



**Talbot Watermen Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 324 • Bozman, MD 21612 • (410) 745-9759 • info@talbotwatermen.org

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our strong **support** for **Senate Bill 558/House Bill 1599 – Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program**.

For more than thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, last year and again this year, MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have



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been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget last year so that planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals. The attached document provides an example of the success and positive impact that this program has had on our local waterways.

We are therefore respectfully requesting that the committee issue a favorable report on this bill to help ensure that MPA keeps their commitment and to help ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities as evidenced by the attached letters. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Herman Jeffrey Harrison  
President

Contact: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio  
R&R Solutions, LLC  
(443) 786-2137  
[jeannie@randrsolutions.us](mailto:jeannie@randrsolutions.us)

Talbot Watermen Association, Inc. is a component fund of the  
Mid-Shore Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) public charity.



## INNOVATIVE & SUSTAINABLE COMMERCIAL FISHING RESTORATION AND REPLENISHMENT BY THE NUMBERS



Annual replenishment of harvested areas is an important practice to ensure long-term resource health. The Talbot County Oystershell Committee leads our local replenishment efforts. Working in partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Oyster Recovery Partnership, the committee begins planning each February and conducts plantings from April through September. **Funding from the oyster bushel tax and an MOU between DNR and MDOT are crucial to this program's success.**

**98M** Spat-on-Shell  
Planted on 24.8 Acres

**46,338** Pounds of Nitrogen Removed in 10 Years  
At a Cost of Only \$739,000

**33,880** Bushels of Shell  
Planted on 17.7 Acres

**2,109** Bushels of Seed Oysters  
Planted on 6.7 Acres



February 10, 2026

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

I am writing to respectfully request your support for the continued funding and advancement of oyster restoration initiatives in Maryland, specifically those guided by the longstanding partnership between the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA).

Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the ongoing stewardship of our state's vital oyster populations. The success of these collaborative efforts not only benefits our natural resources but also supports local economies and communities that depend on healthy fisheries.

As we look to the future, your support is essential for safeguarding Maryland's environmental and economic well-being. I urge you to champion these critical programs and help secure the resources necessary for their continued success.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information or wish to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Sincerely,

*Dan Worrell*

*Representing Fallen Pine Oyster Company*

- **Positions held in Maryland Oyster Aquaculture**
  - Chairman Aquaculture Coordinating Council of Maryland
  - Vice Chairman of the Maryland Seafood Marketing Commission

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORCHESTER COUNTY**  
COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
501 Court Lane, P.O. Box 26  
Cambridge, Maryland 21613  
(410) 228-1700

GEORGE L. PFEFFER, JR., PRESIDENT  
MIKE DETMER, VICE PRESIDENT  
ROB KRAMER, JR.  
WILLIAM V. NICHOLS  
RICKY C. TRAVERS



JERRY JONES  
COUNTY MANAGER  
MACLEOD LAW GROUP LLC  
COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Senator  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 558 - Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Committee Members:

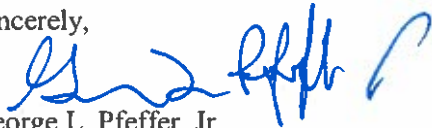
On behalf of the Dorchester County Council, I respectfully offer its support for Senate Bill 558 entitled, "Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program - Established," for the purpose of establishing the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program to provide funding for certain oyster propagation and replenishment projects that mitigate the effects on the State's oyster population of certain transportation projects; and generally relating to the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program.

Dorchester County strongly supports SB 558 because it creates a dedicated and predictable funding source to offset environmental impacts associated with major transportation and port infrastructure projects. As a Chesapeake Bay community with a long-standing economic and cultural connection to the seafood industry, the County understands the importance of sustaining healthy oyster populations that contribute to water quality, habitat restoration, and the vitality of Maryland's commercial fisheries.

By reinvesting in oyster propagation and replenishment efforts, this legislation helps ensure that economic growth and infrastructure improvements are balanced with responsible environmental stewardship and long-term resource sustainability. The proposed annual appropriation also provides accountability and stability for ongoing restoration efforts that benefit the entire Bay region. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you look favorably upon this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support. If you have any questions, please contact the Council's Office at (410) 228-1700

Sincerely,

  
George L. Pfeffer, Jr.  
President

cc: The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Senator  
The Honorable Christopher T. Adams, Delegate  
The Honorable Sheree Sample-Hughes, Delegate  
The Honorable Tom Hutchinson, Delegate



**August 21, 2025**

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

Since 1996, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have worked under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide vital funding to both Maryland's aquaculture industry and the commercial wild harvest industry for the purchase of seed, shell, and spat-on-shell. This partnership has been a cornerstone in strengthening Maryland's coastal economies, enhancing oyster restoration, and supporting workforce development.

This year, without notice, MDOT chose to discontinue its participation in the program. While we are grateful that DNR remains strongly supportive and has provided temporary resources to sustain projects, MDOT's withdrawal creates significant uncertainty for aquaculture operators, coastal communities, and conservation partners who rely on these funds. We respectfully emphasize that it should not fall solely on DNR to mitigate the broader impacts of state-level decisions that directly affect the Chesapeake Bay and the aquaculture workforce.

The funding at issue supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell, the management and monitoring of restoration projects, and critical opportunities for new entrants into aquaculture—including women and minorities. Every investment in this program pays

dividends by advancing sustainable seafood production, creating jobs, and helping Maryland achieve its Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

Minorities In Aquaculture (MIA) strongly supports restoring this funding in the upcoming budget. The program clearly strengthens Maryland's aquaculture workforce and contributes to the long-term resilience of our environment and economy. We respectfully urge your leadership in ensuring that MDOT recommits to this effort alongside DNR so these essential programs can continue without interruption.

Thank you for your continued attention to this issue and your commitment to Maryland's working waterfronts, natural resources, and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Imani Black". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Imani" being more prominent than the last name "Black".

Imani Black  
Founder & CEO  
Minorities In Aquaculture

President: B. Baltus  
410-952-6249  
Vice President: R.  
Spangler  
410-477-3291  
Second Vice-President:  
M. Blake



Treasurer: E. Miller  
410-686-0545

Secretary: A. Ashwell  
7840 Denton Ave.  
Baltimore Md. 21219  
410-477-0798

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

There has been a mutual agreement between the Maryland Department of Transportation and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources since 1996, for oyster propagation.

The watermen of the state and Baltimore County would like to see this relationship continue for the health of the bay and economy.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Blair Baltus', written in a cursive style.

Blair Baltus  
President  
Baltimore County Watermen's Association  
410-952-6249



## Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association

311-A Third Street \* Annapolis, MD 21403 \* Phone: 410-507-3249 \* CBSIA@comcast.net

August 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual-work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR

President, Jack Brooks; Vice President, Robin Hall; Secretary Treasurer, Bill Brooks; Executive Vice President, Bill Stelling  
Board Members: Clay Brooks, Jerry Harris, Jay Newcomb, Casey Todd, Roy Todd, Aubrey Vincent, and Joe Spurry

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provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Brooks  
President  
Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industries Association

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5209 Walnut Landing Road  
Vienna, Maryland 21069  
443-521-1938

July 31, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
103 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
14 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone:

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations for the transportation of waterborne commerce Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, Maryland's aquaculture industry and improving water quality for additional bay species. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with

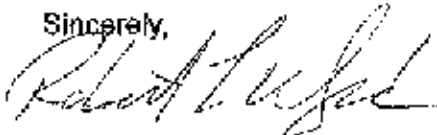
conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Whaples  
President



August 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
II-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) have collaborated with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. Dredging in the Port of Baltimore is still being conducted and continues to impact on the oyster resource and watermen community whose livelihood is tied to the Bay. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

The funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed, substrate and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an aquaculture best management practice. The replenishment projects plants over one-hundred thousand bushels of aged oyster shell and hundreds of millions spat on shell annually, by privately-operated Maryland shellfish businesses who have the equipment, vessels, and knowledge to cost effectively conduct these aquaculture activities. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and

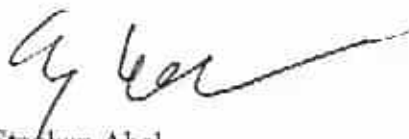
aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MDOT / MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental and economic importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, the community at large feels strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is not often that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this issue. Therefore, we are urging MDOT / MPA to keep their financial commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue on behalf of the businesses, like Ferry Cove, who have dedicated our time, efforts and resources to achieve these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephan Abel  
President / CEO  
Ferry Cove Shellfish



**Green Pearl, LLC**  
Easton, Maryland

July 24, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

Green Pearl LLC is a seven-year-old aquaculture company on Maryland's Eastern Shore. We have three aquaculture leases with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) where we grow and harvest oysters. Being involved in this industry we continuously apply spat on shell to our lease areas. Oysters are not only a revenue source to those in the industry, but far more important perhaps the best and most natural method for cleaning the waters of the Chesapeake.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of the lack of funding for the Oyster Recovery Agreement. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Green Pearl, LLC



By: William F. Cockayne, Authorized Member



MARYLAND  
OYSTERMEN  
ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 290  
ROCK HALL, MD 21661  
www.MDOYSTERMEN.org

**MOA BOD Members**

Jim Mullin  
Executive Director

Bunky Chance  
Jimmy Eline  
Jimmy Kahl  
Chuckie White  
Wayne Wilson

"The Bay's A Big Place  
And There's Room For  
Everybody"

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson & Chair Guzzone,

Since 1996 there has been a mutual agreement between the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay Enhancement Program (Oyster Recovery). The goals and objectives of the agreement address mitigation for the environmental impacts from state dredging to enhance the transportation of waterborne commerce. The mitigation process has had a positive impact on the resource-based economies of the tidewater counties of the state.

The agreement and its overall goals and objectives of providing economic development, sustainable employment and recovery from impacts of state dredging for improved water quality are in danger of being extinguished and we respectfully request that the overall program be continued for the health of the state's economy and the health of the bay.

Thank you for your time & consideration,

James T. Mullin, Executive Director

Cc: Robert T. Brown, President  
Maryland Waterman's Association



# The Maryland Watermen's Association, Inc.

3 August 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone

The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the past 20 years under the Oyster Recovery Agreement to mitigate the channel dredging operations (which is degrading of water quality with silt and other unknown hazard waste).

The funds have improved the Oyster Industry by planting spat on shells, wild seed, and oyster shells. These oyster shells are of high value as sub straight, which rebuild the Natural Oyster bars. These funds are distributed to tidal Counties of Maryland. In conjunction with the DNR, the County Oyster Committee's and the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) have developed best management plan that enhances a sustainable oyster industry.

Harvest fell to an all-time recorded low of 26,000 (25,843) bushels in 2003- 2004 season. This recorded decline was due to the 4-year drought that occurred from 1999 to 2002. The prolonged drought elevated salinity and accelerated oyster disease and mortality.

With funding from MPA and best management practices our oyster industry is not only sustainable but has increased the water quality and helped increase natural spat set. These funds need to be reinstated to continue this valuable industry's recovery, as harvest has been proven with the latest data from 2022-2023 of 722,850 bushels harvest and 2023-2024 of 437,536 due only decreasing due to demand. The Maryland Watermen's Association asks the legislators to assist in reinstalling these valuable funds for the environment, economy, and continued sustainability. Thank you for your time in this matter and we look forward to speaking with you.

Very Respectfully,

ROBERT T BROWN, SR.  
PRESIDENT  
MARYLAND WATERMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.



## MILES RIVER YACHT CLUB

PH 410-745-9511

P. O. Box 158

[www.milesriveryc.org](http://www.milesriveryc.org)

FX 410-745-2602

St. Michaels, MD 21663

Commodore Nick Simpson  
Vice Commodore Dennis Kelly  
Rear Commodore Matt Kealy

Fleet Captain Andrew Southworth  
Secretary Jennifer Williams  
Treasurer John Hines

July 29, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Oyster Recovery Agreement

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

The Miles River Yacht Club ("MRYC") was founded on the shores of the Miles River in 1921 and is now a thriving club with over 800 members. Our mission is to stimulate interest in boating, sailing, and swimming, to promote social recreation, and to enhance the general welfare of the community.

Our membership spends much of their time on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, our children swim on the river and learn to sail on its waters. We strongly believe

that enhancing the general welfare of our community involves protecting and improving the quality of the waters of the Bay.

We strongly believe that by far the best and most natural method for cleaning the waters of the Chesapeake is to encourage and support oyster restoration. To that end many of our members, and the club itself, have participated in the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program.

It is not every day that recreational boaters, conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of the lack of funding for the Oyster Recovery Agreement. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery seed and spat-on-shell in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

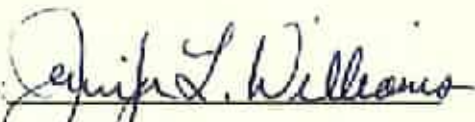
For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would have been halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in the Chesapeake Bay.

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Miles River Yacht Club

By:   
Jennifer L. Williams, Secretary



July 22, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone:

The Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP), based in Annapolis and founded in 1994, is a nonprofit organization that manages much of Maryland's in-water oyster restoration efforts. Under contract with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), ORP has planted more than 13 billion juvenile oysters on both sanctuary and public reefs throughout the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay. We are proud to play a central role in the successful restoration of one of Maryland's most vital natural resources.

For more than 20 years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has been an essential partner in funding Maryland's oyster restoration strategy. This funding serves to mitigate the environmental impact of the Port's ongoing channel dredging activities on native oyster populations. Along with per-bushel harvest taxes paid by the commercial industry, MPA funding has supported the planting of more than 2.4 billion juvenile oysters ("spat-on-shell") and over 1.8 million bushels of shell on public, harvestable reefs.

Since 2014, ORP has partnered with DNR to administer these public fishery repletion funds. Each year, under DNR contract, we engage commercial watermen to plant spat-on-shell and recycled oyster shells on reefs identified by Maryland's 11 County Oyster Committees. This Port-funded repletion program has contributed directly to four consecutive years of the largest commercial oyster harvests in more than 30 years.

Historically, MPA has demonstrated a strong commitment to balancing the Bay's economic and environmental priorities. However, earlier this year, MPA unexpectedly withdrew its support



for public oyster repletion. While DNR stepped in to provide limited gap funding to continue this year's projects, that funding is both partial and temporary. We greatly appreciate DNR's efforts but believe strongly that it is not the agency's responsibility to mitigate the Port's environmental impacts from dredging in the Bay.

A recent DNR study shows that Maryland's oyster population has tripled over the past two decades. Combined with record harvests, this progress clearly demonstrates that Maryland's restoration strategy is working. In recognition of this success, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now identifies oyster restoration as a Best Management Practice (BMP), enabling the state and local governments to earn valuable nutrient reduction credits toward their Watershed Implementation Plans.

ORP is proud to stand with DNR, Maryland's commercial watermen, County Oyster Committees, conservation partners, and the seafood industry in urging the MPA to reinstate critical funding for public oyster repletion. We respectfully request your support in ensuring the continuation of this vital program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Slacum', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ward Slacum  
Executive Director  
Oyster Recovery Partnership  
Office: 410.990.4970 (ext 1015)  
[wslacum@oysterrecovery.org](mailto:wslacum@oysterrecovery.org)



# Phillips Wharf Environmental Center

July 25th, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
II-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Oyster Recovery Agreement

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

The Phillips Wharf Environmental Center (PWEC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that focuses on environmental education. Our mission is to encourage, educate, and engage people of all ages with Chesapeake Bay stewardship. Our vision is a healthy Chesapeake Bay with thriving fisheries, clean water, and access for all.

Founded in 2005 in a former crab shanty on Tilghman Island, PWEC relocated to Easton Point Park in Easton, Maryland in 2022. Since 2011, PWEC has continuously worked with support of the Marylanders Grow Oysters program and the Oyster Recovery Partnership to run a participatory oyster restoration program known as Tilghman Islanders Grow Oysters. Juvenile oysters, known as spat on shell, are provided to Phillips Wharf to distribute to volunteer growers in Tilghman and along Broad and Harris Creek. Volunteers sign up to host these juvenile oysters by hanging them from their docks in cages for approximately 9 months. During this time, the volunteer growers are expected to occasionally shake the cages to help keep the oysters clean of any dirt and other debris.

At the end of the program, the cages are collected, and the juvenile oysters are planted on wild oyster reefs. Specifically, our program plants oysters in the Harris Creek Sanctuary at the direction of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and we have done so since the beginning of the oyster restoration project in Harris Creek called for in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Dr. Kristen Lycett, Executive Director

Phillips Wharf Environmental Center



Queen Anne's County Watermen's Association  
108 Spruce Drive  
Queen Anne, MD 21657



August 19, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For the past twenty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with [these replenishment](#) and restoration activities.

Specifically, the funding supports the production and planting of hatchery [seed](#) and [spat-on-shell](#) in sanctuaries and on aquaculture oyster leases. It also supports the management and monitoring of these plantings along with citizen engagement efforts such as the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program. The other portion of the funding is allocated to the tidal counties of Maryland to implement in-water oyster replenishment projects which are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a best management practice. DNR consults with conservation organizations, County Oyster Committees, and aquaculturists to develop an annual work plan, helping to ensure that all projects are ecologically and economically sustainable.

For years, MPA has worked to balance the economic importance of maintaining navigation in the Bay with the environmental importance of our native oyster populations. Unfortunately, this year MPA abruptly ended the ORA with no notice, which meant that all mitigation activities planned for this year would [have been](#) halted. DNR provided gap funding from their budget so that the planned projects could continue, but their gap funding is only providing partial and temporary relief. Additionally, while we greatly appreciate DNR's efforts, we feel strongly that it is not their responsibility to mitigate the impact of the Port's channel dredging activities in [the Chesapeake Bay](#).

It is not every day that conservationists, commercial watermen, and the aquaculture industry are on the same side of an issue which underscores the importance and urgency of this situation. With the recent increase in natural spat set, every dollar is critical for the placement of substrate, seed, and spat-on-shell. Every day that we lose also pushes Maryland further and further from reaching our Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals.

We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ian Horney".

Ian Horney,  
President  
Queen Anne's County Watermen's Association.



July 11, 2025

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson and Chair Guzzone,

For nearly thirty years, the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to mitigate the impacts of the Port's channel dredging operations on Maryland's oyster populations. This mitigation has been guided by a long-standing funding agreement referred to as the Oyster Recovery Agreement (ORA). Each year, ORA mitigation funding supports critical replenishment and restoration activities for Maryland's oyster sanctuaries, Maryland's public fishery, and Maryland's aquaculture industry. It also supports DNR's operations associated with these replenishment and restoration activities.

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We are therefore urging MPA to keep their commitment and ensure that these essential programs continue. We are also asking for your support on behalf of the workers and conservationists who have dedicated their time and efforts to these important sustainable harvest and restoration activities. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*John A. Horgan*      *T. Lynn Federal Sealord*



10448 Azalea Rd Berlin Md 21811

August 15, 2025

Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
H-107 State House  
100 Sate Circle  
Annapolis Md 21401

Dear Mr. Ferguson,

I am writing to express my support for the continuation of the Oyster Mitigation Program, a mutual agreement between MDDOT and MD DNR for the Chesapeake Bay enhancement program (Oyster Recovery). This program has been instrumental in mitigating environmental impacts from state dredging to enhance transportation while having a positive impact on the resource-based economies of counties in Maryland.

The Oyster Recovery Program has not only contributed to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay but has also played a significant role in maintaining the economy of our state. By supporting the oyster population, we are not only protecting a vital natural resource but also contributing to the livelihoods of countless Marylanders who rely on the seafood industry.

As a resident of Maryland and a waterman, I am deeply concerned about the future of our state's environment and economy. I strongly believe that the continuation of the Oyster Recovery Program is essential for the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay and the well-being of our state.

I kindly request that you, as a legislator, assist in reinstalling these valuable funds for the environment, economy, and continued oyster sustainability. Your support for this program will not only benefit the Chesapeake Bay and the people who depend on it but also ensure the long-term health and prosperity of our great state.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to your support in continuing the Oyster Recovery Program for the benefit of all Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Earl R Gwin, Jr  
President  
Waterman's Association of Worcester County, Md