



Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association

"Maryland's Sportfishing Advocates"

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OPPOSE MAN-O-WAR SHOAL DREDGE PERMIT

Department of Natural Resources' resubmittal of the permit application NAB-2009-61802-M04 to dredge shell from Man-O-War Shoal in Baltimore County

January 12, 2016

Dear Ms. Hopkins,

As Executive Director of the region's largest collective group of recreational anglers, the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA), I am writing to you on behalf of our membership and Maryland's recreational anglers, encouraging the Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District (ACEBD) to deny the Man O War dredging permit. The MSSA is adamantly opposed to any dredging of Man O War Shoals for any purpose.

For over 30 years the MSSA has fought for the rights of anglers and also worked with fisheries managers, and the Corp, to enhance and restore the Chesapeake Bay's ecology. One of the most significant impacts we have had is working to protect and expand fisheries habitat such as Man O War Shoals and other reef sites, both natural forming and artificial.

I want to make sure you know how important natural oyster shoals, artificial reefs, and structure are to the sportfishing community and the industries it supports. Maryland has over a half a million resident anglers, and approximately, 80,000 non-resident anglers, generating annual economic activity of \$844 million, nearly \$1 billion. The US Government estimates that Maryland recreational fishing creates annual state and local tax revenue of approximately \$52 million per year. Over 10,000 jobs are created directly from fishing activity and hundreds of thousands more supported by those who fish. Recreational fishing in Maryland is about clean, outdoor, family recreation.

The MSSA believes that protecting, expanding, and creating more marine habitat in the Chesapeake Bay is critical in restoring our once thriving marine resources. We do this not by dredging and destroying habitat such as Man O War Shoals by means of dredging, or investing in the public oyster fishery for commercial purposes; **we do this by following the Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District's own evaluation, which concluded that the only strategy for a POSITIVE return is oyster sanctuaries.** Any type of dredging would go against the Corps evaluation and the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of 2003-2008; which identified three main criteria for rebuilding the Chesapeake Bay's oyster population: 1.) expand sanctuaries; 2.) facilitate aquaculture; 3.) more restrictive public fishery.

If the Maryland DNR and the Army Corps are looking for substrate to grow, cultivate and foster oyster restoration; we must turn to alternate materials such as small granite stone, concrete, and fossil shell from other states. These alternate materials are readily available and cost effective with a proven track record of growing oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. Dredging oyster shell from Man O War Shoals will impact sportfishing and once again destroy perfectly good habitat.



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We would also like to point out the Maryland DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers have not yet conducted an extensive survey to determine alternate locations of shell deposit within Maryland. If the DNR and ACEBD would like to continue using oyster shell from Maryland, the MSSA would strongly suggest funding an extensive survey of the entire Chesapeake Bay and find alternate locations; locations that aren't so controversial and important to the fishing community.

Finally, the dredge permit states there would be extensive monitoring and surveying of the dredge site. I would like to point out that this is all well and good; however this comes with a pretty hefty price tag. At the moment the Department is looking at a nearly 10% decrease in funding as proposed by Governor Hogan's budget. This cost would only cause further harm to the Department's budget issues. Not to mention that the commercial fishing industry is currently operating in the negative, meaning their license fee revenue does not cover the costs to manage Maryland's commercial fisheries. On the other hand the recreational sector is operating on a surplus. So, in reality the recreational anglers would be funding yet another commercial fishing interest.

We would like to thank the ACEBD for their work and strongly encourage an UNFAVORABLE determination for this dredging permit.

Respectfully,

Frank Holden

President

Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association
Association

Respectfully,

Dave Smith

Executive Director

Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing