

## MetCom Provides Grant Funding For Oyster Revitalization



On September 26, 2024, the St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission (MetCom) entered into a multi-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Potomac River Fisheries Commission (PRFC). The MOU



reflects the commitment of both organizations to collaboratively promote and enhance the health of local ecosystems, including the Potomac River, the Patuxent River, the Chesapeake Bay and their respective tributaries.

Oyster revitalization provides broad ecological benefits, but it requires considerable funding and resources. A typical oyster sanctuary site-specific project can cost between \$50,000.00 and \$100,000.00 and would take approximately four to five years to accumulate sufficient funding (at the rate of \$10,000 per year) without assistance from other partners. [To help expedite progress, MetCom has voluntarily agreed to provide supplemental financial support in the form of annual grants to the PRFC for oyster revitalization projects within the tidal Potomac River.](#) The grant funds will be used to purchase and plant wild oyster seed, spat-on-shell (“SOS”), and oyster shells in designated Special Management Areas (“SMA’s”) and other suitable sites within the PRFC jurisdiction. We purposefully chose to fund the effort on SMAs because they are managed more conservatively than public oyster bars and would therefore provide more of an environmental benefit to our waterways. These types of projects will have limited harvesting windows (some partially or permanently closed) and restrictions on various types of gear allowed to be utilized (*e.g., only hand-operated gear not mechanical – rakes, diving, and hand tongs*). to increase biomass and suitable substrate for reproduction events. Scaled to a funding level of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) per year, it is anticipated that the PRFC could plant over 700 bushels of wild oyster seed or 350,000 seed oysters which would equate to an estimated 2.6 Million eyed larvae and up to 2 acres of oyster ground. A typical oyster site-specific project can cost between \$50,000-\$100,000.

The primary goal is to help enhance the ecological health of the local waterways by increasing the population of Eastern Oysters, which play a critical role in improving water quality, water clarity (*by filtering algae, sediment and other pollutants*) and by providing food and habitat for various species. We are excited about this new partnership which is in line with our mission to be environmental stewards in the operation and maintenance of the public wastewater conveyance and treatment systems.

In accordance with Maryland Governor Wes Moore’s July 20, 2023 Executive Order 01.01.2023.12,“ . . . *Increasing the abundance of the Eastern Oyster, a critical species for Maryland's economy and water quality, is a priority of the Moore-Miller Administration; . . . Oysters play a valuable role in creating reefs that clean water and provide habitat for critical species, including crabs and striped bass.*”

