

Chester River Association * Maryland League of
Conservation Voters * Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy *
South River Federation* West/Rhode Riverkeeper

February 16, 2010

House Environmental Matters Committee
251 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support House Bill 273, “Oyster Poaching”

Dear Chairman McIntosh and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters, South River Federation, Chester River Association, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy, and West/Rhode Riverkeeper are pleased to join with other conservation groups in urging your support of House Bill 273, “Oyster Poaching.”

HB 273 is a terrific complement to Governor O’Malley’s Oyster Plan and would further protect both the oysters and the oystermen. Ninety-nine percent of Maryland’s oystermen have lost their jobs because of water pollution and over harvesting. This bill ensures that the remaining one percent of oysterman will not lose their jobs because of the bad behavior of a few oystermen. HB 273 would revoke a license from a person who is cited for unlawfully catching oysters.

In order to preserve the stock of oysters available for future generations of watermen proper regulation needs to exist as well as consequences for the breach of regulations. Oysters and the industry that surrounds them are important to Maryland’s economy and the health of its environment.

We wish to thank Delegate Gilchrist for his leadership, the committee for its consideration, and respectfully request a favorable report.