



## **OCTOBER OYSTER NEWS**

By now the last of this year's spat set have been distributed, thanks to all the work by Bryan Gomes and the staff of the Oyster Recovery Partnership. Our new baby oysters should be safe in their cages at your dock which will continue to work as a foster reef, long after your boats and swim toys are put away at the end of this boating season.

The Severn River Association is delighted to welcome you as a contributor to this solution for the Severn (many for the second or third year). SRA has made this effort front page news in the [latest SRA Log](#). You are one of over 350 individuals in the Severn River community enthusiastically embracing oyster gardening. Collectively, you are hosting over 1200 cages holding more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  million spat.

If you have had the time and opportunity to examine your guests, you might be wondering what all the fuss is 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 a nail head. Don't let their looks deceive you. By the end of the year, the spat should be healthy juvenile oysters approximately 1 inch in diameter and ready to populate The SRA sanctuary reef. Three years from now as fully mature oysters, they will be cleaning machines each filtering about 1 gallon 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: low in the water column.

It will take many years and a lot of oysters to clean the waters of our river, but your few simple actions are helping us move toward a solution. I encourage you to read the [latest SRA Log](#) to learn what other great projects SRA is sponsoring to restore the river.

SRA Oyster Steering Committee  
Bob Whitcomb  
Chair and SRA Vice President