

TO: Josh Kurtz, Secretary of Natural Resources
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

FROM: Marylanders Grow Oysters Coordinators

CC: Dave Goshorn, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Chris Judy, Director, Shellfish Division, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

RE: Funding Shortfall for Marylanders Grow Oysters

DATE: August 12th, 2024

We call on the Department of Natural Resources to fully fund the Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) program in 2025 and beyond.

Since its establishment by DNR in 2008, MGO has successfully recruited thousands of volunteers – from individual growers to school and community groups – and planted many millions of cage-grown oysters at more than 40 small-scale and nearshore sites.

These oysters provide needed filtration and water quality improvement in local ecosystems beyond the reach of the five major tributaries targeted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. They also give local citizens a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the oyster restoration efforts throughout the Bay.

Historically, DNR supported MGO volunteers by providing spat-on-shell, dock cages, signage, and other supplies. In 2017, the Department transferred the program’s management to the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) but continued to provide financial support.

Unfortunately, ORP has advised growers that DNR’s funding covers little more than 1/4 of the program’s cost, and ORP cannot continue to cover the shortfall. Thus, spat-on-shell will be reduced accordingly this fall, and MGO volunteers will be left without the resources to continue their impressive progress in community-led restoration efforts.

The “2023 CESR Report: In Brief¹” highlights the outsized benefits of improving water quality in nearshore settings such as those served by the MGO program: “Improvements in certain habitats (e.g., shallow waters and migratory, spawning habitat, local open water) in certain locations can provide earlier and more substantial living resource benefits than other habitats (deep water and deep channel). In addition, these same habitats are often particularly important to stakeholders” (8).

Please fund MGO fully so that our many volunteers can continue this important work in support of the future of our watershed.

(See attached signature page.)

¹ “Achieving Water Quality Goals in the Chesapeake Bay: A Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response,” an independent initiative by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

The undersigned community organizations manage more than 40 oyster restoration sites established by Marylanders Grow Oysters volunteers throughout the state. See Map, p. 3

Friends of St Clements Bay, Avenue

Restore Rock Creek, Pasadena

Phillips Wharf Environmental Center, Talbot County West

Magothy River Association, Severna Park

Arundel Rivers Federation, Edgewater

Severn River Association, Annapolis

Linstead Community Association, Severna Park

Bay Ridge Civic Association, Annapolis

Robert Willey, Coordinator, Lower Patuxent/Mill Creek MGO

St Mary's River Watershed Association, St Mary's City

Live Water Foundation, Annapolis

Annapolis Maritime Museum and Park, Annapolis

ShoreRivers, Easton

Poplar Ridge Homeowners Association, Pasadena

Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Berlin

Chesapeake Beach Oyster Conservation Society




Friends of Fishing Creek, Chesapeake Beach

Bill Barger, Coordinator, Cobb Island MGO

Severn Heights Improvement Association, Arnold

Marylanders Grow Oysters Partner Tributaries



| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | Initial Tributary in 2008 |
|  | Additional Tributaries Since 2008 |
|  | |