



Chesapeake **OYSTER ALLIANCE** *10 Billion for the Bay*

ADVOCATES FOR HERRING BAY | ANNAPOLIS AQUACULTURE | ANNAPOLIS OYSTER COMPANY
BUILDING CONSERVATION TRUST | CAPE CONSERVATION CORPS | CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION | CHESAPEAKE BEACH GREEN TEAM
CHESAPEAKE BEACH OYSTER CULTIVATION SOCIETY | CHOPTANK RIVERKEEPER | COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION - MARYLAND
DOUBLE 'T' OYSTER RANCH | FALLEN PINE OYSTER COMPANY | FRIENDS OF ST. CLEMENTS BAY
HOLLYWOOD OYSTER CO. | LIVING CLASSROOMS FOUNDATION | MARK STREET VENTURES | MARYLAND SEA GRANT EXTENSION
ORCHARD POINT OYSTERS | OYSTER NINJA/S.S. SHUCKING | PHILLIPS WHARF ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER | SHORERIVERS
SOLAR OYSTERS | TRUE CHESAPEAKE OYSTER COMPANY | WATERFRONT PARTNERSHIP OF BALTIMORE

House Bill 1263

Natural Resources - Public Clam Fishery Area – Establishment

DATE: MARCH 11, 2025

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance is a broad coalition consisting of 113 partners, including non-profits, academic institutions, oyster aquaculture operations, and other businesses with a shared goal of adding 10 billion oysters to the Bay. With a focus on oyster restoration, science-based fishery management, and increasing aquaculture, the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance aims to accelerate oyster recovery efforts and in so doing the recovery of Chesapeake Bay at large

We, the above-listed members of the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance, **OPPOSE House Bill 1263**, which would require the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to establish clam fishery areas by regulation and prohibit aquaculture leasing in those areas.

Maryland's oyster aquaculture industry reported modest but record landings of aquaculture oysters over the years 2021-2023, with 90,029, 94,257, and 94,286 bushels each year, respectively. These numbers reflect an industry operating at a high capacity but already pushing up against the confines of space and regulatory restraints.

Existing space for oyster aquaculture operations is already limited by established exclusions from public shellfish fishery areas or areas within 150 feet of a Yates Bar. Additionally, landowner conflicts present ongoing obstacles to viable grounds for oyster aquaculture. HB 1263 would further inhibit the breadth and growth of Maryland's aquaculture industry by creating more exclusions for the limited number of Maryland clambers.

While oysters inhabit stationary reefs, clams are found in the sand and soft sediments of the Bay bottom. Their location varies year to year, making establishing static 'clam fishery areas' difficult. Harvest reports for clamming are also not accurate enough to pinpoint specific geographic locations, meaning large swathes of the Bay bottom could be rendered 'off limits' to aquaculture. If regulations for 'clam fishery areas' are analogous to oyster 'public shellfish fishery areas,' this action could also restrict areas available to conduct oyster restoration projects.

Unlike some other types of aquaculture, oyster aquaculture provides net positive environmental and economic benefits. Oyster cultivation involves the introduction of millions of oysters into conducive waterways where they filter water, increasing water clarity. Oyster aquaculture gear also provides habitat to fish and crabs and supports many of the same species that are found on oyster reefs. Additionally, oyster aquaculture has been approved by the Chesapeake Bay Program as a best management practice for the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus, meaning it can be used to help entities achieve their nutrient reduction goals in the development of Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, as well as emerging voluntary markets.

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance respectfully requests an **unfavorable report on House Bill 1263**. Please contact Chesapeake Oyster Alliance Senior Manager, Tanner Council (tcouncil@cbf.org; 434.882.8266) with any questions.