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**RECREATIONAL ANGLERS
WORKING TO CONSERVE, PROMOTE, AND ENHANCE MARYLAND'S
MARINE RESOURCES**

March 7, 2018

To: Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chairman
Honorable Dana Stein, Vice Chairman
Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: House Bill 1455 Dredging on Man O War Shoal – Prohibition

CCA Maryland Position: Support

CCA Maryland has consistently opposed the dredging of buried fossil oyster shell in the upper bay since 1998. The dredging process degrades the marine environment and has not contributed to the long-term restoration of the oyster population. Dredged shell degrades with time and must be periodically replenished, and many alternatives to fossil oyster shell now exist.

From 1960 until 2006 the Department of Natural Resources(DNR) dredged more than 185 million bushels of buried fossil shell from the upper bay and barged them down the bay to saltier water to grow oysters in support of the public oyster fishery. When the readily available fossil shell areas were exhausted and public opposition to dredging increased the program ended. Unfortunately, there was no long-term benefit from the use of this finite public resource, and over this time period, oyster populations have continually declined.

In 2008, when the Legislature mandated that DNR apply for permits to dredge buried oyster shell it did not identify specific dredge sites. We now know that many of the sites containing buried fossil shell in the upper bay are off limits to dredging because they fall within the striped bass spawning areas, and US Fish and Wildlife Service denied the use of these areas. Upon finding out this information, DNR then focused its permit application on Man O War Shoal, causing a groundswell of opposition from many in the upper bay region.

Man O War Shoal is an extremely popular area for recreational fishing, and plantings on the shoal by county oyster committees have supported recent harvest for local watermen. Man O War Shoal is the last great natural shoal in the upper bay, and there is no justification for forever altering this area.

Since 2008, oyster restoration has progressed very well without dredging buried fossil shell. Alternative materials have been proven to be successful for increasing oyster populations throughout the bay. In the same time period, aquaculture has significantly expanded, and is on track to continue to grow without the need for fossil oyster shell. At this time, there is no clear plan on the use of the fossil oyster shell within Man O War shoal for the overall benefit of the state, and any proposal to dredge the shoal should be prohibited.

CCA Maryland requests a FAVORABLE vote on HB 1455