

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND  
Legislative Session 2022, Legislative Day No. 2

Resolution No. 5-22

---

All Councilmembers

---

By the County Council, January 18, 2022

---

A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council supporting the Maryland General Assembly's favorable consideration of ~~legislation~~ House Bill 500, introduced in this year's General Assembly Session to prohibit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from dredging buried oyster shells on Man-O-War Shoals or including such dredging as part of a fishery management plan.

WHEREAS, the Man-O-War Shoal is located off of the shores of Southeast Baltimore County and is the last large oyster reef in the Upper Chesapeake Bay; and

WHEREAS, the 450 plus acre reef contains approximately 100 million bushels of buried oyster shell at its core, which was built up over millennia of oysters continuing use the shoal as a foundation to attach after spawning; and

WHEREAS, from 1960 until 2006, as part of its oyster reef replenishment project, DNR dredged nearly 200 million bushels of buried oyster shell from the Upper Chesapeake Bay and barged it into the southern Bay area where salinity is higher and supports better reproduction and growth of oysters; and

WHEREAS, since the early 2000's, the oyster population in the Chesapeake Bay has languished at 1% of historic levels, the suitable oyster habitat has decreased, and a the number of harvesters has dwindled; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, DNR began establishing sanctuary areas where the harvest of wild

oysters is prohibited and in 2009, DNR published a management and restoration plan for oysters and the State's oyster industry; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 plan proposed to dredge millions of bushels of buried shells from the reef at Man-O-War and dispersing the recovered fossilized shells to replenish or restore oyster habitat in up to ten tributaries elsewhere in the Chesapeake Bay; and

WHEREAS, while oyster reefs usually consist of old oyster shells like those at Man-O-War, in recent years, materials such as granite and crushed concrete are viable alternatives to shell for building sanctuary reefs; and

WHEREAS, in Harris Creek on the eastern shore, stone reefs support 400 percent more oysters than shell reefs, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; and

WHEREAS, dredging the Man-O-War reef will forever damage a critical habitat for fish, crab, and other marine wildlife; and

WHEREAS, when a dredge cuts into the inner core of a reef, it allows oxygen to reach an area that has been sealed off for centuries, which quickly starts the process of decomposition of the core of the reef; and

WHEREAS, losing one of the last large oyster reefs in the Upper Bay area will have a negative impact on recreational and commercial fisherman by further reducing viable fishing areas; and

WHEREAS, commercial crabbing will be negatively impacted by the increased silt deposits that result from dredging, causing crab traps to sink into the silt layer; and

WHEREAS, dredging the Man-O-War reef is a short term solution to increase oyster production by only 2% or 3% of historic levels that takes tens of millions of dollars away from addressing the long term problem of oyster reef preservation; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY that the County Council hereby supports the Maryland General Assembly's favorable consideration of ~~legislation~~ House Bill 500, introduced at this year's General Assembly Session to prohibit the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from dredging buried oyster shells on Man-O-War Shoals or including such dredging as part of a fishery management plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to all members of the Baltimore County delegation to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect from the date of its passage by the County Council.