THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION

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OYSTER CARE DECEMBER 2013

PREPARE FOR WINTER

Your oyster guests need your attention this month, to get them ready for winter. As the oysters grow they will tend to grow around the holes in the cage much like a tree will envelop a chain link fence. You will need to periodically "redistribute" their location in the cage to prevent this. You can do this by simply lifting the cages out of the water and shaking them a little violently. This method works well but you will find that the cages are dirty and getting heavier. Another method is to lift each cage out of water onto the dock and roll it over a couple of times. You might also "slosh" a couple of buckets of sea water over them to clean out the sediment.

The water temperature is falling into the lower 40's (it's 41 degrees at the NOAA buoy off Greenbury Point : http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.php?station=44063), so you should act soon to avoid the freezing conditions. Water temperatures drop in parallel with the air temps, and it is time to protect your oysters. The salt water in the bay never freezes all the way to the bottom so if you lower them down they will be safe. We also tend to get some really low tides in the winter and it is imperative to keep the oyster shells submerged. To ensure this protection, lower the cages all the way to the bottom and then raise them up about a foot. The easy way to keep this depth is to find a place on your dock where the boards are far enough apart so that the line will pass through the crack, then tie a big knot at the appropriate spot or tie a stick in the line to prevent it from slipping through.

We want to thank the Corps of Engineers and Oyster Recovery Partnership for planting their surplus spat on oyster bars 'between the bridges', further adding to the oyster population on the Severn. This year they planted thousands of new spat-on-shell on several of these reefs.

Bob Whitcomb
Chair, SRA Oyster Committee