



CHESAPEAKE BAY
FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

Why Support an Oyster Stock Assessment?

Oyster restoration programs create sanctuary oyster reefs to replace habitat lost due to overharvest, pollution, and disease.

Oysters are one of the most critical filters in the Bay. They reduce sediments and nutrients that harm water quality.

Oysters build reef habitat for a myriad of fish and shellfish that support a healthy ecosystem. In addition, these ecological engineers can form three-dimensional structures that help protect our shorelines and can cost-effectively reduce the challenges of sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

Oyster larvae from restoration reefs populate new areas, boosting populations of oysters throughout Virginia and providing more robust harvest opportunities for watermen.

A stock assessment will estimate the abundance of oysters in Virginia's portion of the Bay, the fraction of oysters that die each year from natural causes, and the fraction of oysters that are harvested each year.

This will show us where to target restoration efforts to ensure that funding is used in the most promising and needed areas of the state.

**For more information, contact
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JANUARY 2025

Support House Bill 2521, Oyster Stock Assessment

The oyster is an iconic species in Virginia, important historically, economically, and ecologically. However, decades of overharvesting, pollution, and disease have decimated the Chesapeake Bay's oyster population to a fraction of its historic numbers.

Fortunately, oysters are rebounding in Virginia, due to successful tributary-scale restoration, wise management, and increased disease resistance in the oyster population. Evidence of this rebound includes an oyster industry that has experienced a 52 percent increase in dockside value since 2013. In order to better leverage these restoration successes, Virginia should appropriate funding for an oyster stock assessment.

CBF encourages legislators to support HB 2521 (Lopez) that directs the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) to conduct a stock assessment of the Commonwealth's oyster population. We also urge support of funding for an additional VMRC staff scientist to develop the stock assessment.

Through the development of an oyster stock assessment, scientists and members of the oyster industry can focus restoration efforts to support a variety of positive ecological and economic outcomes. This will help continue to grow an industry that once supported thousands of jobs and added millions to our economy.

Virginia oyster partners across the Commonwealth are advocating for a stock assessment to help grow the industry and help conservation partners meet goals for oyster restoration in all Bay tributaries.