



THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION

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OYSTER NEWS – APRIL 2014

It seemed like winter would never end, so Oyster News was delayed until spring really showed itself, and the waters began warming. As water temperature is now 48 degrees at the mouth of the Severn, it's time to bring the cages up to their summer level, 12"-18" below low tide. They must also be cleaned of their winter accumulation of sediment, so lift them up and "tea bag" the cages while you're raising them to their summer home. Please also redistribute the shells in the cages, so they can enjoy a growth "spurt" in early spring. Bring the cages up on the deck and roll them over a couple of times to prevent any growth around holes in the mesh. This all should take but 3-4 minutes per cage.

DNR hosted a meeting of oyster coordinators last month, which gave Don Carren and me another opportunity to hear how other oyster programs are progressing. We continue to enjoy the greatest number of participants of any watershed, as supported by a great group of team leaders. DNR is developing a map showing the location of oyster growers, which will illustrate the participating rivers around the Bay. We also heard encouragement to increase oyster restoration efforts through more intensely managed efforts by the sponsoring groups, so SRA will try to raise funds to support that approach, which might include paid staff to help plant oysters on the reef, or other restoration activities.

Another DNR activity receiving considerable press coverage is their use of the MLEIN (Maritime Law Enforcement Information Network) to catch oyster poachers. This tool grew out of their role for Homeland Security to monitor ship activity on the Chesapeake, and has been turned into a program for watching any incursions onto oyster sanctuaries. As headlined in the March 2014 Chesapeake Bay Journal, several oyster poachers have been caught and prosecuted, which gives us further assurance that our oysters will be protected in the Severn River, now a complete sanctuary from shellfish harvesting.

Circle June 7th on your calendar for the oyster planting day, and start thinking about how your local group will organize to gather the oysters from the cages for this planting. We'll provide details in the next Oyster News.

Bob Whitcomb, Chair, SRA Oyster Committee