



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 350

Natural Resources – Aquaculture – Leases

Date: January 14, 2021
To: Senate EHEA Committee

Position: Support with Amendments
Contact: Dr. Allison Colden, acolden@cbf.org

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SB350 WITH AMENDMENTS** which would grant the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulatory authority to grant leases for the commercial cultivation of aquatic plants in Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's Coastal Bays.

Aquatic Plant Aquaculture Can Help Reach Bay Cleanup Goals

Like oysters, aquatic plants take up nutrients to grow which are extracted from the water when aquatic plants are harvested for sale. Through this process, nutrients that could otherwise cause impaired water quality, low oxygen dead zones and other environmental impacts are removed. With a strong regulatory framework that ensures the environmentally-sound operation of such businesses, aquatic plant aquaculture could be a boon to the Chesapeake Bay cleanup and Maryland's economy.

The Introduction of Non-native Species May Have Significant Negative Impacts on the Bay Ecosystem

The introduction of non-native species for aquaculture or other purposes could have significant negative impacts on the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Past introductions of non-native species, like blue catfish introductions in the 1970s, have negatively impacted the Bay's ecology and its commercial fisheries. Clarification that only operators planning to cultivate native aquatic plant species are issued enterprise leases would help protect against the negative effects from the introduction of non-native plants into the Chesapeake Bay.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report WITH AMENDMENTS on SB350.

Amendment

On page 5, line 23, prior to section (d), insert a new section, (c)(4) stating:

THE DEPARTMENT MAY NOT ISSUE AN ENTERPRISE LEASE FOR THE PURPOSES OF CULTIVATING AQUATIC PLANT SPECIES OTHER THAN NATIVE OR NATURALIZED SPECIES AS DEFINED IN THE CODE OF MARYLAND REGULATIONS 08.02.19.02.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.