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May 9, 2017

VIA Electronic Mail

Mark J. Belton, Secretary
Department of Natural Resources
Tawes State Office Building
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2397
mark.belton@maryland.gov

Re: Man O'War Shoals Project

Dear Secretary Belton:

Having recently received an update from Army Corps of Engineers on the status of the Man O'War Shoals dredge permit, we are writing to relay a concern about the Corps' focus now on any potential endangered species at the site and their review of the Magnuson-Stevens Act pertaining to the dredge permit. We are interested in knowing to what extent DNR is participating, assisting and/or overseeing the Army Corps' review process and their research of these two important issues concerning the approval of the dredge permit? We would certainly hope that an expert in these two fields would be closely monitoring this matter on behalf of DNR to ensure that the interests of the State of Maryland and those in the seafood industry are advanced and protected. This permit is of the utmost importance to all of us in the seafood industry in Maryland, and to those citizens who would like to see a cleaner Bay through the functioning of oysters as a filtering agent.

One other issue is the dredging of the Patapsco River shipping approach channels in the area in close proximity to Man O'War Shoals. To the best of our knowledge that upper Bay dredging activity was not subject to the same level of scrutiny that the permit to dredge Man O'War Shoals for oyster shells is being subjected to. This obvious inconsistency deserves an explanation. This shipping channel dredging has been continuous since January with complete disregard for the spawning season for numerous species. Even the visible plume from the channel dredging seems to be larger than allowed. We would certainly hope that the pursuit of protecting the commerce of the Port of Baltimore does not trump the health of our Bay, the protection of our fish and vegetation or the protection of the rights of our men and women that make their living from the natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

Capt. Robert Newberry
Chairman

cc: Oyster Advisory Commission