



110 N. CROSS STREET
CHESTERTOWN, MARYLAND 21620
PHONE: 410-810-1381
FAX: 410-810-1383
www.delmarvafisheries.org

Senate Bill 830

Natural Resources – Oysters – Spat, Shells, and Substrates

Post Bill Hearing Comments re Amendments

March 3, 2022

Post bill hearing comments in anticipation of Thursday, March 3, Zoom conference call among stakeholders hosted by Senator Elfreth and Ann Swanson of Chesapeake Bay Commission:

With the existing hatcheries that would benefit from additional orders and from public financial assistance to improve processes, including a brand-new hatchery in Sherwood (Ferry Cove Shellfish), there is no need for another government run hatchery. The estimated cost of \$20 million for a second UMCES hatchery is insufficient for a state-of-the-art oyster hatchery, especially in light of escalating equipment, supplies and construction costs (and would take many years to open and move the needle on overall spat production).

Instead of building another hatchery, we should accentuate the positive and buy more larvae from existing hatcheries. The bill should simply authorize DNR to procure additional larvae and/or spat from approved sources, including Horn Point, Ferry Cove, PEARL, Virginia hatcheries or hatcheries in other states (larvae can be shipped). Such additional larvae would benefit programs in sanctuaries (restoration), aquaculture and the public fishery. Per UMCES Horn Point Laboratory [2022 Larvae Order Form](#), \$1 million will buy **2.5 billion** larvae (Triploid or Diploid Disease Resistant at \$400 per million eyed larvae) or **3.07 billion** larvae (Diploid Wild at \$325 per million eyed larvae). More funding for spat from existing hatcheries would take advantage of the current favorable conditions in areas of the Bay for oyster propagation.

To improve survivability and return on investment, no spat on shell purchased with public funding should be applied to waters of Maryland until five millimeters (5mm) in size, on average.

State financial assistance programs such as MARBIDCO or direct aid from DNR should give priority to existing Maryland hatcheries for improvements and expansion to meet the demand for larvae, and for existing seafood industry businesses.

In addition to buying more larvae for existing hatcheries instead of building new, provide additional funding for the purchase of shell, or seed and shell, from Virginia if available, and to move forward on shell harvesting at Man O'War Shoal, where the estimated return on investment is 8:1.

No more studies are needed to prove that natural indigenous Chesapeake Bay oyster shell is the absolute best for oyster propagation. Spending time and money trying to prove better “alternatives” is a distraction from the abundance of natural shell deposits throughout the Bay (see [Trove of oyster shells discovered in Potomac River. Now what?](#) in Bay Journal, Feb. 28, 2022).

Re the bottom survey, more definition is needed in terms of types of bottom (structure or classification) to be surveyed and the intent – to quantify existing shell and oyster bottom, including oyster bar locations. Given the loss of public fishery bottom over the years (to sanctuaries and private aquaculture leases), the wild public fishery would like assurance in the bill (legislative intent) that the bottom survey will not result in the loss of more public fishery bottom.

CONTACT: Capt. Robert Newberry at 410-708-9851 or rnewberry56@gmail.com
Chip MacLeod at 410-810-1381 or cmacleod@mlg-lawyers.com

