



THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION

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OYSTER NEWS – APRIL

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Your oyster friends will need more attention this month, as this begins their intensive growth period. While previously we suggested monthly shaking or dipping to clean off any accumulated silt, Springtime means more frequent attention is appropriate. Certainly, more is better; DNR's Chris Judy suggests that once a week would be best. Your location should dictate the frequency. Some areas are more prone to silt, particularly if your cages are in a sheltered cove with little current or boat wakes to agitate the water. You should be guided by what you see on the cages, if the silt is heavy then more frequent cleaning may be needed.

I'd like to share some good news. The Federal Government, through the Army Corps of Engineers, has launched a major effort on a large-scale native oyster restoration program to achieve ecological success through creating self-sustaining oyster reefs. The Oyster Restoration Master Plan, available at http://www.nao.usace.army.mil/news/CB_OysterMasterPlan_March2012_LOW-RES.pdf identifies 19 tributaries with potential for restoration, including the Severn River. While dependent on funding and other resources, the COE will concentrate on one tributary at a time, will begin restoration efforts this year on Harris Creek in Talbot County on the Eastern Shore, and then select future tributaries of which the Severn could compete to be in the top 10.

This month we launched a spat sampling program, and I want to thank those growers who allowed us to come on their docks and sample the spat in one of their cages. Thanks to Don Cebulski, Val Culotta, and Sally Hornor for undertaking this effort to determine spat growth and mortality rates in select areas, and we'll publish the results in the next newsletter.

Please plan to collect and plant your oysters on the "Tracers Hollow" SRA Oyster Sanctuary in June. We have established an "Oyster Planting Event" on Saturday, June 2nd to gather and plant as many of our cage oysters as possible. We will focus most of our attention on this event with SRA's support and local media. Coordinators should help as many volunteers as possible to participate by recruiting boaters to support this effort. Volunteers will work from private boats to pick up the oysters from the various docks and transport them to the sanctuary at "Traces Hollow". This being the third annual "SRA Oyster Planting", we hope many oyster growers will come to plant between 2:00PM & 3:30PM, yet everyone should arrange to have your spat planted on the sanctuary in June.

The June 2nd event is an excellent opportunity for increasing awareness of the MGO Program and to recruit more volunteer growers. If you have time and inclination to help with the PR efforts leading up to that day, and particularly while we are on the water at the Traces Hollow sanctuary, please email me about your interests.

Another reminder about the June plantings. When you pick up the oysters (probably by boat), leave the cages on the grower's dock for reseeding later in the season. The empty cages should be cleaned and stored out of the water, until the next crop of spat are distributed.

Bob Whitcomb
Chair, SRA Oyster Committee