

# THE COMMON GOOD



John Griffin

On December 3, DNR Secretary John Griffin and I announced a new plan to restore our native oyster population to the Chesapeake Bay. We were joined by scientists, aquaculture entrepreneurs, industry representatives, recreational anglers and environmental advocates, who all agree that, with a population at 1 percent of historic levels and a struggling industry, we need a new course of action. Under our plan, we will pursue a three-pronged approach to restore oysters for ecological purposes, jump-start a new aquaculture initiative and refocus our public fishery.

We will increase the number, size, and quality of our network of oyster sanctuaries, which will allow oysters to live longer, develop natural resistance to disease, and to spawn without harvest pressure; open up additional areas available to lease for oyster aquaculture while streamlining the permitting process; and continue to maintain substantial areas open to the public fishery, to ensure a more targeted, sustainable, and scientifically-managed public oyster fishery, while strengthening monitoring and enforcement against poaching.

Historically, our oyster population filtered pollutants from our waterways and supported a thriving industry. By taking bold, decisive

action to restore our native oyster, we can also restore those ecological services and create a new oyster industry.

The connection between rebuilding our oyster population and creating jobs is clear; in Virginia, aquaculture is already producing \$35 million in dockside value. Here in Maryland, we have that potential: By some estimates aquaculture could be contributing as much as \$25 million annually (including more than 200 jobs) to our State's economy by 2015.

Earlier this year, we passed legislation to support Maryland aquaculture jobs and the health of our oyster population. In June, following a 6-year environmental impact study, we agreed with our partners — the Commonwealth of Virginia and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — to pursue a native-only oyster restoration option for the Chesapeake Bay. Last week's announcement begins an extensive public process that will result in new regulations by mid-May.

Our native oyster is part of the public trust, and we have a clear and urgent responsibility to restore this iconic species to the Chesapeake Bay. In December, looking out across the water from the deck of the Annapolis Maritime Museum — where a thriving oyster packing company once stood — we took a critical next step in our efforts to rebuild that population for ecological and economic benefits that will serve the Bay's health and Maryland's working families for generations to come.

Martin O'Malley  
Governor

*Learn more about Maryland's Proposed Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Redevelopment Plan at [www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries)*

