



*Martin O'Malley, Governor*

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## **GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY ANNOUNCES STREAMLINED AQUACULTURE PERMITTING**

*Army Corps of Engineers Expedites Approval Process*

**Baltimore, Md. (August 15, 2011)** — Governor Martin O'Malley today announced a new streamlined and centralized aquaculture permitting process for Marylanders interested in growing oysters and other shellfish in Maryland waters. Thanks to a realignment of State requirements approved by the General Assembly earlier this year and a cooperative effort between the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, qualifying applicants will now be able to submit a joint state-federal application and the Corps is expediting the approval process through issuance of the Regional General Permit.

"We are cutting the red tape, streamlining the permitting process and making it easier to do business in Maryland," said Governor O'Malley. "I want to thank Colonel Anderson and his team for helping us improve this process. Together, we can create jobs, grow our seafood industry and make a more sustainable future for the Chesapeake Bay and our native oyster."

Along with expanded sanctuaries and increased enforcement against poaching, one of the key components of Governor O'Malley's 2010 Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Development Plan is a streamlined permit process. As of July 1, all aquaculture functions have been consolidated and transferred to DNR, which now coordinates all aquaculture permitting, issues water column leases and staffs the Aquaculture Coordinating Council and Aquaculture Review Board.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District approved the new permit, which goes into effect on August 15. The permit will be available for aquaculture projects up to 50 acres placed directly on the water bottom, 5 acres for aquaculture cages on the bottom and 3 acres for floating aquaculture projects. This covers activities such as shellfish seeding, rearing and cultivation as well as the installation and deployment of aquaculture structures including cages, floats, racks and trays.

"I am relieved the aquaculture permit has finally been approved," said Senator Mikulski, who is Chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee that funds NOAA. "A lack of urgency in the permit process left the lives and livelihoods of Maryland's watermen on hold over the last several months. This permit means jobs for Maryland's watermen."

“The action taken today is an important step in restoring oysters to a central role in the Bay economy,” said U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, chairman of the Water and Wildlife Subcommittee of the Committee on Environment and Public Works. “Oyster aquaculture will provide a new generation of watermen a valuable fishery while also allowing wild oysters to return to their central role in the Chesapeake ecosystem.”

Since September 2010, DNR has received 38 applications to lease nearly 1,600 acres. 24 of those applicants are commercial watermen. These permits all require federal approval by the Corps. On August 1, DNR began accepting applications for new aquaculture leases within oyster sanctuaries. In less than two weeks, DNR received 6 complete applications and expects more as word of this new opportunity spreads.

The Corps administers Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. These authorities require that a Department of the Army permit is issued for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waterways and wetlands; and for the placement of structures in, over, or under navigable waters.

“This general permit is a monumental action for the Baltimore District and for the State of Maryland. It demonstrates our commitment to being good stewards of the environment, while also bolstering the economy,” said Col. David E. Anderson, Baltimore District Engineer. “The decision to issue this permit is a direct reflection on the close collaboration and partnership among the Federal agencies, and with the State of Maryland.”

A copy of the public notice and permit can be found online here:  
[http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Wetlands%20Permits/public\\_notices.htm](http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/Wetlands%20Permits/public_notices.htm)