

OFFICERS

Frank Bonanno, *Chairman*
Michael Wissel, *Vice-Chairman*
Chair, Management Committee
Larry Jennings, *Secretary*
Frank Bonnano, *Treasurer*
David Sikorski,
Executive Director



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

February 22, 2019

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

Re: House Bill 298 – Oysters- Tributary-Scale Sanctuaries – Protection and Restoration

CCA Maryland Position: Support

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCA Maryland), is a state chapter of Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), a nationwide non-profit, and the largest saltwater recreational fishing organization in the country. As anglers, and avid users of our natural resources, CCA Maryland members work hard to promote sensible science-based management measures to support sustainable fisheries for the benefit of the general public, and the long-term health of the Chesapeake Bay.

In no uncertain terms, oyster reefs are the very foundation of all life in the Chesapeake Bay. As a keystone species, oysters create important habitat through the growth of reef structures, and filter large quantities of water while feeding on algae. By supporting clean water and building reef habitat, oysters are directly related to maintaining a balance in our regional ecosystems, and supporting the many species that recreational and commercial fishing industries rely on in the Chesapeake Region.

As a valuable food product, oysters have been overexploited for over a century, and harvested at levels beyond what the natural system can support, or reproduce. Disease has also been a major factor in the decline of populations in recent decades. Unfortunately, many once great three-dimensional oyster reefs are now gone, or at best, reduced to flat and featureless oyster bars which are readily susceptible to sedimentation and degradation.

While much of the focus on oysters always remains with the commercial harvest and value of the animal, oysters absolutely support many of species that support recreational fishing pursuits. Unfortunately, the abundance of many popular fish species that rely on reef habitat are in decline as well. Fishermen throughout the state have noted that popular species like Atlantic croaker, spot, weakfish (sea trout), and bluefish have all declined over the last many years.

Spillover from poor water quality from Chesapeake has also effected nearshore waters in the Mid-Atlantic region. Anglers used to pursue blue water offshore species like marlin within sight of Ocean City Maryland, the “White Marlin Capital of the World”. While there are many factors that impact water quality, the massive declines in our natural filters, the oyster, cannot be ignored as a key factor in our natural system’s inability to mitigate the massive nutrient loading that exists in this region.

Recreational fishing is a major economic driver in Maryland and beyond, and without a sound science based and balanced approach to improving oyster populations and overall habitat, we fear that many species that anglers pursue will continue to decline, and so will the participants in our deeply important recreational fisheries.

In order to turn around this long-standing decline and degradation of the overall oyster population and habitat, CCA Maryland supports the same three-pronged approach launched in 2010 with investments in large scale restoration in sanctuaries, developing a sustainable wild oyster fishery, and building a viable oyster aquaculture industry.

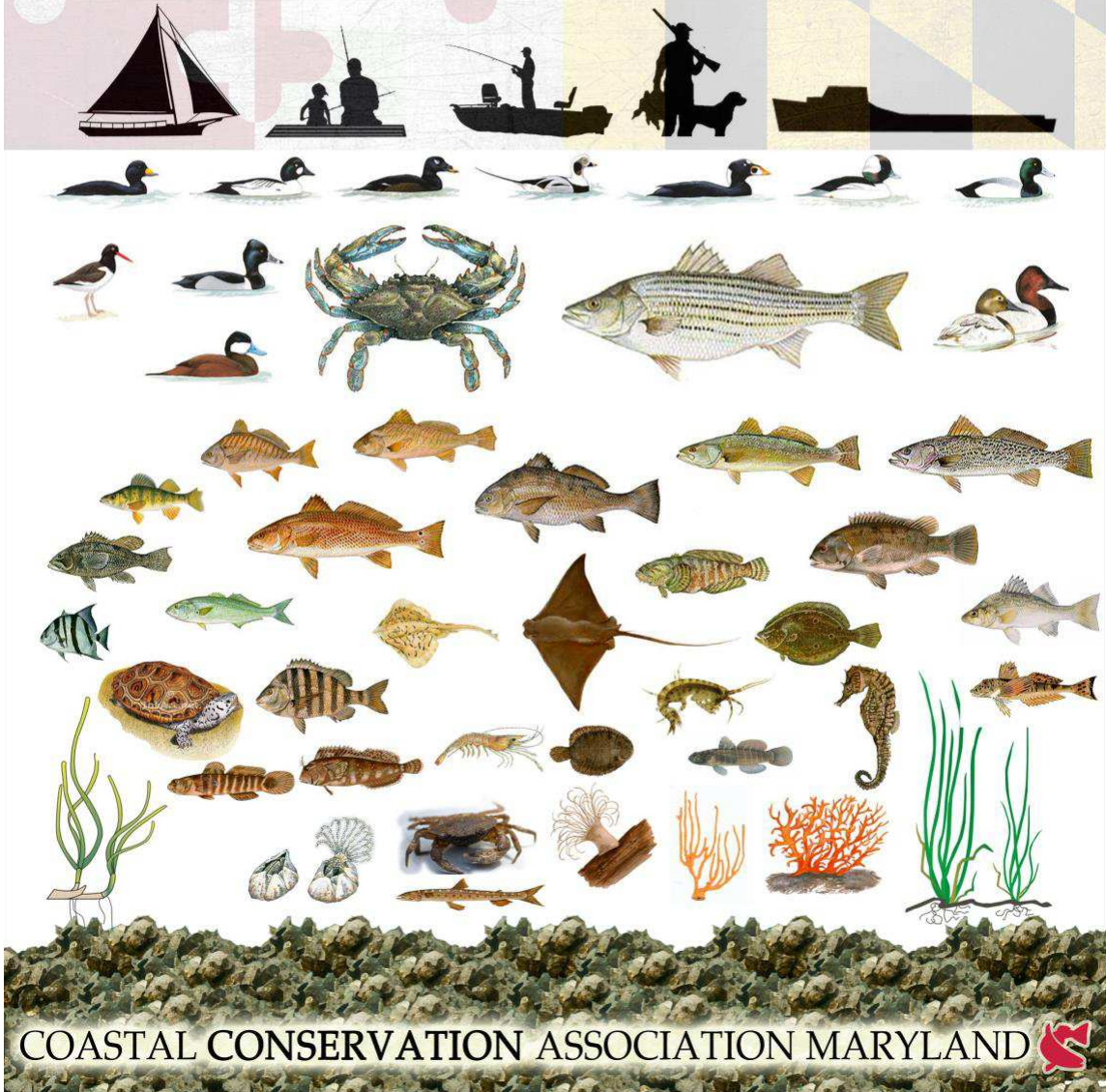
We respectfully recognize that each one of the three methods have different goals, techniques, and outcomes which provide different benefits or impacts to various resource stakeholders. We also recognize that turning around our overall oyster population will take long term investment and vision.

We urge leaders in Maryland to continue to invest in scientifically sound ways to increase oyster populations in both the 5 large scale tributary sanctuaries defined by HB 298, and throughout the watershed. We believe that these efforts and investments to build habitat will support a long term and overall improvement in water quality and the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay for the benefit of all.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable vote on HB 298.

OYSTERS

THE FOUNDATION OF ALL LIFE IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY



COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION MARYLAND 



Economic Impacts of Recreational Fishing in: Maryland



744,236 anglers spent \$491 Million While Fishing in Maryland.



Statewide Contributions by Maryland Anglers

Economic Output Jobs Supported



\$767 Million



5,085 Jobs

Natioal Contributions by U.S. Anglers

Economic Output Jobs Supported



\$125 Billion



802,000 Jobs



In the U.S. there are...



Estimates based on data from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011 & 2016 National Survey of Fishing Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, and Esri, Inc.



For more information on the economic drivers related to recreational fishing, please visit: <https://asafishing.org/facts-figures/>