



THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION

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OCTOBER 2015 OYSTER NEWS

This year's spat have been distributed, thanks to all the work by our Coordinators and the staff of the Oyster Recovery Partnership. The new baby oysters, born at Horn Point Lab near Cambridge, should be safe in their cages at your dock, where they will continue to work as a mini reef, long after the end of this boating season.

The Severn River Association again welcomes you as a participant in our oyster restoration program (many for the seventh year). You are one of almost 500 volunteers in the Severn River watershed enthusiastically embracing oyster gardening. I especially welcome three of our newest and largest growers: Capital SUP, South Annapolis Yacht Centre, and Annapolis Sailing School. Collectively, you are hosting over 1,700 cages holding more than 510,000 spat, which is ONE THIRD of the statewide participation in the MGO program on 24 other watersheds.

If you have had the time and opportunity to examine your guests, you might be wondering what's all the excitement about. Spat can be a challenge to find and are not particularly appealing, looking something like a crusty, disc-shaped scale about the size of the end of a ball-point pen. If you can't see them now, don't worry because by next spring, they should be healthy juvenile oysters approximately ½ inch in diameter and ready to populate the SRA sanctuary reef. When fully mature oysters, they will be cleaning machines each filtering about 2 gallons of Severn River water per hour.

Their chances of survival this first year of life are greatly increased by your thoughtful care and simple actions to promote ideal growing conditions. The oyster cages allow the spat to develop during the growing season in the upper water column where food and oxygen are plentiful. You will also protect them from exposure to freezing air in the cold, dormant season; and keep them off the suffocating mud of the bottom year round.

Right now, your spat should be low maintenance dock mates. As the water temperature drops, the animals and plant growth that can foul the cages become less of a concern. Please keep your cages clean with bi-weekly "shaking" or "hosing" and keep them spread evenly with some "rattling" or "rolling." In a few weeks, we will remind you to lower your cages to their cold weather location.

Bob Whitcomb
Chair, Oyster Committee