

## ***DNR To Host Three Shellfish Tagging And Aquaculture Open Houses***

**Annapolis, Md. (November 1, 2010)** — The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries Service will launch a commercial shellfish tagging program in August 2011 to meet U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) national public safety requirements. DNR will host three open houses in November to discuss the elements of the program and to solicit ideas from watermen and aquaculturists about the development and implementation of this important program.

Tagging shellfish will allow public health officials to trace back to a source if an illness is caused by eating shellfish. A shellfish harvesting area can be checked for water quality and other potential health concerns. DNR, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Maryland Department of the Environment may then take action to reduce the public risk. The tagging system will also enhance DNR's ability to monitor the harvest and manage a sustainable fishery.

The proposed plan will require watermen to tag each bushel of shellfish in a standardized container. The tag will allow public safety officials to determine precisely where, when and by whom the shellfish were harvested.

The FDA has an informative slide show on the National Shellfish Sanitation Program online at [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm180442.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm180442.htm).

Additionally, two of the open houses will include representatives from the Maryland Oyster Aquaculture Financing Program to discuss the elements and requirements for participating in an exciting new opportunity. As part of Governor Martin O'Malley's Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Program, \$2.2 million in subsidized loans are immediately being made available for aquaculture projects. Representatives of the program will be on hand at the Annapolis (November 8) and Princess Anne (November 22) open houses to answer general questions and to schedule appointments with interested parties to begin the business planning and application processes.

Those seeking subsidized financing for shellfish production must hold a DNR shellfish aquaculture lease or must have applied for a shellfish aquaculture lease by 5 p.m. on Monday, November 15, 2010.

Information on the Aquaculture Financing Program is available from the Maryland Department of Agriculture at (410) 841-5724 and online at [www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/oysters/industry/funding.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/oysters/industry/funding.asp).

### Shellfish Tagging Open House Schedule:

November 8 from 4 to 8 p.m., C-1 Conference Room, Tawes Building, 580 Taylor Ave., Annapolis  
November 22 from 3 to 7 p.m., Somerset County Library, 11767 Beechwood St., Princess Anne  
November 30 from 4 to 8 p.m., Queen Anne's County Library, 121 S. Commerce St., Centreville

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The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, is the state agency responsible for providing natural and living resource-related services to citizens and visitors. DNR manages more than 461,000 acres of public lands and 17,000 miles of waterways, along with Maryland's forests, fisheries, and wildlife for maximum environmental, economic and quality of life benefits. A national leader in land conservation, DNR-managed parks and natural, historic, and cultural resources attract 12 million visitors annually. DNR is the lead agency in Maryland's effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay, the state's number one environmental priority. Learn more at [www.dnr.maryland.gov](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov)