



Senate Bill 203 – Aquaculture Lease Applications - Notices, Protests, Meetings, and Conflict Resolution

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® support SB 203, which expands property owner notification of proposed aquaculture leases and promotes conflict resolution between lease applicants and area residents. Taken together, these changes will give homeowners a voice in the granting of aquaculture leases off their shoreline.

REALTORS® recognize the benefits that oyster aquaculture provides but believe that it should be subject to additional standards when close to property owners. Maneuvering a watercraft through or around some aquaculture operations is difficult and can limit ingress and egress from docks and the waterfront of a property owner.

An Aquaculture Enterprise Zone directly in front of a property owner can impact the attractiveness of the property to a subsequent buyer as well. Current guidelines permit these operations within 51 feet of a dock or shoreline. A property subject to navigation restrictions, noise, and other commercial activities less than 100 feet from their property line is likely to be viewed more negatively than a property not subject to these activities.

SB 203 addresses some of these concerns by requiring the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to notify owners property within 500 feet of the proposed aquaculture activity. Current guidelines only require notice for property owners directly in front of the operation. The bill also directs DNR to work with the both the aquaculture permit seeker and the landowner to mitigate any concerns. Finally, the bill requires DNR to hold a public informational meeting if the person raises significant health, safety, or welfare concerns.

SB 203 will help permit seekers and owners design an aquaculture lease operation that results in the least amount of interference with property owner's rights to use and enjoy their property.

Maryland REALTORS® encourage a favorable report.

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