



Maryland House Environment & Transportation Committee
Thursday, March 6, 2025
House Bill 506: Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act
Favorable

- I am Ward Slacum, Executive Director of the Oyster Recovery Partnership, here to support House Bill 506, Governor Moore’s “Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act “
- The Oyster Recovery Partnership is a 30-year old Annapolis-based nonprofit organization that helps execute Maryland’s oyster restoration agenda
- Working with the Department of Natural Resources, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, and other partners, ORP annually plants as many as one billion oysters in the Chesapeake Bay
 - Public reefs
 - Sanctuary reefs
- ORP is also heavily involved in Maryland’s fast-growing oyster aquaculture industry
 - In 2010, when aquaculture leasing was re-instated, ORP and it’s partner UMCES Horn Point hatchery developed a training program with a purpose to provide training and support to working watermen on how they could start their own aquaculture business. Over 80 watermen participated in the program and many of them are now the largest aquaculture businesses in the state.
 - Today, there are hundreds of underwater oyster aquaculture leases in 12 Maryland counties
- House Bill 506 proposes changes to the state’s process of leasing underwater acreage to would-be oyster farmers
- The changes add greater certainty to the process, allowing DNR:
 - To survey would-be leases
 - To mediate disputes between applicants and nearby property owners
 - To better manage data
- These changes will simplify the leasing process and encourage more private investment in this important industry
- I join our state, local, and federal partners in urging you to approve House Bill 506.