

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 12, 2008

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CCA MD Favors Native Oyster Approach in Draft EIS

ANNAPOLIS (MD)—Calling the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Oyster Restoration in the Chesapeake Bay “late” and “lacking in a preferred scientific recommendation,” the Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCA MD) Board of Directors last night adopted a position statement supporting a focus on the restoration of the native Eastern Oyster. CCA MD represents more than 1,800 recreational anglers and conservation-minded citizens.

The CCA MD position will be presented at public hearings this week. CCA MD also specifically opposed any introduction of the Asian Oyster.

“We believe that large scale restoration efforts have a reasonable possibility of restoring self-sustaining, river specific populations of Eastern oysters,” the statement reads.

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“This draft statement, which was released more than a year later than scheduled, would have served both Maryland and Virginia better if it had recommended a preferred scientific-based option,” said Sherman Baynard, chair, CCA MD Fisheries Committee.

“Unfortunately, both Maryland and Virginia fishery managers are already moving forward in planning restoration activities. Rather than making a solid recommendation, the draft EIS has focused on three primary options for public input. This may foster a divergence among the agencies’ strategies.”

CCA MD, which has embarked on an oyster restoration project in the Patuxent River watershed, believes that restoring native oysters along with a focus on aqua culture has the best chance with the fewest risks of increasing the number of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay.

“The Asian Oyster is an unproven commodity in our waters,” said Robert Glenn, CCA MD executive director. “The risks of introducing this invasive species to our native oysters and the Chesapeake’s ecosystem are unknown, and, therefore, unacceptable.”

Rather than introducing Asian Oysters, CCA MD is calling for greater restoration efforts, a focus on aqua culture to improve the oyster fishery, and more oyster sanctuaries in the best possible locations for oyster survival.

“The Chesapeake Bay and its oysters will be best served if we immediately transition to aqua culture for raising oysters with a focus on having a minimal impact on fish habitat,” Baynard said. “This transition will have to be planned carefully with consideration of ecological and legal issues, but in the long run raising oysters through aqua culture is in the best interests of the Chesapeake and Marylanders.”

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The CCA MD position also calls for “a moratorium on the harvest of Eastern oysters on public bottom as our members believe publicly owned oysters should be preserved for their ecological value only.”

“Oysters are a public resource and must be managed for the public interest,” Glenn said.

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The Coastal Conservation Association is a national organization of 100,000 members in 17 state chapters. CCA's mission is to advise and educate the public on conservation of marine resources. The objective of CCA is to conserve, promote and enhance the present and future availability of these coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public.