

SENATE BILL 875

M2

6lr3097
CF 6lr2732

By: **Senators Carozza, Mautz, and Hershey**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

Oysters – Rotational Harvest – Pilot Program

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a rotational harvest pilot program for oysters to be
4 implemented by the Department of Natural Resources; requiring the Department to
5 open certain areas of the Chesapeake Bay to the rotational harvest of oysters in
6 certain manners; requiring a certain replacement of oyster shells on the bar where
7 they were caught under the pilot program; requiring the Department, before opening
8 an area to oyster harvesting under the pilot program, to survey and investigate the
9 area to collect certain baseline data and, after closing the area, to continue to monitor
10 the area to collect certain additional data; and generally relating to a rotational
11 harvest pilot program for oysters.

12 BY adding to

13 Article – Natural Resources
14 Section 4-1011
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

Article – Natural Resources

20 **4-1011.**

21 **(A) THERE IS A 5-YEAR ROTATIONAL HARVEST PILOT PROGRAM FOR**
22 **OYSTERS TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT.**

23 **(B) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL APPLY TO FOUR DESIGNATED AREAS OF**
24 **THE CHESAPEAKE BAY, AS FOLLOWS:**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



26 (c) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

30 (II) REOPEN THE SAME OYSTER BAR FOR THE 2029-2030
31 OYSTER SEASON THAT IT HAD OPENED FOR THE 2026-2027 OYSTER SEASON; AND

32 (III) REOPEN THE SAME OYSTER BAR FOR THE 2030–2031
33 OYSTER SEASON THAT IT HAD OPENED FOR THE 2027–2028 OYSTER SEASON.

5 (III) REOPEN THE SAME OYSTER BAR FOR THE 2030-2031
6 OYSTER SEASON THAT IT HAD OPENED FOR THE 2027-2028 OYSTER SEASON.

10 (I) THE 2026–2027 OYSTER SEASON; AND

11 (II) THE 2029–2030 OYSTER SEASON.

15 (I) OPEN ONE DIFFERENT OYSTER BAR FOR EACH OF THE
16 2026–2027 AND 2027–2028 OYSTER SEASONS;

17 (II) REOPEN THE SAME OYSTER BAR FOR THE 2029-2030
18 OYSTER SEASON THAT IT HAD OPENED FOR THE 2026-2027 OYSTER SEASON; AND

19 (III) REOPEN THE SAME OYSTER BAR FOR THE 2030-2031
20 OYSTER SEASON THAT IT HAD OPENED FOR THE 2027-2028 OYSTER SEASON.

21 (D) (1) A TIDAL FISH LICENSEE WHO HOLDS AN OYSTER AUTHORIZATION
22 MAY CATCH OYSTERS IN AREAS OF THE LOWER CHOPTANK RIVER ROTATIONAL
23 HARVEST AREA, THE LOWER MAIN STEM CHESAPEAKE BAY ROTATIONAL
24 HARVEST AREA, THE HERRING BAY ROTATIONAL HARVEST AREA, AND THE LOWER
25 CHESTER ROTATIONAL HARVEST AREA THAT ARE OPEN FOR HARVEST.

30 (E) UNDER THE PILOT PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT:

(1) IN ITS DISCRETION, SHALL MANAGE THE OYSTER HARVEST; AND

(2) MAY:

(I) ADJUST CATCH LIMITS;

(II) LIMIT THE HOURS AND DAYS FOR HARVEST; AND

(III) RESTRICT THE GEAR THAT MAY BE USED.

(F) (1) BEFORE OPENING AN AREA TO OYSTER HARVESTING UNDER THE

PILOT PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SURVEY AND INVESTIGATE THE AREA

TO COLLECT BASELINE DATA ON:

(I) WATER QUALITY;

(II) HABITAT QUALITY, INCLUDING THE PRESENCE OF FINFISH

SPECIES AND OTHER SHELLFISH SPECIES:

(III) THE PRESENCE OF:

1. SILT AND SEDIMENT ON THE OYSTER BAR:

2. SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION ON OR NEAR THE

OYSTER BAR: AND

3. DISEASED OR DEAD OYSTERS ON THE OYSTER BAR:

17 AND

(IV) ANY OTHER RELEVANT MATTER IN THE DISCRETION OF THE

DEPARTMENT

(2) AFTER CLOSING AN AREA IN THE ROTATIONAL HARVEST AREAS

TO OYSTER HARVESTING UNDER THE PILOT PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL

TO OYSTER HARVESTING UNDER THE FLEET PROGRAM. CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE AREA TO COLLECT ADDITIONAL DATA.

23 DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

(C) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2021, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REPORT

(G) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2031, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 3-1257 OF THE STATE

TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
2 1, 2026. It shall remain effective for a period of 6 years and, at the end of June 30, 2032,
3 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and
4 of no further force and effect.