



## **OYSTER CARE DECEMBER**

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 still mild, perhaps in the mid 40’s (it’s 45 degrees at the NOAA buoy off Greenbury Point), so there is no need to be concerned about freezing. However, the temperature has started to fall sharply, and it is time to protect them. 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.

It’s interesting to watch the water temperature change. You can use one of the swimming pool thermometers from a pool supplier, or you can do it from your armchair by going to NOAA’s web site: [http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station\\_page.php?station=44063](http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/station_page.php?station=44063) for the Annapolis smart buoy.

We’ve noticed a large number of baby barnacles on some of our oyster shells. If you’ve noticed the same phenomena, let me know. When I asked about this at a recent CBF seminar, no one else had experienced this “competition” for shell space and food. It may be a sign that our waters are supporting more shellfish, yet I’m concerned that these will compete for the same nutrients that the oyster spat should enjoy.

Speaking of the CBF, they planted many thousands of new oyster spat under the old “ bridge” at Jonas Green Park as a new sanctuary reef. Thanks also to all of you for hosting cages up and down the River. Some of the communities where MGO oyster spat are growing include:

Glen Oban	Admiral Heights	Belle View
Hidden Hills	Severn Heights	Dreams Landing
Round Bay	Rugby Hall	Severn View

SRA is proud to be a partner with the Oyster Recovery Partnership, with our logo and link on their web page. The Severn is one of the rivers receiving the most attention for oyster restoration, with the help of DNR, ORP, CBF and you.

Bob Whitcomb  
Chair, SRA Oyster Committee