

Written Testimony in **SUPPORT of Senate Bill 629**
SAV Protection Zones and Hydraulic Clam Dredging

If only we could magically see the bottom of the bay and the havoc we are wreaking on it by senselessly destroying SAV due to the lack of proper SAV mapping available to watermen, updated environmental studies showing the impact of silt plumes and shredding the bottom and stable buoys for enforcement.

I am very concerned about the environmental impacts of hydraulic dredging an important filter feeder that provides food for crabs, cownose rays, spot, croaker, flounder, other bottom feeders, as well as sea birds and some waterfowl. When the clams are gone, what takes their place? Along with the unsustainable dredging of this species, **it poses a great threat to nearby SAV, oyster sanctuaries and historic oyster beds allegedly protected by MDDNR.**

I live on the shores of the Plum Point Oyster Sanctuary in Calvert County on the Western Shore of the Chesapeake. We have one lone buoy that is easily moved by bad actors and storms. That buoy is our only means of ensuring that the hydraulic clam dredgers are outside the boundaries of the miles long sanctuary. However, razor clam dredging is allowed 365 days a year, thus impossible to enforce when the county currently has only one officer who also has to take calls for roadside deer poaching. From my perspective, these few buoys are ineffective. In fact, many of them end up as lawn ornaments for my neighbors. They are no replacement for enforcement.

The last time the effects of hydraulic clam dredging was studied was 1955! Our research technology has greatly improved since then. What are the effects of the massive silt plumes? Given what I have witnessed along our shore when hydraulic clam dredgers churn for hours on end in and around our sanctuary, approval to operate within 150 feet of SAV zones seems too close. The silt that was studied in 1955 has also likely changed. Who knows what toxins are being spread among the grasses and oysters with all of the dredged and spewed silt?

I understand the balance of "yeah, I love my crabs, oysters and rockfish and a healthy bay." I support watermen practicing their valuable trade and making a living. Economy vs. ecology is a given. It's a tough balance. However, **we need to invest in environmental research and find alternatives that don't deplete the grasses and species of our beloved bay.** The potential cost of not doing so is simply too high.

Please see photos of the moving buoys attached.

Regards,
Lisa Collins
Concerned Citizen
Calvert County

