

HOUSE BILL 1254

M2

3lr3065
CF SB 434

By: **Delegate Stein**

Introduced and read first time: February 16, 2023

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources to establish and
4 implement a Restorative Aquaculture Pilot Program to provide financial incentives
5 to certain holders of aquaculture leases; authorizing a holder of an aquaculture lease
6 who is participating in the Pilot Program to meet certain requirements by shellfish
7 seed planting only; and generally relating to the Restorative Aquaculture Pilot
8 Program.

9 BY adding to

10 Article – Natural Resources
11 Section 4–11A–24
12 Annotated Code of Maryland
13 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

14 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
15 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

16 **Article – Natural Resources**

17 **4–11A–24.**

18 **(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PILOT PROGRAM” MEANS THE RESTORATIVE**
19 **AQUACULTURE PILOT PROGRAM.**

20 **(B) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT, WITH APPROPRIATE SITING,**
21 **ACTIVE USE REQUIREMENTS THAT REQUIRE ANNUAL SHELLFISH SEED PLANTINGS,**
22 **AND APPROPRIATE HUSBANDRY, SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE IS A RESTORATIVE**
23 **ACTIVITY THAT BENEFITS WATER QUALITY, OYSTER PRODUCTIVITY, AND HABITAT.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 **(C) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A**
2 **RESTORATIVE AQUACULTURE PILOT PROGRAM.**

3 **(2) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL BE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE**
4 **FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO A HOLDER OF AN AQUACULTURE LEASE WHO:**

5 **(I) MAINTAINS THE LEASE, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, IN**
6 **ACCORDANCE WITH THE CRITERIA FOR RESTORATIVE AQUACULTURE IDENTIFIED**
7 **BY THE DEPARTMENT UNDER SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION; AND**

8 **(II) MAINTAINS THE RESTORATIVE CONDITIONS FOR AT LEAST**
9 **4 YEARS.**

10 **(D) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE**
11 **DEPARTMENT SHALL IDENTIFY CRITERIA AND METRICS FOR RESTORATIVE**
12 **AQUACULTURE THAT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION:**

13 **(I) OYSTER DENSITY;**

14 **(II) OYSTER BIOMASS;**

15 **(III) HABITAT COMPLEXITY; AND**

16 **(IV) ANY OTHER CRITERIA AND METRICS DEVELOPED OR**
17 **IDENTIFIED IN COORDINATION WITH THE AQUACULTURE COORDINATING COUNCIL,**
18 **THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, OR**
19 **OTHER INTERESTED STAKEHOLDERS.**

20 **(2) THE CRITERIA AND METRICS IDENTIFIED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1)**
21 **OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE AT LEAST AS STRINGENT AS THE TARGET CRITERIA**
22 **AND METRICS USED IN LARGE-SCALE OYSTER RESTORATION PROJECTS OVERSEEN**
23 **OR SUPPORTED BY THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM.**

24 **(E) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPHS (2) AND (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE**
25 **DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND FINANCIAL**
26 **INCENTIVES FOR THE PILOT PROGRAM.**

27 **(2) THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES ESTABLISHED UNDER PARAGRAPH**
28 **(1) OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER THAT PAYS ELIGIBLE**
29 **LEASE HOLDERS:**

30 **(I) 1. ON A PER-ACRE BASIS; AND**

1 **2. AT A RATE DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT IN**
2 **CONSULTATION WITH THE AQUACULTURE COORDINATING COUNCIL; OR**

3 **(II) FOR OYSTERS PURCHASED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR USE**
4 **IN OYSTER RESTORATION SANCTUARY PROJECTS.**

5 **(3) THE DEPARTMENT MAY CONSULT WITH INTERESTED**
6 **STAKEHOLDERS IN ESTABLISHING THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES UNDER THIS**
7 **SUBSECTION.**

8 **(F) A HOLDER OF AN AQUACULTURE LEASE WHO IS PARTICIPATING IN THE**
9 **PILOT PROGRAM MAY MEET ANY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ACTIVE USE OF THE**
10 **LEASE BY SHELLFISH SEED PLANTING ONLY.**

11 **(G) (1) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2024, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL**
12 **ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THIS SECTION.**

13 **(2) THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS**
14 **SUBSECTION SHALL INCLUDE PROVISIONS FOR THE VERIFICATION OF EXISTING**
15 **AND IMPROVED CONDITIONS ON AQUACULTURE LEASES THAT ARE PART OF THE**
16 **PILOT PROGRAM.**

17 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
18 October 1, 2023. It shall remain effective for a period of 6 years and, at the end of September
19 30, 2029, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be
20 abrogated and of no further force and effect.