



## SENATE BILL 119

Clean Water Commerce Act of 2021

**DATE:** January 28, 2021

**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Blue Oyster Environmental **recommends a favorable report with sponsor amendments from the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs (EHEA) Committee on Senate Bill 119.**

This legislation, if enacted with what we understand the sponsor amendments to be, would provide refreshed direction for the use of Clean Water Commerce (CWC) funds for performance-based nitrogen pollution reductions and incentivize ecosystem restoration markets.

### **Oyster Aquaculture**

It was over 200 years ago that we, as a country, began using the oyster as a natural resource to establish an economic foundation in the development of the Chesapeake Bay region and our great nation. Indeed, in 1885, 20 million bushels were harvested annually on the Chesapeake Bay, employing 50,000 people, and supporting an industry worth \$50 million. That same industry would be worth \$1.3 billion in 2020 dollars.

**Purchasing performance-based nutrient reductions achieved through oyster aquaculture could accelerate the development of a major sustainable oyster aquaculture industry by selling 'environmental outcomes' generated by the oysters themselves as an added value to the product.** Technical guidance from the US EPA Chesapeake Bay Program's Oyster Best Management Practice (BMP) Expert panel, combined with regulations in the State of Maryland, shows that oyster aquaculture precisely quantifies the ecosystem services produced by oysters grown to reduce nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) pollution on an annual basis.

### **The Issue Is Not New**

Many of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would be authorized to receive funding under this legislation are effective at reducing nitrogen pollution to the Chesapeake Bay. Oysters have a known ecological and environmental benefit within their habitats, which are the same waterways that many people live on and use for recreational activities. Oysters filter up to 50 gallons of water per day, leading to an increase in water quality and clarity. They directly filter out the harmful pollutants, nitrogen, and phosphorus, that come from chemical fertilizers and livestock manure within the agricultural sector, as well as sewage and stormwater within the industrial and municipal sectors. Adding additional oysters into the water, whether utilizing aquaculture gear or directly on a submerged land lease, can function much like a natural



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oyster reef, providing protection from dangerous storm waves and reducing shoreline erosion. This can help protect many investments that the general public has in shoreside infrastructure, such as homes, businesses, and roads.

With additional funds provided by the sale of environmental outcomes, oyster growers will be able to expand their farms, putting more oysters into the Chesapeake Bay, and its respective tributaries. Oyster aquaculture has been proven to create and enhance habitats for marine life, including fish, crabs, and other bottom dwelling organisms. This has been proven especially with the blue crab population and would be a significant benefit for that fishery both commercially and recreationally.

FOR THESE REASONS, BLUE OYSTER ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDS A **FAVORABLE REPORT WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENTS** ON SB 119.

#### **About Blue Oyster Environmental**

Blue Oyster Environmental, LLC is a for-profit company that seeks to be the leader in the Chesapeake region in re-establishing the Eastern Oyster as the cornerstone of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, in the heart of Dorchester County, Blue Oyster Environmental values the heritage that transformed many seaside villages into thriving communities and is committed to championing the Chesapeake Bay Watermen once again.

Blue Oyster aggregates nutrient credits (i.e., "environmental outcomes") generated by oysters grown by farmers and through our Co-op program and sell them to individuals, municipalities, and corporations. The revenue generated through this program will provide added value back into the established oyster aquaculture industry and will provide startup capital for individuals interested in becoming oyster farmers.

Please contact Jordan Shockley, CEO, at [jshockley@blueoysterenv.com](mailto:jshockley@blueoysterenv.com) or (443) 225-6860, with any questions you may have.