

## Chapter 597

**(House Bill 911)**

AN ACT concerning

**Natural Resources – Fishery Management Plans – Oysters**

FOR the purpose of altering the date by which the Department of Natural Resources is required to convene in a certain manner the Oyster Advisory Commission; altering the version of the fishery management plan for oysters that the Department is required to develop before taking certain management action governing oyster sanctuaries; repealing a certain provision of law authorizing the Commission to meet and deliberate in closed session under certain circumstances; altering the dates by which certain interim reports related to oyster management are required to be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly; requiring the Department to include certain information in a certain interim report; altering the date by which a certain final report related to oyster management is required to be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly; requiring the Department to implement a certain version of the fishery management plan for oysters consistent with certain law; making certain technical corrections; making this Act an emergency measure; and generally relating to fishery management plans for oysters.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Natural Resources

Section 4–204(c)(1) and 4–215(b)(6)

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Natural Resources

Section 4–204(c)(2)(i) and 4–215(e)(4) and (5)

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

(As enacted by Chapters 5 and 9 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2020)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Chapter 5 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2020

Section 3

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Chapter 9 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2020

Section 3

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article – Natural Resources**

4–204.

(c) (1) There is an Oyster Advisory Commission in the Department.

(2) (i) On or before [June 1, 2019] **APRIL 1, 2020**, and subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the Department shall, in coordination with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, convene the members of the Commission.

4–215.

(b) The Department shall prepare fishery management plans for the following species:

(6) Oysters;

(e) (4) (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the Department may not take any action to reduce or alter the boundaries of the oyster sanctuaries established in “Oyster Sanctuaries of the Chesapeake Bay and its Tidal Tributaries (September 2010)” until the Department has developed [a] **AN UPDATED** fisheries management plan for the scientific management of the oyster stock based on management strategies and measurements recommended by the Oyster Advisory Commission under paragraph (5) of this subsection and determined by the Department in consultation with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

(ii) The fishery management plan developed in accordance with paragraph (5) of this subsection shall:

1. End the overfishing of oysters in all areas and regions of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries where overfishing has occurred according to biological reference points established by the most recent oyster stock assessment while maintaining a harvest in the fishery;

2. Achieve fishing mortality rates at target levels;

3. Increase oyster abundance;

4. Increase oyster habitat; and

5. Facilitate the long-term sustainable harvest of oysters, including the public fishery.

(iii) This paragraph may not be construed to prevent the Department from:

1. Selecting the final two tributaries for tributary–scale oyster restoration sanctuary projects in accordance with the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement; or

2. Establishing, in the discretion of the Department, any dimensions for a tributary–scale oyster restoration sanctuary project.

(5) (i) The Department shall:

1. In coordination with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and the Oyster Advisory Commission, develop a package of consensus recommendations for enhancing and implementing the fishery management plan for oysters that will be informed by a collaboratively developed, science–based modeling tool to quantify the long–term impacts of identified management actions and possible combinations of management actions on:

- A. Oyster abundance;
- B. Oyster habitat;
- C. Oyster harvest;
- D. Oyster harvest revenue; and
- E. Nitrogen removal; and

2. Hold public listening sessions throughout the State to identify possible management actions for use in the public oyster fishery.

(ii) The Oyster Advisory Commission, with the assistance of external conflict resolution and facilitation specialists, shall:

1. Develop a package of consensus recommendations through a facilitated consensus solutions process, based on a 75% majority agreement level for each recommendation;

2. Recommend management actions or combinations of management actions to achieve the targets identified in the oyster stock assessment with the goal of increasing oyster abundance; and

3. Review model results for each management action or combination of management actions to inform its recommendations.

(iii) [Notwithstanding § 3–305 of the General Provisions Article, and with the consent of a 75% majority of its members, the Oyster Advisory Commission may

meet and deliberate in closed session to develop the package of consensus recommendations for enhancing and implementing the fishery management plan for oysters under this paragraph.

(iv)] 1. The Department shall submit interim reports on the development of the package of consensus recommendations by [December 1, 2019, August 1, 2020, and December 1, 2020] **AUGUST 1, 2020, AND DECEMBER 1, 2020, AND AUGUST 1, 2021**, to the Governor and, in accordance with § [2-1246] **2-1257** of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

**2. IN ADDITION TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER SUBSUBPARAGRAPH 1 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL INCLUDE IN THE INTERIM REPORT SUBMITTED BY AUGUST 1, 2021:**

**A. THE STATUS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENCE-BASED MODELING TOOL USED TO QUANTIFY THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF IDENTIFIED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS; AND**

**B. A SUMMARY OF THE MODEL RESULTS OF ANY ACTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE OYSTER ADVISORY COMMISSION ON OR BEFORE THE DATE OF THE INTERIM REPORT.**

~~2.~~ **3.** The Department shall provide a final report by ~~July~~ **DECEMBER** 1, 2021, which will include an implementation schedule for the consensus recommendations, to the Governor and, in accordance with § [2-1246] **2-1257** of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

[(v)] **(IV)** To be responsive to changes in the oyster resource due to environmental conditions, the Department shall:

1. Review the status of the stock relative to reference points every 2 years and conduct a benchmark stock assessment every 6 years with consideration of new methods and with external peer review; and

2. With the input of interested stakeholders, implement management actions that increase oyster habitat, maintain harvest, and grow the oyster stock.

### **Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2020**

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of Natural Resources shall implement the 2019 Fishery Management Plan for Oysters **CONSISTENT WITH § 4-215(E)(4)(I) OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE** pending the development of consensus recommendations in accordance with this Act.

**Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2020**

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Department of Natural Resources shall implement the 2019 Fishery Management Plan for Oysters **CONSISTENT WITH § 4-215(E)(4)(I) OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE** pending the development of consensus recommendations in accordance with this Act.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a ye and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted.

**Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 8, 2020.**