



**Policy Position of the Advocates for Herring Bay
Regarding SB 362: Regarding Oyster Planting, Substrate Material
Submitted by Birgit Sharp
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Whether you are an oysterman, an environmentalist, a fisherman, or a hungry tourist, everyone agrees that the Chesapeake Bay's oysters should be restored. Oyster sanctuaries have been established to reseed the bay; but while restoration has been strong in five tributary sanctuaries, several sanctuaries have no oysters in them at all.

Help for these sanctuaries has come from a surprising, but optimistic place: citizen groups. In the Herring Bay Sanctuary, there are no known oysters other than those planted by a citizen group called Chesapeake Beach Oyster Cultivation Society—and these oysters are reproducing. Similarly, through the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program, thousands of citizens have planted millions of oysters and have succeeded in growing them in more than 30 locations.

The Advocates for Herring Bay are currently making plans to plant and grow oysters in the Herring Bay Sanctuary using scientifically tested methods. NOAA's 2016 Oyster Reef Monitoring Report presents valuable research done in several locations. This research demonstrates that the average oyster density on stone-based reefs was approximately four times higher than on shell-based reefs, and 22 times higher than reefs without substrate. It also showed that the stone helped with oyster reproduction, which is the ultimate goal for sustainable restoration. For us, using stone is a win-win, as the oysters we plant will grow better, reproduce, and be less vulnerable to poaching.

Consequently, we are opposed to Senate Bill 362 because it would prohibit the use of any material other than oyster shell for restoration unless the Department of Natural Resources obtains the prior permission of the Oyster Advisory Commission and county oyster committees, holds a public hearing, and carries out an environmental impact study. These conditions are unnecessary and duplicative, and for most small citizen groups trying to grow oysters, would make the permitting process for the use of rock or other substrate long, difficult, and ultimately prohibitive.

The Advocates for Herring Bay urge an unfavorable report for this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

About the Advocates for Herring Bay

We are a community-based environmental organization established in 2005 for the purpose of preserving, restoring, and enhancing the environment in the Herring Bay watershed in Anne Arundel County. We are a voice for Herring Bay, advocating for policies that will promote the long-term health of our fragile ecological resources.