996 as mitigation for activities in and around the Port of Baltimore that could have impacts on oyster populations in the Upper Bay and tributaries. For many years, the funding was utilized for restoration, research, surveys, and replenishment activities which benefitted the public fishery, the Bay ecosystem, and the public. Each year, DNR prepared a work plan which was presented to the Sport Fisheries and Tidal Fisheries Advisory Committees for their review and feedback. These advisory committees represent a wide swath of stakeholders with an interest in Maryland's oyster resource.

Over the years, later versions of the MOU iteratively restricted the uses of the funds, with the most recent version requiring at least \$925,000 annually to be used exclusively for public fishery replenishment activities under the advisement of the County Oyster Committees. County Oyster Committees are comprised solely of watermen who reside and work in a specific county, limiting the perspectives and input to a narrow group. Around the same time, public presentations on the use of the funds and annual work plan also ceased, leaving the public in the dark about how funds were being spent.

DNR is currently reviewing its oyster management program to determine how to best address underinvestment in some state oyster sanctuaries, several of which are located in the Upper Bay near the Port. If the scope of this bill were broadened to allow DNR discretion on how best to spend the funds to support the state's oyster resources, similar to how the fund was used previously, this could be a potential boon to sanctuaries where the State has previously lacked resources to invest. It would also provide flexibility year-to-year to address priorities of importance to all oyster stakeholders. Otherwise, this bill codifies the narrow scope of the current MOU and misses a key opportunity to ensure public dollars are spent in a way that benefits the Bay and the state's oyster resource through a transparent process that accounts for multiple perspectives.

**CBF urges the Committee's to report FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS on SB 558.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

*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 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*

**Suggested Amendments:**

ON PAGE 1, LINE 21, STRIKE “PROPAGATION” AND INSERT “RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION, RESTORATION”

ON PAGE 2, LINE 10, STRIKE “(D)” AND INSERT, “(D) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DRAFT AN ANNUAL WORK PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM DETAILING THE EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS. THE WORK PLAN WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT’S WEBSITE IN ADDITION TO BEING SHARED WITH RELEVANT ADVISORY BODIES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.”

# **FWA for SB558 - Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Ford

Position: FWA



## Testimony in Favorable with Amendments to Senate Bill 558

2/20/2026

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** to SB558 on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a Riverkeeper organization, focused on water quality on Maryland's Eastern Shore, with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.

SB558 would codify the existing agreement that directs funding associated with Port-related impacts toward oyster replenishment in Maryland's public fishery. We support the principle that revenues tied to impacts on the Bay should be reinvested directly into the oyster resource. Dedicated funding has historically supported not only replenishment but broader restoration, research, and ecosystem benefits.

Over time, however, the scope of how these funds may be used has narrowed. Limiting expenditures exclusively to public fishery replenishment reduces flexibility and risks overlooking pressing ecological needs, including underinvestment in certain state oyster sanctuaries. Several sanctuaries, particularly in the Upper Bay and tributaries influenced by Port activities, have experienced degraded substrate, sedimentation, and declining reef structure. Without the ability to invest in bottom preparation, shell planting, and seed deployment in sanctuaries, Maryland may miss opportunities to strengthen overall oyster biomass and larval production that ultimately benefit both sanctuaries and adjacent harvest areas.

Oyster management works best as an integrated portfolio: public fishery areas, aquaculture, and protected sanctuaries functioning together. A funding stream tied to oyster mitigation should support the full oyster resource, not only one segment of it. Allowing the Department of Natural Resources discretion to allocate funds toward restoration within designated sanctuaries, especially those near the Port of Baltimore, would restore balance and align spending with science-based priorities.

In addition, transparency and public accountability are essential. Historically, annual work plans detailing expenditures were shared with advisory bodies and available for public review. Codifying a requirement for an annual work plan, publicly posted and shared with relevant advisory committees, would ensure that these funds are deployed through an open and inclusive process.

Accordingly, we respectfully request the following amendments:

ON PAGE 1, LINE 21, AFTER "PROPAGATION" INSERT "AND FOR OYSTER RESTORATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN DESIGNATED OYSTER SANCTUARIES."

AND ON PAGE 2, LINE 10, STRIKE "(D)" AND INSERT, "(D) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DRAFT AN ANNUAL WORK PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM DETAILING

### ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper  
Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

THE EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS. THE WORK PLAN WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE IN ADDITION TO BEING SHARED WITH RELEVANT ADVISORY BODIES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT."

For these reasons, ShoreRivers urges a favorable report on SB558 with amendments to preserve flexibility, promote transparency, and ensure these funds benefit Maryland's entire oyster resource and the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Benjamin Ford

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Ford', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Benjamin Ford, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper,** on behalf of ShoreRivers

# **Arundel Rivers Testimony FWA Bay Enhancement SB558**

Uploaded by: Elle Bassett

Position: FWA



PO Box 760 Edgewater, MD  
21037

410-224-3802  
[www.arundelrivers.org](http://www.arundelrivers.org)

---

## Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS – Senate Bill 558: Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

Budget and Taxation Committee  
February 24, 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB558**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

Senate Bill 558 codifies a program between the Port of Baltimore and the Department of Natural Resources to provide \$2 million in funding annually for oyster replenishment activities in the state public oyster fishery.

Oysters are critical natural resources that filter our waterways, support our local watermen and economy, and provide habitat for other aquatic life. Arundel Rivers strongly supports any efforts or programs that intend to boost native oyster populations in the Chesapeake, as populations remain at critically low levels compared to historic populations. Arundel Rivers has been supporting community-based oyster restoration through the Marylanders Grow Oyster Program for over a decade on the South River.

As a current Commissioner on the Oyster Advisory Commission, I am currently working with my fellow Commissioners and the Department of Natural Resources to identify how we can address underinvested oyster sanctuaries throughout the state. **This bill could address that gap if it were amended to also include supporting oyster restoration.** Arundel Rivers is supportive of restoring the original intent of this partnership between the Port of Baltimore and the Department first established in the 1990s, which gave DNR the discretion to **utilize funds for restoration, research, surveys, and replenishment for the public fishery.**

Arundel Rivers Federation wholeheartedly supports investing in our native oyster populations, which will result in better water quality, a stronger economy, and enhanced habitat, and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB558.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett  
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper  
Arundel Rivers Federation

# **SB 558 Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Establ**

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FWA

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026**

**TO:** Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, and Committee Members

**FROM:** Michelle Dietz, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy; Amy Jacobs, Chesapeake Bay Program Director, The Nature Conservancy

**POSITION:** Support with Amendments SB558 Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports with amendments SB558 offered by Senator Bailey. For the past two decades, the world has looked to the Chesapeake Bay to learn what's possible in oyster restoration. No effort in the world matches the scale of what has been accomplished here, and TNC has been proud to support and invest in oyster restoration along with many others during this time. SB 558 seeks to codify an existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Port of Baltimore, which would provide \$2 million in annual funding for oyster replenishment activities in the public oyster fishery.

TNC supports the oyster industry across the state. We have a history of working across sectors to leverage private, state and federal funding for its benefit. Harvesting and restoration efforts must be balanced in order to realize the many benefits oysters provide to the Chesapeake Bay, including improving the Bay's health, strengthening our state and local economies, and enhancing Maryland's culture.

TNC recommends that this committee adopt the amendments offered by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to this bill. These amendments seek to broaden the scope of SB 558 to allow DNR to utilize Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program funding to advance oyster replenishment activities on state sanctuaries. DNR is currently reviewing oyster management across these state sanctuaries and as a member of the Oyster Advisory Commission, TNC would like to see flexibility built into this bill to allow DNR to direct funding where it is needed most. Sanctuaries improve recreational and commercial fishing in the Bay by providing persistent habitat for blue crabs, striped bass, white perch and other important finfish species. Oysters within sanctuaries can produce larvae that benefit areas beyond the sanctuary, including adjacent public fishery areas. In this way, oyster restoration work also increases harvest opportunities. We support the following amendments to this legislation:

**On Page 1, Line 21, strike “PROPAGATION” and insert “RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION, RESTORATION”**

**On Page 2, line 10, strike “(D)” and Insert, “(D) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DRAFT AN ANNUAL WORK PLAN FOR THE PROGRAM DETAILING THE EXPENDITURE OF**

**FUNDS. THE WORK PLAN WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT’S WEBSITE IN ADDITION TO BEING SHARED WITH RELEVANT ADVISORY BODIES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.”**

The Nature Conservancy commends Senators Bailey on introducing SB558, which will codify funding for oyster restoration and encourages the consideration of amendment language that would allow for a more expansive use of funding by DNR for restoration efforts. **Therefore, we urge a favorable with amendments report on SB 558.**

**SB0558\_DNR\_LOI\_B&T\_2-24-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lydia McPherson

Position: INFO



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.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

# **SB0558 - LOC - MPA - Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Pr**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

February 24, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Concern – Senate Bill 558 – Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program – Established***

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 558 but offers the following concerns for the committee's consideration.

SB 558 would establish a Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide funding for oyster propagation and replenishment programs. This program would be funded through a mandated appropriation of \$2 million from the Transportation Trust Fund annually beginning in Fiscal Year 2028.

MDOT and DNR's Commitment to Continuing Partnership

MDOT understands the vital importance of the oyster population to the health and economy of the Chesapeake Bay, and since 2005, it has provided funding from the Transportation Trust Fund toward oyster propagation and replenishment activities through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MDOT and DNR. Last fall, MDOT fully restored all \$2 million in funding for FY 2026 for the oyster reseeding program consistent with the existing MOU. While the MOU ends in FY 2026, MDOT and DNR have begun conversations to enter into a new, multi-year MOU. Additionally, MDOT has budgeted \$2 million in FY 2027 to show its commitment to continuing this partnership with DNR. MDOT will keep the General Assembly informed as the conversations regarding the new MOU continue. In next year's draft Consolidated Transportation Program, MDOT will fully fund the term of the multi-year MOU.

The Port of Baltimore and Environmental Stewardship

The Port of Baltimore is an economic engine and critical international gateway that connects the region to global suppliers and markets, relying wholly on the existence of the 50-foot channel maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. SB 558 sends a troubling message to the hardworking men and women who make their living at the Port of Baltimore.

The Port of Baltimore has a 320-year history of delivering economic prosperity through trade in the largest estuary in the United States. For generations, the Maryland Port Administration has been committed to supporting Maryland's economic vitality while at the same time caring for and

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Page Two

protecting our environment and improving the lives of our neighbors. Stakeholders play a vital role in shaping the Port and their input has driven efforts to enhance transparency and collaboration.

As written, the purpose described in SB 558 is inaccurate and misplaced. Dredging makes it possible for some of the largest cargo ships in the world to do business in Maryland. With innovative thinking, thoughtful investment and careful implementation, dredging also provides material to create beautiful habitats for thousands of species of birds and animals, and places of wonder for people to discover nature. The State's Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) established by state law provides for exhaustive, multi-stakeholder input and evaluation of dredging and management of dredged material. Additionally, the construction and operation of the State's DMMP projects are subject to extensive permitting, environmental impacts studies, wetland licensing, and the State's clearing house processes – all of which include extensive evaluation of Port project impacts to a wide variety of finfish, shellfish, and other living resources in the Chesapeake Bay.

In advancing this new MOU, MDOT will note the broad nexus between oysters, the health of the Bay, and transportation-related impacts. MDOT and DNR will also work to ensure the funds directly support the repletion and restoration of oysters and oyster beds within the Chesapeake Bay relative to administrative costs.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully request the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 558.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090

Jennifer Guthrie  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Port Administration  
443-255-8980