



THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION

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APRIL 2015 OYSTER NEWS

Another long winter is finally over, and again Oyster News was delayed until spring really showed itself, and the waters began warming. As water temperature is now 44 degrees at the mouth of the Patapsco (the Annapolis NOAA buoy is off-line), it's time to bring the cages up to their summer level, 12"-18" below low tide. They should 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. A little attention now will lead to greater growth this spring.

DNR hosted a meeting of oyster coordinators last week, which gave Don Carren and me another opportunity to hear how other oyster programs are progressing. There are now 32 watersheds participating in the MGO program, and ours has by far the largest number of participants of any watershed, with over 25% of the total oysters being grown by MGO volunteers. We also enjoy one of the best sanctuary reefs on which to plant our oysters, although our challenge in having a large tributary is that we'll need millions more oysters to have a measureable impact. A report from the Univ. of MD Paynter Labs from their diving on our reef last June, is that the oysters are growing very well and mortality is low.

There's a lot of press about the "dead zones" occurring in the Bay and some rivers, where excess nitrogen leads to depletion of dissolved oxygen. Scientists have documented this to be a problem in the upper Severn River, especially in Round Bay. A recent article documents "dead zone" impacts on oysters: [\[Click here to read the full article\]](#). Paynter Lab divers found DO to be 5.9 last June at our sanctuary reef, just barely enough oxygen for oysters, yet they are surviving.

Circle June 6th 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