
ORCHARD POINT OYSTER CO.®

3/13/23

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider this a letter of support for HB1262. The current shellfish oyster aquaculture lease issuance time creates a severe barrier to entry in this industry. We have personally experienced lease issuance times of between 3-5.5 years, some without public protest. Besides hindering start-ups, it makes it difficult for individuals and companies to adapt, as business and production needs change and evolve. Much of that evolution and change can be unplanned and involuntary; the current reality creates industry inefficiency and hardship.

Also, we are in favor of creating pre-approved lease areas off of state-owned shorelines. We currently operate a lease off of federally owned property and it is a symbiotic relationship. They are good neighbors and we help protect their unprotected beach by dampening wave action with our surface floats. As long as DNR/MDE take into account water usage and water quality, this could be a viable means to obtain a lease. Which would make new entries into industry more realistic, as well as make current businesses and operations more viable.

Finally, we are in favor of proportional representation on the Oyster Advisory Committee. Since the vast majority of shellfish aquaculture in the state is oyster production, it is logical that industry be equitably represented at a body that makes regulatory and fisheries management suggestions. Currently, there are (16) representatives from the wild fishery on OAC and (1) from the oyster aquaculture industry. If you take recent harvest figures from DNR (2021: 511K/90K wild/farmed), and split representation based on those, it should be more along the lines of 16/3. Hence the ask for two more oyster aquaculture seats.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report from the committee. Please consider this bill an earnest attempt to enhance this growing sustainable and regenerative industry in the state.

Sincerely,



Scott Budden

Partner, Orchard Point Oyster Co.