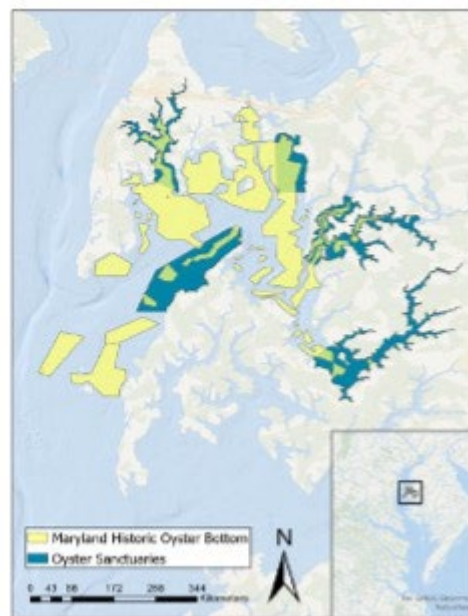


**EASTERN BAY  
OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP**



**MEETING #6 – DECEMBER 4-5, 2024  
FACILITATOR’S SUMMARY REPORT**

**CHESAPEAKE BAY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER  
GRASONVILLE, MARYLAND**



**PROCESS DESIGN, MEETING FACILITATION, AND REPORTING  
BY JEFF A. BLAIR**

**EASTERN BAY OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP  
DECEMBER 4-5, 2024 FACILITATOR’S MEETING SUMMARY REPORT**

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EASTERN BAY OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP  
DECEMBER 4-5, 2024 FACILITATOR'S MEETING SUMMARY REPORT



## OVERVIEW OF THE EASTERN BAY OYSTER COALITION'S MEETING #6 ACTIONS

### I. MEETING SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

The sixth and final Oyster Coalition Workgroup meeting was held at the Hyatt Place Kent Narrows and Marina in Grasonville, Maryland. During the final meeting, the Oyster Coalition Workgroup (OCW): received an overview of the updated Project Workplan, and a recap of the OCW Process; participated in an interactive habitat survey results group GIS mapping exercise working with revised maps from Meeting #5; received an overview and discussed the Draft Final OCW Report and Recommendations for the Plan; and discussed final planning and assignments for the Community Open House Forum. Specific actions from Meeting #6 included: **1)** Providing additional feedback based on the updated habitat survey maps on potential locations for priority planting, aquaculture siting, shell moving and reclamation, co-siting of plantings between management zones, and areas that could be divided or removed from the fishery; **2)** Including the Summary of the Open House Forum Feedback as an appendix to the OCW's Report and Recommendations for the Plan; **3)** Discussing, refining, and adopting the Draft Final OCW Report and Recommendations for the Plan **4)** Approving ORP's development of a glossy short summary report for printing and distribution; and **5)** Receiving an overview and approving the ORP's Communication, Marketing, and Distribution Plan for the Workgroup's Report and Recommendations for the Plan.

*(Attachment 1 – Key to Common Project Abbreviations)*

*(Attachment 2 – Glossary of OCW Project Terms and Definitions)*

## II. OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP MEETING PARTICIPATION

The following OCW members participated in Day-1 (Wednesday) of the December 4-5, 2024 meeting conducted in-person at the Hyatt Place Kent Narrows and Marina in Grasonville, Maryland:

Scott Budden, Brian Callam, Ben Ford, Mark Galasso, Moochie Gilmer, Jeff Harrison, Richard Jones, Chris Judy, Matt Latham, Jim Moran, Vicki Paulas, Jason Ruth, Ward Slacum, Dan Sweeney, Kathy Brohawn, and Troy Wilkins (Mike Eber, alternate).

(16 of 17 members participated – 94%).

*Absent OCW Members:*

Nick Hargrove.

The following OCW members participated in Day-2 (Thursday) of the December 4-5, 2024 meeting conducted in-person at the Hyatt Place Kent Narrows and Marina in Grasonville, Maryland:

Scott Budden, Brian Callam, Ben Ford, Mark Galasso, Moochie Gilmer, Nick Hargrove, Jeff Harrison, Richard Jones, Chris Judy, Jim Moran, Vicki Paulas, Jason Ruth, Ward Slacum, Dan Sweeney, and Troy Wilkins (Mike Eber, alternate).

(15 of 17 members participated – 88%).

*Absent OCW Members:*

Kathy Brohawn, and Matt Latham.

### OCW LEADERSHIP TEAM AND FACILITATOR

Jeff Blair, Olivia Caretti, Beth Franks, and Ward Slacum.

*(Attachment 3 – Meeting Participation)*

### MEETING FACILITATION

Meetings are facilitated and meeting summary reports prepared by Jeff A. Blair of Facilitated Solutions, LLC. Information at: <http://facilitatedsolutions.org>.



*(Attachment 7 – About the Workgroup’s Facilitator)*

### ADDITIONAL MEETING ATTENDEES

Jennica Moffat (ORP), Jennifer Walters (ORP), Kristen Hughes Evans (NFWF), Natasha Rathlev (NFWF)

### PROJECT WEBPAGE

Information on the Oyster Coalition Workgroup project, including agenda packets, meeting reports, draft Plan Framework, and related documents may be found on the OCW Webpage. Located at the following URL: <https://www.oysterrecovery.org/our-work/oyster-restoration/easternbaycoalition>

### **III. AGENDA REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

The OCW voted unanimously to approve the agenda for the December 4-5, 2024 meeting as presented. Following are the key agenda items approved for consideration:

- ✓ To Approve Regular Procedural Topics (Meeting Agenda, Summary Report, and Workplan Update).
- ✓ To Participate in an Interactive Habitat Survey Results Group Mapping Exercise with Revised Maps.
- ✓ To Review and Evaluate Community Open House Forum Feedback.
- ✓ To Hear Summary, Discuss, Refine, and Adopt Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan.
- ✓ To Review and Approve ORP's Marketing, Communication, and Distribution Plan Regarding OCW Report.
- ✓ To Discuss Next Steps.

*Amendments to the Posted Agenda:*

There were no amendments to the Agenda.

*(Attachment 4 – December 4-5, 2024 OCW Agenda)*

### **IV. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY REPORT**

The OCW voted unanimously to approve the September 25, 2024 OCW Meeting Facilitator Summary Report as presented. The approved Report will be posted to the project webpage.

*Amendments:* None

### **V. REVIEW OF UPDATED PROJECT WORKPLAN AND SUMMARY OF OCW PROCESS**

Jeff Blair provided the OCW with a review of the Project Workplan and Schedule and answered members' questions. The December 4-5, 2024 meeting represented the Workgroup's sixth and final meeting for the process.

Throughout the project, the OCW members representing management and restoration agencies have committed to vetting the strategies and actions under consideration with their leadership to gauge support and feasibility of implementation. The OCW concluded the process of evaluating the relative priority and efficacy of strategies and associated actions (options) and identifying restoration and management approaches for inclusion in recommendations for a *Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland* during Meeting #6, the final meeting.

Jeff reported as follows:

- The process consisted of six Workgroup meetings and one Community Workshop Forum. The process culminated with the Workgroup's adoption of a Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the *Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland* for submittal to the Oyster Recovery Partnership.
- Jeff highlighted that has been important to the process itself, as well as for the process outcomes, that all of the stakeholder groups comprising the Workgroup participated in all of the meetings to

ensure that all perspectives were included in the discussions and the rankings. This was critical for ensuring that the Workgroup's recommendations were supported by all of the stakeholder interests committed to the health and sustainability of Eastern Bay.

- The Workgroup Meeting Dates were as follows:
  - Meeting #1 – February 2-3, 2024 – Completed
  - Meeting #2 – March 29-30, 2024 – Completed
  - Meeting #3 – May 29-30, 2024 – Completed
  - Meeting #4 – July 31-August 1, 2024 – Completed
  - Meeting #5 – September 25, 2024 – Completed
  - Meeting #6 – December 4-5, 2024 – Completed
- The Community Workshop Forum was held on December 4, 2024 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Hyatt Place Kent Narrows.

*(Attachment 5 – Updated Project Workplan and Meeting Schedule)*

## **VI. HABITAT SURVEY RESULTS GROUP MAPPING EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REVISIONS TO CURRENT REGULATIONS**

During Meeting #6 the OCW reviewed the updated maps from Meeting #5 and discussed whether there was need for any refinements, and/or whether there were any concerns regarding the maps.

During Meeting #6 the following topical issues were discussed:

### **Discuss and Identify Options Based on Survey Results and Revised Maps.**

- Olivia asked whether there were any additional areas and/or concerns with the results of the maps produced following Meeting #5.
- In general, there was support for the Workgroup's mapping exercise results, with the understanding that specific recommendations and decisions would go through DNR's regular procedures for regulatory changes, and this would be done in consultation with impacted stakeholders before any implementation of specific recommendations.
- Matt stated that Cox Creek shouldn't be eligible for an aquaculture lease; it conflicts with trotlining in Cox Creek Sanctuary. ORP surveyed there and it was all mud.
  - Jeff Blair reiterated these aren't specific recommendations – they represent areas that should be evaluated by DNR in consultation with stakeholders.
  - Matt indicated that with this understanding, he was good with the maps.
- Jeff Blair tested for agreement with the maps, and all OCW members affirmed the same.
- Q) Jeff Harrison: Southern Eastern Bay/Lower Miles – the one area identified as potential location for alternate substrate – was there some shell there already, and how large is the area?
  - Answer) Yes, and the area is about ten acres. Could do a planting inside that area somewhere. ORP only took one sample within this area, so some additional sampling may be needed.
- Jeff H. mentioned Talbot County may receive \$100K for the next five years, and they are looking for a location with some shell on the bottom. Jeff suggested perhaps this would be a good location to plant. In addition, alternate substrate(s) could be placed beside it. Olivia explained this strategy was implemented elsewhere this year – placing shell and crushed concrete side-by-side.

## **Discuss Whether the OCW Process Was Useful and/or Potentially Valuable for Additional Projects.**

- Olivia summarized the habitat process:
  - The mapping exercise began with a meeting with watermen to discuss their knowledge of existing Eastern Bay oyster habitat
  - ORP used this information, harvest data from DNR, and the sidescan data from MGS to develop a draft survey plan
  - The draft survey plan was brought to the OCW for discussion and revision. This was discussed at two meetings
  - The results were discussed with the OCW and additional input from the watermen was essential to interpreting the data and identifying areas for potential uses (i.e. create the resulting map in the Plan).
- Olivia asked whether the data ORP was able to collect through the habitat survey helped answer their questions regarding the current state of Oyster Habitat in Eastern Bay.
  - Jeff H. stated yes, and from his perspective, this was the best thing to come out of this project.
- Olivia asked whether the approach ORP used to design the survey was useful.
  - There were nods of affirmation from the OCW members. Moochie said definitely the key to it all was starting with the watermen.
- More nods of affirmation from the members when they were asked whether this would be a good model for other locations.
- Olivia indicated that the OCW spent 2.5 or 3 meetings evaluating the data ORP collected, and whether other members felt like this was valuable.
  - Vicky and Richard nodded yes, and Mike said it was “perfect.”
- Olivia asked whether there were any suggestions for how a process like this could be improved or how it could be used for other locations or future efforts.
  - Jeff H. indicated that now that we have a baseline and can move forward.
  - Moochie noted in other locations it’s likely that stakeholders won’t not be as collaborative as the OCW group was.
  - Jeff H. stated that the OCW consensus process resulted in surprisingly good results and recommendations, and he feels it helped create trust between stakeholders and could change the approach used by the watermen in working with other groups to make recommendations.
  - There was a general expression of agreement with this sentiment by OCW members, and a desire to replicate the process in other watersheds.

## **VII. DRAFT FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN SUMMARY**

Olivia Caretti, ORP, reviewed the *Draft Final OCW Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland (Plan)*.

### **Summary and Overview of the Discussion**

During Day-One of the December 2024 meeting, the Workgroup was asked whether there were any proposed revisions and/or additional topical issue categories missing from the Draft Report that should be included. Following is a summary of the Workgroup’s discussions and the sequence of actions taken regarding development of the Report:

- The ORP Leadership Team drafted the Draft Final OCW Report and Recommendations incorporating approved revisions, and formatted and edited the document for presentation, clarity, and consistency per the Workgroup’s direction and unanimously approved motion at the September 25, 2024 Meeting #5.
- A Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan was provided to the OCW on November 25, 2024.
- The OCW received an overview and discussed the Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan during Day 1 of the December meeting.
- The OCW will vet the Draft Final Report and Recommendations with the public during the December 4, 2024 Public Workshop Forum.
- The OCW will determine whether to make any revisions to the Plan based on public input on Day 2 of the December 2024 meeting.
- The OCW will discuss, refine as needed, and adopt the Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan on the second day of the final meeting on December 5, 2024.

## **VIII. FINAL PLANNING FOR THE COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE FORUM ON DECEMBER 4, 2024**

The Workgroup reviewed the objectives and approach for the Community Open House Forum and made final plans as follows:

- The Forum is designed to be interactive with several informational stations that participants can self-select based on interest. Each station will have a subject expert and a notetaker to record and respond to participants questions, comments, and feedback as follows:
  - Station 1: Restoration Recommendations and Outcomes.
  - Station 2: Management Recommendations and Outcomes (Staffed by DNR).
  - Station 3: Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes and Additional Outreach Initiatives.
  - Station 4: Habitat Survey Process, Mapping Exercises, and Results.
- The OCW will evaluate a summary of the feedback during day-two of the December 4-5, 2024 meeting.
- The Forum will run from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Hyatt Place Kent Narrows.

The following twelve Workgroup members volunteered to assist with the informational tables:

Scott Budden, Brian Callam, Mike Eber, Ben Ford, Moochie Gilmer, Jeff Harrison, Jim Moran, Richard Jones, Chris Judy, Vicki Paulas, Dan Sweeney, and Ward Slacum.

## **IX. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE FORUM FEEDBACK**

Jeff Blair provided a brief big-picture analysis and summary of the Open House Forum feedback, and Olivia Caretti walked the OCW through the compiled summary of the feedback. Following is a summary of the Community Open House Forum format and process:

Four information stations staffed by OCW, ORP, and DNR subject area experts as relevant were provided for the Community Open House Forum. The four information stations provided opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback on the following topics:



- Station 1: Restoration Recommendations and Outcomes;
- Station 2: Management Recommendations and Outcomes (Staffed By DNR);
- Station 3: Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes and Additional Outreach Initiatives; and
- Station 4: Habitat Survey Process, Mapping Exercises, and Results.

### **Restoration Recommendations and Outcomes Station**

The station was staffed by ORP personnel led by Dr. Olivia Caretti, ORP Leadership Team, with notes taken by Jordan Salafie (ORP). Community members were provided an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the OCW’s restoration recommendations and outcomes.

### **Management Recommendations and Outcomes Station**

The station was staffed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources led by Chris Judy, DNR, Shellfish Division, and Brian Callam, DNR, Aquaculture & Industry Enhancement Division, with notes taken by Jennifer Walters (ORP). Community members were provided an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the OCW’s management recommendations and outcomes.

### **Stakeholder Engagement Outcomes and Additional Outreach Initiatives Station**

The station was staffed by OCW members led by Vicki Paulas and Ward Slacum, with notes taken by Beth Franks (ORP). Community members were provided an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the OCW’s stakeholder engagement recommendations and outreach initiatives.

### **Habitat Survey Process, Mapping Exercises, and Results Station**

A station was staffed by ORP personnel led by Jennica Moffat (ORP), with notes taken by Elana Hunter (ORP). Community members were provided an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the habitat survey process, mapping exercises, and results.

### **Summary of Community Feedback from the Presentations and the Four Information Stations:**

The questions and feedback from the Open House are included in *Attachment 6* of this Report.

Following the opportunity provided for questions and answers, and Workgroup discussion, the Oyster Coalition Workgroup took the following action:

#### ***Oyster Coalition Workgroup Action:***

**MOTION**– The OCW voted unanimously, 16-0 in favor, to include the Summary of the Open House Forum Feedback as an appendix to the OCW’s Report and Recommendations for the Plan.

\*Kathy Brohawn was absent and provided written approval via email to Olivia Caretti

*(Attachment 6 – Open House Feedback Summary)*

## **X. REVIEW, DISCUSSION, AND ADOPTION OF THE OCW DRAFT FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN**

Olivia Caretti, ORP, reviewed the *Draft Final OCW Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland (Plan)*.

### Summary and Overview of the Discussion

The Workgroup was asked whether, based on feedback from the Community Open House Forum, there were any final proposed revisions to the Draft Final Report and Recommendations that should be considered. Following is a summary of the Workgroup’s discussions and the sequence of actions taken:

- The OCW vetted the Draft Final Report and Recommendations with the public during the December 4, 2024 Public Workshop Forum.
- The OCW determined whether to make any revisions to the Plan based on public input during Day-Two of the December 2024 meeting.
- The OCW discussed, refined, and adopted the Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan during the second day of the final meeting on December 5, 2024.

Following the opportunity provided for questions and answers, and Workgroup discussion, the Oyster Coalition Workgroup took the following action:

#### *Oyster Coalition Workgroup Actions:*

**MOTION** – The OCW voted unanimously, 16-0 in favor, to adopt the Oyster Coalition Workgroup’s *Draft Final Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland (Plan)*, incorporating the Workgroup’s approved revisions, and to charge the ORP Leadership Team with drafting the Final OCW Report and Recommendations and to format and edit the document for presentation, clarity, and consistency, and when finalized to distribute the Final OCW Report and Recommendations to the appropriate agencies, entities, and organizations as appropriate.

**MOTION** – The OCW voted unanimously, 16-0 in favor, to approve ORP’s development of a short glossy summary report for printing and distribution.

\*Kathy Brohawn was absent and provided written approval via email to Olivia Caretti

*(Attachment 6 – Adopted OCW Report and Recommendations for the Plan)*

## XI. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORP’S COMMUNICATION, MARKETING, AND DISTRIBUTION PLAN FOR OCW’S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN

The ORP provided the Workgroup with a summary of ORP’s proposed Communication, Marketing, and Distribution Plan for OCW’s Report and Recommendations for the Plan as follows:

#### *Summary of Report Development and Distribution Schedule*

<b>DUE DATE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE GROUP</b>
12/5/2024	Review and adopt Final Report and Recommendations	OCW @ OCW Meeting #6
12/11/2024	Incorporate any feedback and final revisions to Report	ORP Leadership Team
12/11/2024	Distribute Final Report to OCW members for final review	ORP Leadership Team

12/18/2024	Review Final Report and provide any comments to ORP Leadership Team (no substantive revisions will be considered)	OCW Members
12/22/2024	Make additional revisions and finalize Report	ORP Leadership Team
1/13/2025	Distribute Report to the OCW, post to project webpage and ORP social media	ORP Leadership Team
1/13/2025	Distribute Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan to agencies, entities, and organizations as appropriate	ORP Leadership Team
1/13/2025	Summary Report finalized, printed, and distributed	ORP Leadership Team
1/17/2025	Summary Report available at 2025 East Coast Commercial Fishermen's & Aquaculture Trade Exposition	ORP Booth

*Initial Distribution List for Report and Recommendations*

<b>OCW REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST</b>
MDNR Leadership
NRP Leadership
MDE Leadership
QA County Commissioners and Leadership
Talbot County Commissioners and Leadership
Oyster Advisory Commission
Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council
NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office
ShoreRivers
Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center
The Nature Conservancy
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
MDH Leadership
MDA Leadership
MWA Leadership
US Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District
Chesapeake Bay Commission
Appropriate State Delegate(s)
Appropriate State Senator(s)
UMCES – Horn Point Lab & Chesapeake Biological Lab
NOAA Oxford Lab

Following the opportunity provided for questions and answers, and Workgroup discussion, the Oyster Coalition Workgroup took the following action:

**Oyster Coalition Workgroup Action:**

**MOTION** –The OCW voted unanimously, 16 - 0 in favor, to approve the Communication, Marketing, and Distribution Plan for the Oyster Coalition Workgroup’s *Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland*.

\*Kathy Brohawn was absent and provided written approval via email to Olivia Caretti

## **XII. NEXT STEPS AND ADJOURNMENT**

The December 4-5, 2024 meeting concluded the Oyster Coalition Workgroup process, culminating in the OCW’s unanimous adoption of the *Final OCW Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland (Plan)*.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Finalization of the OCW’s Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan.
- Development of Glossy Short Summary Report.
- Implementation of Marketing, Communication, and Distribution Plan Regarding the OCW’s Full Report, and the Glossy Short Summary Report.
- Workgroup and ORP Leadership Team Group Photo.
- Presentation of Memento of Appreciation to Workgroup Members.
- Appreciation for the Workgroup’s Excellent and Dedicated Work in Development of the Plan
- Group Celebration.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Facilitator thanked Workgroup members, ORP Project Team members, and all other meeting attendees for their participation. In addition, the facilitator and the ORP Project Team thanked Workgroup members for their participation, commitment, and excellent work product, and adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m. on Thursday, December 5, 2024.

**ATTACHMENT 1**  
**KEY TO COMMON PROJECT ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ABBREVIATION</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
CBEC	Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center
CBF	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
EB	Eastern Bay of Maryland
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
HPL	UMCES Horn Point Lab
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
MDNR	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
OCW	Eastern Bay Oyster Coalition Workgroup
ORP	Oyster Recovery Partnership
OAC	Oyster Advisory Commission
Plan	<i>Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i>
QAC	Queen Anne County
SAV	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
SR	ShoreRivers
TC	Talbot County
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UMD	University of Maryland
UMCES	University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

## ATTACHMENT 2

### GLOSSARY OF OCW PROJECT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**ACTION:** The specific steps and activities taken to implement a strategy.

**ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:** A process that includes making decisions, evaluating the results, comparing the results to predetermined performance measures, and modifying future decisions to incorporate lessons learned.

**EASTERN BAY SYSTEM:** Eastern Bay is a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay located between Queen Anne and Talbot Counties on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Its main tributaries include the Miles and Wye Rivers. Eastern Bay is connected to the Chester River to the north via Kent Narrows, a working waterfront that supports a thriving commercial and recreational fishing community and includes seafood processing facilities, restaurants, and tourism. The estuary is a mesohaline system with expansive oyster, SAV, and sandy bottom habitats. The project will focus on existing oyster habitats and those areas suitable for oyster aquaculture and oyster restoration activities in Eastern Bay.

**ECOSYSTEM HEALTH:**  
A “healthy” ecosystem is one that conserves diversity, supports fully functional ecological processes, and sustains a range of ecological and ecosystem services.

**ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:** The contributions of ecosystems to human wellbeing. These include provisioning services (food, raw materials, fresh water, medicinal resources), regulating services (climate, air and water quality, moderation of extreme events, and erosion prevention), habitat services (habitat for species that support ecosystem services), and cultural services (recreation for mental & and physical health; tourism; aesthetic appreciation spiritual experience).

**GOAL:** A goal is a statement of the project’s purpose to move towards the vision expressed in fairly broad language.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES:** The Oyster Coalition Workgroup’s Guiding Principles reflect the broad values and philosophy that guides the operation of the Workgroup and the behavior of its members throughout its process.

**OBJECTIVE:** Objectives describe in concrete terms how to accomplish the goal to achieve the vision within a specific timeframe and with available resources. (E.g., by 2033, the State of Maryland will have approved a stakeholder developed Ecosystem-Based Adaptive Management and Restoration Plan for the Eastern Bay System.)

**OUTCOME:** Outcomes describe the expected result at the end of the project period – what is hoped to be achieved when the goal is accomplished. (E.g., *an ecologically, and economically viable, healthy and sustainable Eastern Bay System oyster fishery and ecosystem*)

**OYSTER REPLETION PROGRAM:** A state-managed program to replenish oyster populations and bottom substrate on natural oyster bars that are regularly harvested by the commercial industry. The program is funded by the Maryland Department of Transportation Port Authority, revenue from commercial oyster license renewal surcharges, and bushel tax revenue from commercial harvest. The Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) implements the coordination and oversight of the production and

deployment of wild seed, shell, alternate substrate, and spat-on-shell (SOS) to achieve bottom enhancement per requests from the county oyster committees.

**OYSTER RESOURCES:** Sources of oysters that provide natural and cultural benefits to humans. These sources can come from the wild or from aquaculture. The responsible management of oyster resources requires integrated approaches that incorporate the social, economic, and environmental considerations of sustainability.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES:** The regular measurement of outcomes and results, which generates reliable data on the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of a project's objectives.

**RESTORATION:** The process of repairing, through human intervention, sites whose biological communities and ecosystems have been degraded or destroyed. Restoration goals are site-specific, and would include restoration of the health and ecological functions that are self-sustaining over time.

**STAKEHOLDERS:** All groups whether public, private or non-governmental organizations who have an interest or concern in the success of a project and can affect or be affected by the outcome of decisions or activities of the project. The Eastern Bay System Initiative stakeholders include but are not limited to agriculture, silviculture, business, economic development, tourism, environmental, citizen groups, recreational fishing, commercial seafood industry, regional groups, local, state, and federal government, universities, and research interests.

**STRATEGY:** A method, action, plan of action, or policy that can be tested to determine whether it solves a problem and helps to achieve objectives and goals in the context of bringing about a desired future for the Eastern Bay System.

**VISION:** An idealized view of where or what the stakeholders would like the oyster resource and ecosystem to be in the future.

**VISION THEMES:** The key issues that characterize the desirable future for the oyster resource and ecosystem. The Vision Themes establish a framework for goals and objectives. They are not ordered by priority.

**ATTACHMENT 3**  
**OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION**

<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
<b>NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGO): ENVIRONMENTAL AND CITIZEN GROUPS</b>	
1. Ben Ford	ShoreRivers (Miles-Wye Riverkeeper)
2. Vicki Paulas	Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center
3. Ward Slacum	Oyster Recovery Partnership
4. Dan Sweeney	The Nature Conservancy
<b>RECREATIONAL FISHING</b>	
5. Mark Galasso	Tuna the Tide Charter Service
<b>SEAFOOD INDUSTRY</b>	
6. Scott Budden	Orchard Point Oyster Company and Aquaculture
7. Moochie Gilmore	Queen Anne County Waterman, Clam Harvester
8. Nick Hargrove	Wittman Wharf Seafood, Talbot County Waterman and Aquaculture
9. Jeff Harrison	Talbot County Waterman
10. Richard Jones	Queen Anne County Waterman
11. Matt Latham	Queen Anne County Waterman
12. Jason Ruth	Harris Seafood Company, Queen Anne County Waterman and Aquaculture
13. Troy Wilkins	Queen Anne County Waterman ( <i>Designated Alternate: Mike Eber</i> )
<b>LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT</b>	
14. Kathy Brohawn	Maryland Department of Environment ( <i>Designated Alternate: Rusty McKay</i> )
15. Brian Callam	Maryland DNR – Aquaculture & Industry Enhancement
16. Chris Judy	Maryland DNR – Shellfish Division
17. Jim Moran	Queen Anne County

<b>OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP LEADERSHIP TEAM</b>	
<b>OYSTER RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP</b>	
Olivia Caretti	Coastal Restoration Program Manager
Beth Franks	Senior Manager
Jennica Moffat	Monitoring Coordinator
Ward Slacum	Executive Director
<b>FACILITATED SOLUTIONS, LLC</b>	
Jeff Blair	Workgroup Facilitator, Consensus Building, and Process Design



**ATTACHMENT 4**  
**DECEMBER 4-5, 2024 MEETING AGENDA**

**MEETING #6 OBJECTIVES**

- To Approve Regular Procedural Topics (Meeting Agenda, Summary Report, and Workplan Update).
- To Participate in an Interactive Habitat Survey Results Group Mapping Exercise with Revised Maps.
- To Review and Evaluate Community Open House Forum Feedback.
- To Hear Summary, Discuss, Refine, and Adopt Final Report and Recommendations for the Plan.
- To Review and Approve ORP’s Marketing, Communication, and Distribution Plan Regarding OCW Report.
- To Discuss Next Steps.

**AGENDA – DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024**

1)	2:30 p.m.	<b>WELCOME AND ROLL CALL</b>
2)	2:35	<b>REGULAR PROCEDURAL TOPICS REVIEW AND APPROVAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AGENDA REVIEW AND MEETING OBJECTIVES (Dec. 4-5, 2024)</b></li> <li>• <b>APPROVAL OF FACILITATOR’S SUMMARY REPORT (Sept. 25, 2024)</b></li> <li>• <b>REVIEW OF UPDATED WORKPLAN AND RECAP OF THE OCW PROCESS</b></li> </ul>
3)	2:45	<b>INTERACTIVE HABITAT SURVEY RESULTS GROUP MAPPING EXERCISE WORKING WITH REVISED MAPS – CONTINUATION FROM MEETING #5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss and Identify Options Based on Survey Results and Revised Maps.</li> <li>• Discuss Whether the OCW Process Was Useful and/or Potentially Valuable for Additional Projects.</li> </ul>
4)	3:15	<b>SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT FINAL OCW REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN, AND DISCUSSION REGARDING ANY NEEDED REFINEMENTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of Draft Final Report and Consideration of Any Proposed Revisions.</li> </ul>
5)	3:45	<b>FINAL PLANNING AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE FORUM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Final Logistical Issues and Roles for Open House Forum.</li> </ul>
6)	4:25	<b>SUMMARY OF DAY ONE AND REVIEW OF DAY TWO AGENDA</b>
	~4:30 p.m.	<b>RECESS</b>

**AGENDA DAY 2 – THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024**

1)	2:30 p.m.	<b>WELCOME AND SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES FOR DAY 2</b>
2)	2:35	<b>REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE FORUM FEEDBACK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and Decide Whether to Make Any Revisions to OCW’s Recommendations.</li> </ul>
3)	3:15	<b>REVIEW, DISCUSSION, AND ADOPTION OF THE OCW DRAFT FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and Adoption of OCW Draft Final <i>Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland.</i></li> </ul>
4)	3:45	<b>REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF ORP’S COMMUNICATION, MARKETING, AND DISTRIBUTION PLAN FOR OCW’S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalization and Distribution of the OCW’s Full Final Report and Recommendations.</li> <li>• Finalization, Printing, and Distribution of Glossy Short Summary Report.</li> </ul>
5)	4:15	<b>NEXT STEPS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Next Steps.</li> <li>• Complete Meeting Evaluation Form.</li> <li>• Project Closing and OCW and Project Team Members Group Photo.</li> </ul>
	~4:30 PM	<b>ADJOURN AND WORKGROUP APPRECIATION AND CELEBRATION</b>

**ATTACHMENT 5**  
**WORKPLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE**

<b>OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP MEETINGS SCHEDULE AND WORKPLAN UPDATED DECEMBER 5, 2024</b>		
<b>MEETING</b>	<b>DATE(S)</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>
<b>Meeting #1</b>	<b>Feb. 2-3, 2024</b>	<p><b>Organizational Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of Oyster Coalition Workgroup’s Operational and Procedural Policies and Guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assumptions, Principles, and Participation Guidelines;</li> <li>○ Consensus Building Procedures;</li> <li>○ Consensus Solutions Process Procedures;</li> <li>○ Options Acceptability Ranking Process; and</li> <li>○ Guiding Principles, and Goal Statement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Presentations on the Eastern Bay Region of Maryland.</li> <li>• Review of Questionnaire responses.</li> <li>• Discussion and adoption of draft Framework for the Plan: Vision Themes, Goals, Outcomes, and Objectives.</li> <li>• Identification of initial list of strategies for evaluation.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting #2</b>	<b>March 29-30, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations on decision support tools: spatial tools for oyster siting, and OysterFutures simulation model. Overview of DNR regulatory processes related to oysters.</li> <li>• Discussion of the application of spatial tools for oyster production in Eastern Bay.</li> <li>• Discussion of ORP’s Eastern Bay Habitat Survey Plan.</li> <li>• Mapping Exercise on Oyster Habitat: Current harvest locations, and proposed locations for expanding wild-harvest and aquaculture.</li> <li>• Identification, discussion, and acceptability ranking of options (strategies and actions), and resource needs to achieve Project Goals and Objectives.</li> <li>• Identification of revised, hybrid, and new options for evaluation.</li> <li>• Discussion and acceptability ranking of performance measures to track progress towards Objectives and Goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting #3</b>	<b>May 29-30, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations and discussions about oyster substrate.</li> <li>• Update and preliminary results from ORP’s Eastern Bay Habitat Survey.</li> <li>• Overview of local stakeholders and resources in Eastern Bay.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification, discussion, and acceptability ranking of revised options (strategies and actions), and resource needs to achieve Project Goals and Objectives.</li> <li>• Identification of revised, hybrid, and new options for evaluation.</li> <li>• Discussion and acceptability ranking of revised performance measures to track progress towards Objectives and Goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting #4</b>	<b>July 31-Aug. 1, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on results of ORP’s Eastern Bay habitat survey.</li> <li>• Discussion regarding how results of Eastern Bay Habitat Surveys will inform recommendations and inclusion in the Plan.</li> <li>• Discussion of OCW stakeholders resources available to support the goals of the OCW Project.</li> <li>• Discussion regarding whether to form an OCW Successor Group, and review of an associated Draft Framework for ensuring implementation of OCW recommendations.</li> <li>• Acceptability ranking of proposed revisions to consensus ranked objectives, strategies, actions, and performance measures (options) for inclusion in the <i>Draft Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i> using the Strategies Evaluation Worksheet Process.</li> <li>• Adoption of the final package of Performance Measures to track progress towards objectives and Project goals.</li> <li>• Discussion and approval of Draft Outline for the OCW <i>Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i>.</li> <li>• Interactive habitat survey results group GIS mapping exercise.</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting #5</b>	<b>Sept. 25, 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on CBEC education plan and OCW feedback.</li> <li>• Spatial tools for oyster siting update and OCW feedback.</li> <li>• Interactive habitat survey results group mapping exercise continued with revised maps.</li> <li>• Summary, discussion, refinement, and approval of the OCW <i>Draft Report and Recommendations for the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i>.</li> <li>• Discussion of objectives, approach, and content for December 4, 2024 Community Open House Forum and OCW feedback.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community Open House Forum</b></p>	<p><b>Dec. 4, 2024</b> 6:00pm – 8:00pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community education on the OCW goals and process.</li> <li>• Community input on the OCW outcomes and recommendations for a <i>Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meeting #6</b></p>	<p><b>Dec. 4-5, 2024</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of Community Open House Forum input.</li> <li>• Interactive Habitat Survey Results Group Mapping Exercise, Continued with Revised Maps.</li> <li>• Summary, discussion, refinement, and adoption of the Oyster Coalition Workgroup’s <i>Report and Recommendations for a Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland</i>, and submittal to the Oyster Recovery Partnership.</li> <li>• Overview and approval of ORP’s Communication, Marketing, and Distribution Plan for Full and Short Summary Versions of the OCW’s Report and Recommendations for the Plan.</li> <li>• Oyster Recovery Partnership will finalize the Report and distribute to relevant agencies, entities, and organizations as appropriate.</li> <li>• Workgroup Appreciation and Celebration.</li> </ul>

# Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland



Submitted by the Eastern Bay Oyster Coalition Workgroup and Oyster Recovery Partnership to the leadership of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
13 January 2025

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to the Oyster Coalition Workgroup members for dedicating their time and expertise to this effort. The watermen members were especially valuable in providing historical and practical knowledge of oyster habitat and harvest in Eastern Bay. Thank you to Captain Guy Spurry for captaining his working vessel for patent tong sampling of oyster habitat in Eastern Bay. The Maryland Geological Survey and Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Shellfish Division provided data to guide the development of the habitat surveys, which formed the foundation for several recommendations outlined in this report. The Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, American Legion Post 278, and Hyatt Place Kent Narrows provided a meeting space for the Coalition. This project was made possible through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, EPA, and Chesapeake Bay Program (NFWF Small Watershed Grant 75770). Cover photo: Jordan Salafie, Oyster Recovery Partnership.

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Appendix J. Habitat Survey Methods and Oyster Habitat Maps ....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**



## 1.0 Introduction

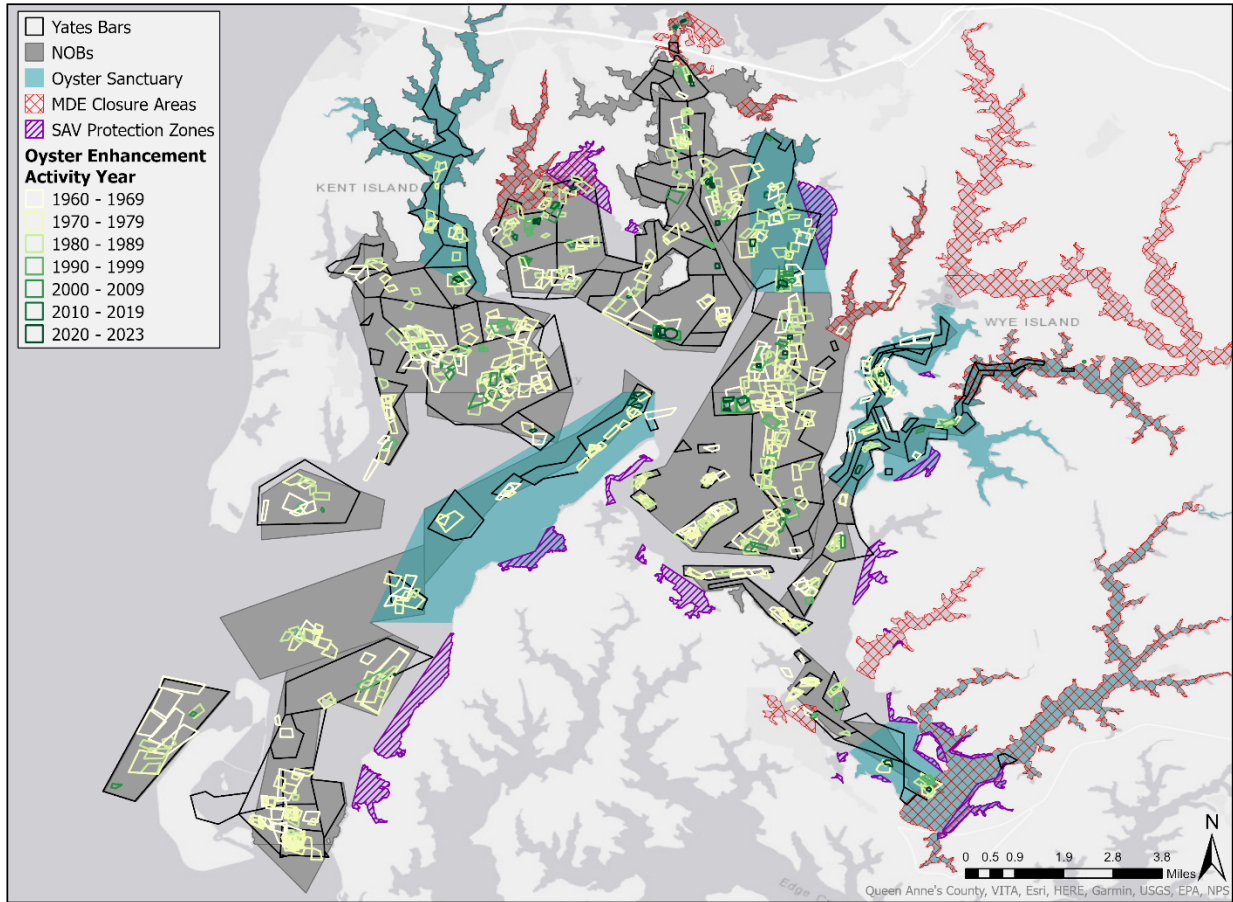
### *1.1 History of Oysters in Eastern Bay*

Eastern Bay, located between Queen Anne and Talbot Counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore, supports a thriving commercial and recreational fishing community including seafood processing facilities, restaurants, and tourism. The estuary is a mesohaline system with expansive oyster, SAV, and sandy bottom habitats. Eastern Bay and its tributaries contain vast oyster resources, with an estimated 20,086 acres of historic oyster habitat, 22,645 active acres of public shellfish fishery areas, seven oyster sanctuaries, and twelve active aquaculture leases (MDNR 2024). Of this historic oyster habitat, 15,358 acres are managed within the public shellfish fishery and 4,728 acres are managed within the region's oyster sanctuary network (Figure 1).

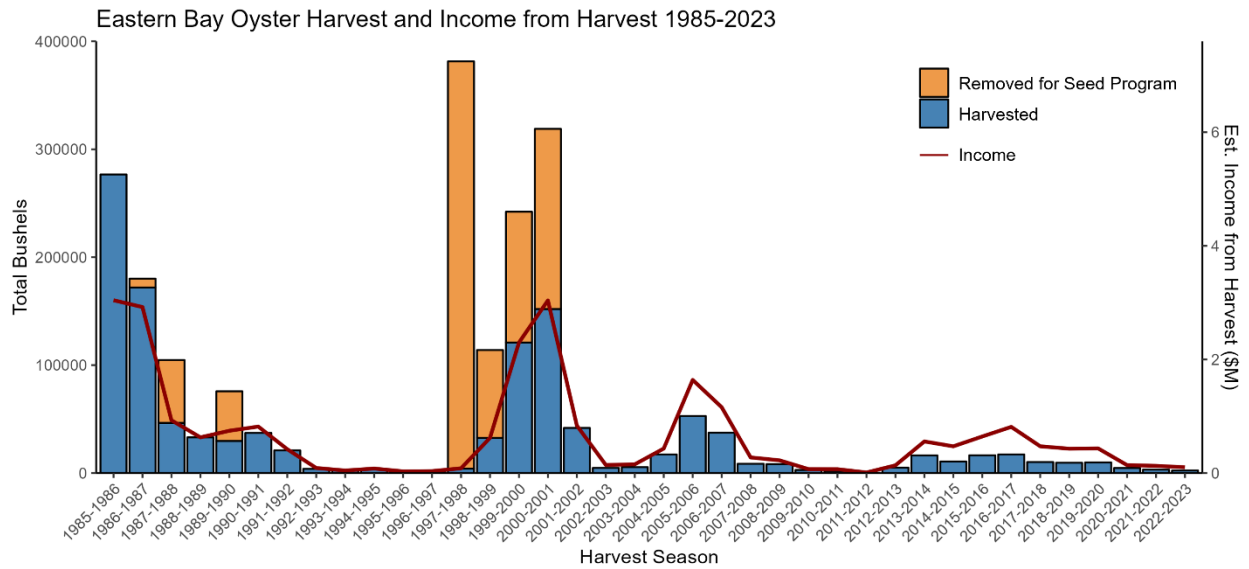
Historically, Eastern Bay (EB) was an extremely productive area for oysters. EB experienced relatively high natural recruitment compared to other areas in the Upper Chesapeake Bay and supported significant harvest effort. During the 1980s and early 2000s, in addition to the harvest of market oysters, spat or seed oysters were removed from EB and deployed in less naturally productive areas to enhance harvest in other regions of the Chesapeake (Figure 2). As oysters and habitat were removed through these activities, Maryland DNR conducted an extensive replenishment program that deployed shell dredged from buried, historic oyster reefs back onto oyster habitat in Eastern Bay (Figure 3). The EB oyster population was devastated by disease following a 4-year drought in 1997-2002 (MDNR 2024), which resulted in significant reductions in harvest and replenishment activities (Figures 2 & 3).

A decline in the seafood economy and infrastructure in EB followed the decline in oyster production. Through the 1980s, Kent Narrows was a booming hub for seafood processing and distribution. Today, only two seafood processors remain in the region. A concurrent increase in development in the watershed resulted in an economic shift – from predominantly centered around the seafood industry to recreation and tourism (Queen Anne's County 2022, Talbot County 2016). Land use changes in the rural EB watershed that continue today have overwhelmed the existing wastewater management systems and degraded water quality through increased nutrient loading into the system. Increased shoreline development and shoreline hardening also increased sediment input. Combined, these multiple stressors reduced the ability of oysters to recover to their former densities and extent.

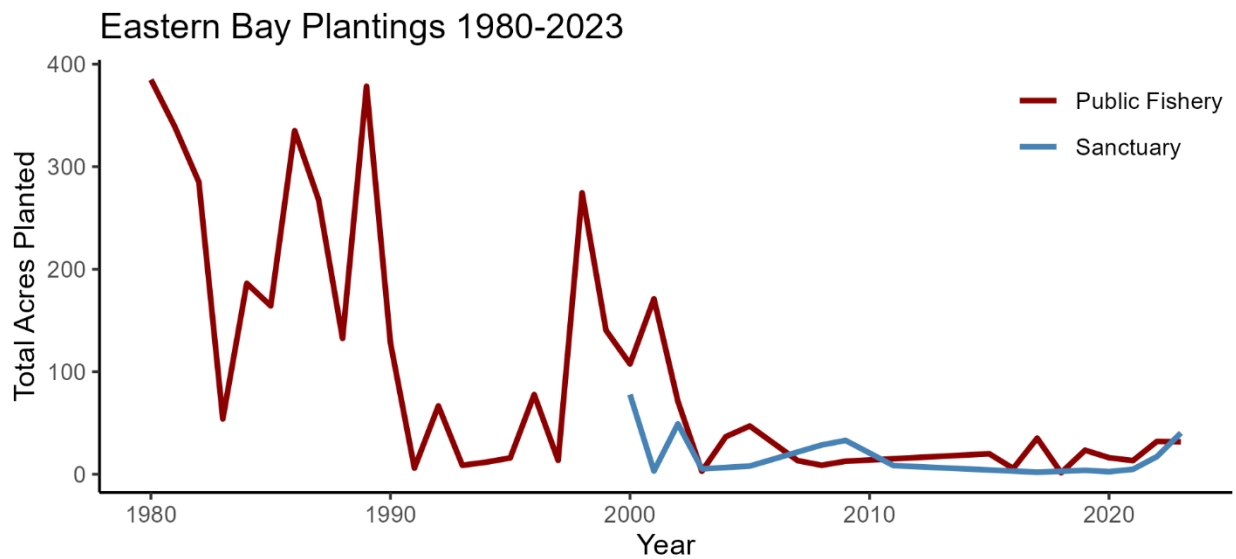
The creation of oyster sanctuaries in EB began in 2000 to protect broodstock, enhance natural recruitment, provide ecological services, and provide areas to test experimental restoration approaches (MDNR 2019, 2024). The region's larger sanctuary network was established in 2010 as part of a management action to expand Maryland's existing sanctuary network (MDNR 2019). Restoration plantings have been ongoing in EB sanctuaries and harvest areas to enhance habitat and oyster broodstock through MDNR programs and using locally sourced funds (Figure 3). New funding for EB sanctuary and harvest restoration was allocated during the 2022 state legislative session to re-invest in oyster habitat enhancement within the EB region.



**Figure 1.** Eastern Bay historic oyster habitat, current management zones, and history of restoration and replenishment. Data from MDNR. Areas shown are for informational use only. For legal boundaries, please consult Maryland statute and the Annotated Code of Maryland (COMAR 08.02).



**Figure 2.** Eastern Bay oyster harvest landings, harvest for the seed program, and economic impact. Data from MDNR.



**Figure 3.** Shell, spat-on-shell, and substrate plantings conducted in Eastern Bay from 1980-2023. Data from MDNR and ORP.

### 1.2 Current Management Framework and Challenges

The Eastern Bay Oyster Coalition evolved as a result of previous stakeholder processes that were coordinated by Maryland DNR, the Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission, and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences (North et al. 2024). These initiatives were convened to engage oyster stakeholders to reach a consensus on management needs and actions for oyster restoration or production in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

The current focus on EB began in 2019 when MDNR developed the Eastern Bay Project, an integrated and inclusive approach to restore oysters to the region and to define a new working relationship that equally included representation from oyster aquaculture, sanctuaries, and the fishery. Certain preceding efforts in other regions generated tensions among stakeholders and the Eastern Bay Project aimed to define a new approach to oyster restoration and management. MDNR convened a small group of local oyster stakeholders to discuss and develop management goals, plan enhancement activities, and develop metrics for tracking progress. The Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC) was briefed on MDNR’s integrated approach in EB and endorsed the project. In 2022, the state legislature provided funding to support restoration and replenishment activities outlined in the project – plantings began in 2023 and are still underway. The Eastern Bay Coalition’s work expands upon the collaborative approach and enhancement actions initiated through the Eastern Bay Project.

Regarding the Oyster Advisory Commission’s (OAC) role in EB restoration, this occurred during the OAC’s extensive 2-year consensus process where, working with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, over 100 management scenarios for oysters in the Chesapeake Bay were modeled and evaluated. The only management consensus outcome formalized by the OAC was for continuing the Eastern Bay Project – recommending that the state collectively plan and undertake a combination of replenishment, restoration, and aquaculture activities in EB over 25

years, with an equal amount of funding (\$1M annually) allocated for planting spat in sanctuaries and spat and shell on fishery reefs in addition to current restoration activities (MDNR et al. 2021). The OAC also identified several business practice recommendations that built on MDNR's approach – including improving organization and cooperation among groups and integrating projects across oyster production sectors (fishery, aquaculture, restoration). The state legislature endorsed the recommendations, which allocated funding towards EB through Senate Bill 830/House Bill 1228 during the 2022 legislative session.

While these efforts collectively improved the approach and secured funding to support EB oyster production, challenges related to overlapping resources, conflicting user interest, and outdated spatial data on oyster habitat necessitated further planning and agreement on how to use these funds most effectively, and how to integrate the new funding into existing activities. The Oyster Recovery Partnership solicited funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants program to establish the Eastern Bay Oyster Coalition Workgroup (OCW) to assist and enhance the previous efforts led by MDNR and the OAC and address these challenges.

The overarching goal in convening the OCW was to develop a strategic plan for optimizing oyster production in EB over the long term using a process that supports and creates synergy among all EB oyster stakeholders. This was accomplished through (1) a stakeholder-driven, consensus-based process, (2) an updated habitat survey of EB that was used to help identify areas suitable for future oyster production, (3) improving stakeholder relationships in the OCW setting, and (4) improving public education of oyster production in EB.

### *1.3 Purpose of the Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan*

This Plan provides a framework for the long-term sustainable restoration and management of the oyster resource and ecosystem in Eastern Bay, Maryland. The Plan outlines a set of recommendations intended to be implemented by state and federal agencies, local government, and NGOs working in this region. The Plan also provides guidance for tracking progress to meet the goals and objectives set by the OCW.

The Plan will be submitted to MDNR for immediate implementation following final approval by the OCW. Changes to state regulation may be required to fully and effectively implement some recommendations. The OCW encourages MDNR to regularly update the stakeholders and continue to incorporate stakeholder input throughout the implementation process.

## **2.0 Eastern Bay Oyster Coalition Workgroup**

The Oyster Coalition Workgroup (OCW) was convened to develop consensus recommendations for oyster policies, management, and restoration/replenishment activities that improve oyster production and the ecological and ecosystem services from oyster habitat restoration and meet the needs of industry, citizens, NGOs, and government stakeholders in EB and its tributaries. This includes (1) defining annual and long-term goals for each individual stakeholder group and collectively across all groups, (2) identifying resources required to meet these goals, and (3) defining performance metrics to track progress.

The Workgroup process was informed by the best available science and shared stakeholder values, and the aim was to establish the economically and ecologically sustainable long-term maintenance and growth of oyster restoration and production in EB and its tributaries.

The OCW consisted of 17 members representing 11 interest groups, all of which operate businesses, manage resources, work with the public, or conduct other work in EB (Appendix C). Many OCW members represent multiple perspectives. Candidate OCW members were selected from ORP and MDNR’s local network of partners operating in EB and screened through an informal discussion conducted by the project team, where appropriate. OCW members were selected to ensure that they represented the collective interest of their respective organizations and/or constituents.

**Oyster Coalition Workgroup Member Perspectives and Affiliations (#)**

- Oyster fishery (11)
- Seafood processors (3)
- Aquaculture (6)
- Non-profit/NGO environmental organizations (5)
- Oyster restoration (10)
- Recreational fishing interests (4)
- Biologist/scientist (3)
- Fishery managers (2)
- Federal, state, or local government (4)
- Citizen interested in Chesapeake Bay health (4)
- Other (1 – clam fishery)

The OCW members attended six Coalition meetings between February and December 2024, as well as a community open house in December 2024 (Appendix D). OCW members were also asked to complete a questionnaire during the fall of 2023, prior to the first OCW meeting (Appendix F). The results of the questionnaire were compiled and synthesized to build a foundation for discussion at the first OCW meeting in February. During the OCW meetings, members participated in the development, evaluation, and ranking of recommendations outlined in the following sections. Some OCW members provided additional context, clarity, input, and vision during follow-up discussions when requested by the Project Team. The OCW members also participated in discussions related to the implementation of the Plan, including providing input on the design, interpretation of results, and action items resulting from the supporting EB habitat survey, which should be leveraged as a starting point for MDNR’s implementation of the Plan (Section 6).

All OCW meeting materials are posted on the project webpage (<https://www.oysterrecovery.org/our-work/oyster-restoration/easternbaycoalition>).

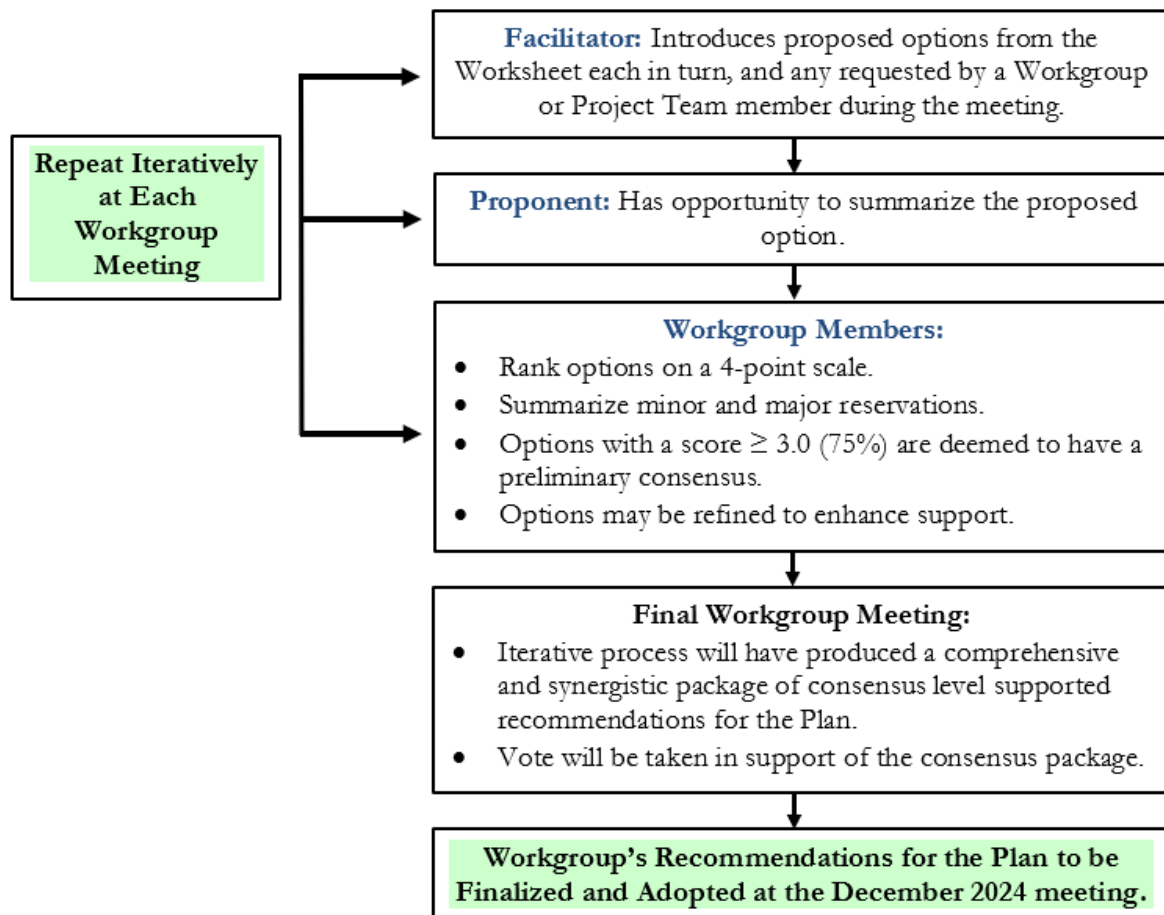
*2.1 Consensus-Building Process*

The OCW developed the framework, strategies, and actions described in this Plan using a consensus-building process designed and implemented by Facilitated Solutions, LLC (Figure 4, Appendix G). Consensus is a participatory process whereby the members strive for an agreement that all members can accept, support, or agree not to oppose. OCW members evaluated all components of this Plan using the best available science, data, stakeholder knowledge, and decision-support tools for oyster production in EB. All components in the Plan were ranked and refined to reach consensus through three iterations using the options evaluation process and worksheets (Appendix G, H). Two additional opportunities for discussion and refinements were provided with the Workgroup’s approval of the Draft Plan and adoption of the Final Plan. In cases where the OCW found that 100% acceptance or support was not achievable, final consensus

recommendations required at least 75% favorable vote to be included in this package of recommendations.

The OCW developed its recommendations using consensus-building techniques with the assistance of the facilitator. Techniques such as brainstorming, ranking, and prioritizing approaches were used. OCW members, the project leadership team, and the facilitator were the only participants seated at the table, and primarily only OCW members contributed to discussions. Only OCW members voted on proposals and recommendations. The facilitator or project leadership team provided clarification when needed.

### CONSENSUS SOLUTIONS OPTIONS EVALUATION PROCESS FLOWCHART



**Figure 4.** OCW consensus process, developed by and adapted from Facilitated Solutions, LLC.

### 3.0 Goal Framework and Structure of the Plan

The OCW agreed that to optimize oyster production in EB over the long term, oysters must be (1) enhanced, (2) managed sustainably, and (3) there must be support for these two components from stakeholders and the public. These three themes form the foundation of the OCW’s goal framework and structure of the Plan, which outlines the components required to achieve the overarching vision for EB.

**Goal A:** Enhance the oyster resource in Eastern Bay.  
**Goal B:** Manage the oyster fishery and aquaculture to increase and sustain harvest and a thriving economy.  
**Goal C:** An engaged stakeholder community that supports sustainable oyster restoration and management.

In the following sections, each goal has an accompanying vision theme, defined outcome, and set of objectives. To achieve these objectives, each goal has a series of strategies with associated actions to implement the strategies. Performance measures to track progress toward the objectives for each goal are listed in Section 5.

Success will require implementing strategies and actions towards objectives under all three goals within the framework collectively – success cannot be achieved by only implementing recommendations from one or a subset of the three goals. The goals were developed to work cohesively, not in isolation.

The framework was adopted unanimously at the first OCW meeting on February 2, 2024 and was revised at the third meeting on May 30, 2024 to ensure that objectives were measurable and concise.

### 4.0 Recommendations for Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management

The OCW generated consensus recommendations through a total of three iterations of ranking and revisions. The initial recommendations were derived from the initial list of options identified by OCW members at the first meeting in February. The OCW recommendations address key issues related to the three goal areas outlined in Section 3. The OCW recommends that 13 strategies and 42 actions be considered and implemented by MDNR or other appropriate agencies to achieve these goals.

- Summary of OCW Recommendations**
- Improved communication
  - Continued need for stakeholder involvement
  - Proper siting of enhancement activities
  - Substrate needs
  - Aquaculture expansion
  - Monitoring
  - Permitting and regulatory gaps/needs
  - Funding
  - Adaptive management and accepting new management practices
  - Increased enforcement

Several recommendations were identified for EB that are also relevant to other tributaries and/or the entire state. These include management, regulatory, and permitting recommendations, as well as recommendations intended to increase participation and sustain the livelihood of the oyster industry.

Another major theme is the need to improve communication throughout the oyster production process. Several discussions centered around the need to increase transparency in the regulatory and permitting processes managed by the state, including for oyster aquaculture. The OCW also recommends improving inter-department and inter-agency communication to streamline these processes. Improved communication with the public and local officials will be key for securing political and financial support for EB oyster activities. In addition, several recommendations underscore the continued need for engaging stakeholders in the entire restoration process – including planning, monitoring, and adaptive management – well beyond the timeframe of the OCW itself.

*4.1 Goal A. Enhance the Oyster Resource in Eastern Bay*

*Vision Theme:* A healthy, self-sustained Eastern Bay oyster population.

*Outcome:* By 2034 oyster resources that include natural habitat, public oyster grounds, and privately operated aquaculture leases will be thriving and contributing toward a sustainable population and improvements to the Eastern Bay System.

*Objectives*

1. To achieve a healthy and sustainable oyster population in Eastern Bay.
2. To enhance ecosystem services through the restoration of oysters in Eastern Bay.
3. To expand oyster aquaculture in Eastern Bay.

*Strategies and Actions*

The OCW recommends that six strategies and 18 actions be considered and implemented to enhance the oyster resource in EB (Table 1). These strategies and actions address the following challenges or themes to achieve the objectives for Goal A:

- Proper siting for enhancement – including the importance of involving stakeholders in the planning and siting process
- Substrate needs – including retaining and reclaiming shell, using alternate substrates, and other sources of shell
- Aquaculture expansion – removing regulatory and stakeholder roadblocks
- Monitoring to understand progress
- Permitting and regulatory gaps/needs
- Securing funding to conduct enhancement activities

**Table 1.** Goal A strategies and actions. The score is listed in parentheses for options not receiving 100% consensus.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1. Improve oyster habitat and broodstock in Eastern Bay by relying on scientific and industry expertise and integrating stakeholder input into a restoration plan that covers	1A. Conduct regular habitat mapping to understand the extent and condition of existing oyster habitat and identify priority areas that need enhancement or could be re-delineated for other activities. Funding should not come from existing restoration funds.



<p>sanctuaries, harvest areas, and aquaculture.</p>	<p>1B. Integrate the use of alternate substrates into Eastern Bay oyster restoration by relying on existing data on the suitability, availability, and effectiveness of different types of substrates that have been approved by DNR and seek any changes to law needed to allow and/or provide for funding.</p> <p>1C. Identify suitable locations for deploying alternate substrates to improve existing habitat, reduce sedimentation, and improve spat recruitment.</p> <p>1D. Evaluate restoration practices that will improve oyster broodstock, including moving adult oysters from one location in Eastern Bay to another to improve survival and reproduction.</p> <p>1E. Evaluate opportunities to involve industry in restoration siting and monitoring and outline how contributions will be integrated.</p>
<p>2. Evaluate existing practices to increase the availability of oyster shell for habitat enhancement.</p>	<p>2A. Evaluate and implement the existing shell reclamation practices of bar cleaning and dredging from existing fishery areas in Eastern Bay to move shells from unproductive to productive locations.</p> <p>2B. Evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of using shells produced through aquaculture as a potential new source of shell for restoration.</p> <p>2C. Evaluate existing practices and implement programs to increase the amount of shell retained in Maryland from oyster harvest and aquaculture in Eastern Bay.</p> <p>2D. Evaluate and acquire other sources of shell within the state of Maryland and from other locations.</p>
<p>3. Identify opportunities for aquaculture expansion in Eastern Bay that complement existing restoration and fishery practices and consider logistical limitations and habitat requirements, with a focus on areas where shells have been recently removed for bottom enhancement.</p>	<p>3A. Connect oyster harvesters, aquaculture leaseholders, and representatives from other fisheries that depend on a healthy oyster habitat to improve cohesion among ongoing and emerging activities in Eastern Bay.</p> <p>3B. Collectively generate a list of areas acceptable to fishery and aquaculture stakeholders for new aquaculture leases to avoid future conflict.</p>

<p>4. Develop a long-term monitoring plan to demonstrate whether strategies and actions are working and to allow for adaptive management of the Eastern Bay oyster resource.</p>	<p>[No specific actions identified]</p>
<p>5. Identify specific roadblocks in the regulatory process or existing regulations at the state, county, and local levels that create challenges for oyster restoration/production. Propose options to overcome these or improve transparency in the process.</p>	<p>5A. Recommend that DNR improve transparency in shell import and alternate substrate approval permitting process for restoration practices.</p> <p>5B. Recommend that DNR evaluate and enhance interagency coordination groups to improve coordination and communication between agencies and stakeholders.</p> <p>5C. DNR should review and update regulations that restrict the expansion of aquaculture on Yates Bars in sanctuaries and near SAV beds. At the very minimum, improve transparency in the existing aquaculture permitting process and regulations. <i>(97.5% consensus)</i></p> <p>5D. DNR should review and update regulations that restrict the expansion of aquaculture on Yates Bars in public fishery areas. At the very minimum, improve transparency in the existing aquaculture permitting process and regulations.</p>
<p>6. Evaluate the cost of existing and proposed enhancement practices that are recommended by the OCW and identify funding for short- and long-term efforts. Include any available resources/references as an Appendix to the OCW's Report (Appendix I).</p>	<p>6A. Allocate money from recreational oyster license purchases to replenish public fishery oyster bars.</p> <p>6B. The OCW supports and recommends finalizing the development of a viable implementation framework or plan for nutrient credits which can be used to support oyster enhancement activities that remain within the Eastern Bay System.</p> <p>6C. Prioritize providing or increasing funding for restoration in sanctuaries that have not yet, or not recently, received restoration.</p>

*4.2 Goal B. Manage the Oyster Fishery and Aquaculture to Increase and Sustain Harvest and a Thriving Economy*

*Vision Theme:* A productive oyster population that sustains a vibrant commercial oyster fishery, a thriving aquaculture industry, and recreational and tourism related activities.

*Outcome:* By 2034 both private and public oyster resources will sustain a vibrant commercial oyster fishery, a thriving aquaculture industry, and recreational and tourism related activities in Eastern Bay.

*Objectives*

1. To achieve an increased level of sustainable oyster harvest from Eastern Bay.
2. To improve recreational and other commercial fisheries and tourism activities in Eastern Bay.

*Strategies and Actions*

The OCW recommends that four strategies supported by 12 actions be considered and implemented to sustainably manage the oyster fishery and aquaculture in EB (Table 2). These strategies and actions address the following challenges or themes to achieve the objectives for Goal B:

- Adaptive management and implementing new management and harvest practices
- Increased enforcement
- Facilitating industry operations

**Table 2.** Goal B strategies and actions. The score is listed in parentheses for options not receiving 100% consensus.

Strategy	Actions
<p>1. Evaluate and enhance the current strategy for sustainable management of Eastern Bay oyster resources.</p>	<p>1A. DNR should define and monitor progress towards targets and thresholds for sustainable harvest levels in Eastern Bay</p> <p>1B. DNR should implement, or enhance as needed, a process to collaborate with stakeholders to develop consensus recommendations for the management of oyster harvest bars based on these thresholds, and should implement appropriate changes in a timely manner.</p> <p>1C. In the event of adverse impacts from climate change and/or environmental conditions, the appropriate state agencies should adaptively make changes to oyster harvesting regulations as required to maintain public health (e.g., adjustments to season, closures, etc.).</p> <p>1D. Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a pilot project to test a rotational harvest framework within specified sanctuaries by allowing watermen to use their funds to restore and harvest bars in specified sanctuaries where no restoration has been done. Based on the results, consider recategorizing areas in sanctuaries that have not received restoration to serve as the locations selected for potential rotational harvest areas. (85% consensus)</p> <p>1E. Consider and establish a rotational harvest framework in non-productive bottom in fishery areas,</p>

	<p>incorporating practices such as rotational investment and management of entire oyster bars.</p> <p>1F. Evaluate existing harvest gear regulations and locations in Eastern Bay and consider changes that will promote sustainable oyster harvest (e.g., expanding patent tong or dredge areas) along with a proportional increase in enforcement to ensure compliance.</p> <p>1G. Evaluate management practices that are implemented successfully in other areas and consider whether they would be appropriate to apply in Eastern Bay.</p>
<p>2. DNR should enhance enforcement and reporting mechanisms that ensure accurate information on oyster harvesting in Eastern Bay.</p>	<p>2A. Engage with NRP and industry stakeholders to discuss and implement effective solutions to quantify and limit poaching and illegal harvest, with a focus on available technology (e.g., GPS, drones).</p> <p>2B. Develop methods to account for illegal and unreported harvest when assessing the effectiveness of restoration and replenishment.</p> <p>2C. In collaboration with seafood processors, evaluate enhancements to and/or eliminate problems with existing harvest reporting standards.</p>
<p>3. DNR should support leaseholders to develop and implement experimental aquaculture harvest practices and processes.</p>	<p>[No specific actions identified]</p>
<p>4. Forward any OCW recommendations that have state-wide oyster management impacts to the appropriate advisory groups (e.g., OAC, TFAC) for evaluation.</p>	<p>4A. The OCW recommends that OAC and/or TFAC, in collaboration with stakeholder interests, evaluate and establish a comprehensive limited entry program for full-time seafood industry workers, ensuring accessibility for full-time seafood industry workers and their family members.</p> <p>4B. The OCW recommends the establishment of a state law requiring that all local jurisdictions establish right-to-work laws to protect seafood industry workers and facilitate industry operations. <i>(OCW members representing state agencies abstained)</i></p>

*4.3 Goal C. An Engaged Stakeholder Community That Supports Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management*

*Vision Theme:* Stakeholders in Eastern Bay are committed to working together to advocate for a sustainably managed oyster habitat and a healthy Eastern Bay ecosystem.

*Outcome:* By 2034 stakeholders and the public are informed of the importance of sustaining the health of oysters in Eastern Bay, and are engaged and working actively together along with elected and appointed leaders and managers to invest in and implement the Plan.

*Objectives*

1. To achieve a broader awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural value of healthy oyster habitat in Eastern Bay.
2. To secure funds for oyster enhancement in Eastern Bay over the long term.

*Strategies and Actions*

The OCW recommends that three strategies supported by 12 actions be considered and implemented to engage the broader stakeholder community in EB (Table 3). These strategies and actions address the following challenges or themes to achieve the objectives for Goal C:

- Education strategies to improve public awareness and perception
- Securing future of oyster industry

**Table 3.** Goal C strategies and actions. The score is listed in parentheses for options not receiving 100% consensus.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1. Establish a coordinated public relations and marketing effort among stakeholders (including Dept of Ag./MD’s Best Seafood) to enhance public perception and support for commercial fisheries and aquaculture occurring in Eastern Bay.	1A. Identify strategies to monitor and respond to the spread of misinformation about Chesapeake Bay/Eastern Bay oysters.  1B. Market ecosystem services provided by oysters.  1C. Develop a process to communicate monitoring results to secure future funding for oyster production in Eastern Bay.
2. Establish educational opportunities to improve public awareness of Eastern Bay oyster culture.	2A. Create opportunities to engage with local waterman and aquaculture leaseholders to learn about the investment and process for harvesting oysters, with the goal to ensure that industry maintains access to oyster resources and commercial infrastructure.  2B. Educate elected officials on challenges and opportunities for the expansion of oyster production in Eastern Bay, including zoning restrictions, right-to-work laws, access to working waterfronts, and opportunities with the oyster BMP. <i>(OCW members representing state agencies abstained)</i>

	<p>2C. Maintain community restoration programs such as Marylander’s Grow Oysters that are primarily designed to be educational for the public.</p> <p>2D. Improve the market for local oysters by identifying opportunities to engage stakeholders in the preparation and eating of locally caught oysters.</p> <p>2E. Establish educational programs that are hosted locally (e.g., at CBEC) that focus on watermen, aquaculture, and the history of commercial seafood activity in Eastern Bay.</p> <p>2F. Increase recreational oyster dive charters/hand tong charters to educate the public about oyster reef ecology and the commercial oyster industry.</p> <p>2G. Identify technologies that can be used to educate a broader audience about Eastern Bay oyster habitat and culture.</p>
<p>3. Evaluate strategies and incentives to retain people in the commercial oyster industry and remove barriers to young entrants.</p>	<p>3A. Develop an apprentice program to train people entering the oyster fishery or aquaculture, including education on the required investment, training using various gear types, connecting them to the community, etc.</p> <p>3B. Establish education programs that introduce young people to aspects of the oyster fishery and inspire them to consider a career on the water.</p>

## 5.0 Performance Metrics

A series of performance metrics were proposed by the project leadership team in collaboration with UMCES and MDNR and were evaluated, revised, and ranked by the OCW. The recommended metrics are intended to regularly quantify outcomes and results of the implemented Plan. This is essential to track progress towards the OCW goals and objectives and to ensure that OCW recommendations are implemented successfully.

The exact targets and thresholds for each metric will need to be defined by MDNR or the appropriate agency (see *Goal A, Strategy 1, Action 1A* and *Goal B, Strategy 1, Action 1.A*), as well as the timeframe for evaluation. Both should be defined in collaboration with stakeholders. For example, for Goal A, Objective 1, the definition of a “healthy” and “sustainable” oyster population in EB will need to be specified. The OCW proposed that MDNR use historic oyster densities as a benchmark when evaluating what would be reasonable given the current performance of the system. However, the OCW cautions MDNR not to be too restrictive and declare success too early in the process – the recommendations provided here are intended to be implemented over the long term.

The OCW recognizes that data types may not currently exist for some of the proposed performance metrics, or there may not be existing capacity to collect some of these data. However, the OCW requests that MDNR or the most appropriate agency critically assess opportunities and options to develop methods and capacity to track all proposed metrics. Missing information may unintentionally overestimate success and jeopardize progress.

Lastly, the OCW recognizes that some metrics may not solely be driven by increases in the oyster population. Like the goals outlined in this Plan, the performance metrics are intended to be assessed collectively and to understand the performance of the EB system as a whole.

*Goal A. Enhance the Oyster Resource in Eastern Bay*

Objectives	Recommended Metrics
A1. To achieve a healthy and sustainable oyster population in Eastern Bay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oyster density (m2) – adults, spat, sub-legal</li> <li>• Oyster biomass (m2)</li> <li>• Annual recruitment rate</li> <li>• Annual volume of cultch (bushels)</li> </ul>
A2. To enhance ecosystem services through the restoration of oysters in Eastern Bay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area (acres) restored annually</li> <li>• Pounds of nitrogen &amp; phosphorus removed annually from reefs</li> <li>• Water clarity – percent increase in light reaching 2m depth</li> <li>• Area (acres) of SAV in Eastern Bay, assessed annually</li> </ul>
A3. To expand oyster aquaculture in Eastern Bay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of aquaculture leases operating in Eastern Bay annually</li> <li>• Acres of active oyster leases in Eastern Bay</li> <li>• Number and volume (bushels) of oysters planted/deployed in leases annually</li> <li>• Annual harvest from leases (bushels)</li> </ul>

*Goal B. Manage the Oyster Fishery and Aquaculture to Increase and Sustain Harvest and a Thriving Economy*

Objectives	Recommended Metrics
B1. To achieve an increased level of sustainable oyster harvest from Eastern Bay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual oyster harvest from Eastern Bay through wild harvest and aquaculture (bushels)</li> <li>• Harvest/fishing rate/CPUE</li> <li>• Number of commercial oyster licenses in Queen Anne and Talbot Counties</li> <li>• Number of oyster trips reported in Eastern Bay</li> <li>• Proportion of dealer buy tickets purchasing seafood from Eastern Bay, annually</li> </ul>

<p>B2. To improve recreational and other commercial fisheries and tourism activities in Eastern Bay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual recreational oyster harvest from Eastern Bay</li> <li>• Number of recreational oyster licenses in Queen Anne and Talbot Counties</li> <li>• Number charter trips reported in Eastern Bay annually</li> <li>• Number of harvest trips and harvest (bushels/lbs.) reported for other fisheries in Eastern Bay (clam, finfish, blue crab) annually</li> <li>• Number recreational boating trips in Eastern Bay annually (e.g., # Queen Anne &amp; Talbot County landing permits, annual boater surveys, recreational fishing surveys or CCA data, economic benefit analysis of increased eco-tourism and recreational activities, and other new data collection approaches)</li> <li>• Water clarity – percent increase in light reaching 2m depth</li> <li>• Pounds of nitrogen &amp; phosphorus removed annually through harvest</li> <li>• Pounds of nitrogen &amp; phosphorus removed annually through aquaculture</li> </ul>
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*Goal C. An Engaged Stakeholder Community That Supports Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management*

Objectives	Recommended Metrics
<p>C1. To achieve a broader awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural value of healthy oyster habitat in Eastern Bay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number people engaged – K-12, adults</li> <li>• Number of Eastern Bay oyster educational materials developed (e.g., signage at local environmental centers, lesson plans, etc.)</li> <li>• Number of businesses participating in outreach</li> <li>• Number of restaurants in Queen Anne’s and Talbot Counties serving local oysters</li> </ul>
<p>C2. To secure funds for oyster enhancement in Eastern Bay over the long term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds allocated by Queen Anne’s and Talbot Counties for oyster restoration, annually</li> <li>• Funds allocated by the state for oyster restoration in Eastern Bay, annually</li> <li>• Community funds raised for oyster restoration, annually (e.g., through QA &amp; Talbot Co crab pot Christmas trees, ORP &amp; ShoreRivers Build-A-Reef partnership, etc.)</li> </ul>



## 6.0 Additional Information and Considerations for Implementing the Plan

As part of the OCW process, ORP conducted a stakeholder-driven habitat survey to assess existing oyster habitat quality in EB (Appendix J). The OCW used the results of the habitat survey to: (1) identify potential locations for evaluation for future investment in oyster restoration and enhancement, (2) identify potentially marginal habitat that could be evaluated for other uses, and (3) identify potential locations that could support other activities outlined in the OCW recommendations. The discussions and resulting potential use areas focused primarily on habitat enhancement (planting shell, spat-on-shell, alternate substrate), shell reclamation, and aquaculture activities within existing NOBs and adjacent areas (Figure 5). Areas were also identified that currently support clam harvest and that may require further evaluation by the OCW, MDNR, and additional stakeholders to minimize conflicts with existing activities occurring in EB (Figure 5). The outcome of the OCW's iterative habitat survey and mapping exercise is a draft spatial plan, submitted to MDNR as part of this package of recommendations, which is ready for immediate evaluation and should be used to support the implementation of the OCW's recommendations (Figure 5). Some fishery spat-on-shell plantings, which were authorized by MDNR, already occurred in certain areas prioritized by the OCW during the 2024 restoration season. This action underscores the value and relevance of the OCW process and Plan for effectively implementing oyster enhancement activities in EB.

The habitat survey revealed that ~2,700 acres within existing NOBs in EB and its tributaries are likely unproductive oyster habitat (<25% habitat score, Figure 5, Appendix J). The OCW endorses evaluating these areas for other uses. The OCW also supports focusing investments in productive areas with a habitat score > 50% over the short term, and those with a habitat score > 25% over the long term or if/when larger funding and sources and more resources (e.g., substrate, shell) become available (Figure 5, Appendix J).

The OCW recognizes that all proposed areas and activities require further evaluation by MDNR and the appropriate entities, and that current regulation may limit the implementation of these activities. Potential areas identified by the OCW for expanding aquaculture will require MDNR to evaluate and modify Yates Bars, Natural Oyster Bars, and PSFA regulatory boundaries. In addition, these areas should be evaluated with a broader group of stakeholders, including additional representation from the crab, clam, and other commercial industries, to ensure conflicts with existing habitat uses are minimized. Changes to regulations and permitting processes will be required to implement some of the OCW recommendations, and MDNR should embrace and prioritize this to achieve the most effective outcomes for Eastern Bay with stakeholder support.

## 7.0 References

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) (2024) Eastern Bay Regional Restoration. <https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/oysters/eastern-bay.aspx>
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fishing and Boating Services and the Oyster Advisory Commission in consultation with The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (2021) Final Report: Oyster Advisory Commission Consensus Recommendations on Oyster Management. A report to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly, as required by Natural Resources Article §4-215 and §4-204. [https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Documents/Final\\_Report\\_OAC\\_SB0808\\_HB0911.pdf](https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Documents/Final_Report_OAC_SB0808_HB0911.pdf)

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Fishing and Boating Services (2019) Final Draft Maryland Oyster Management Plan.

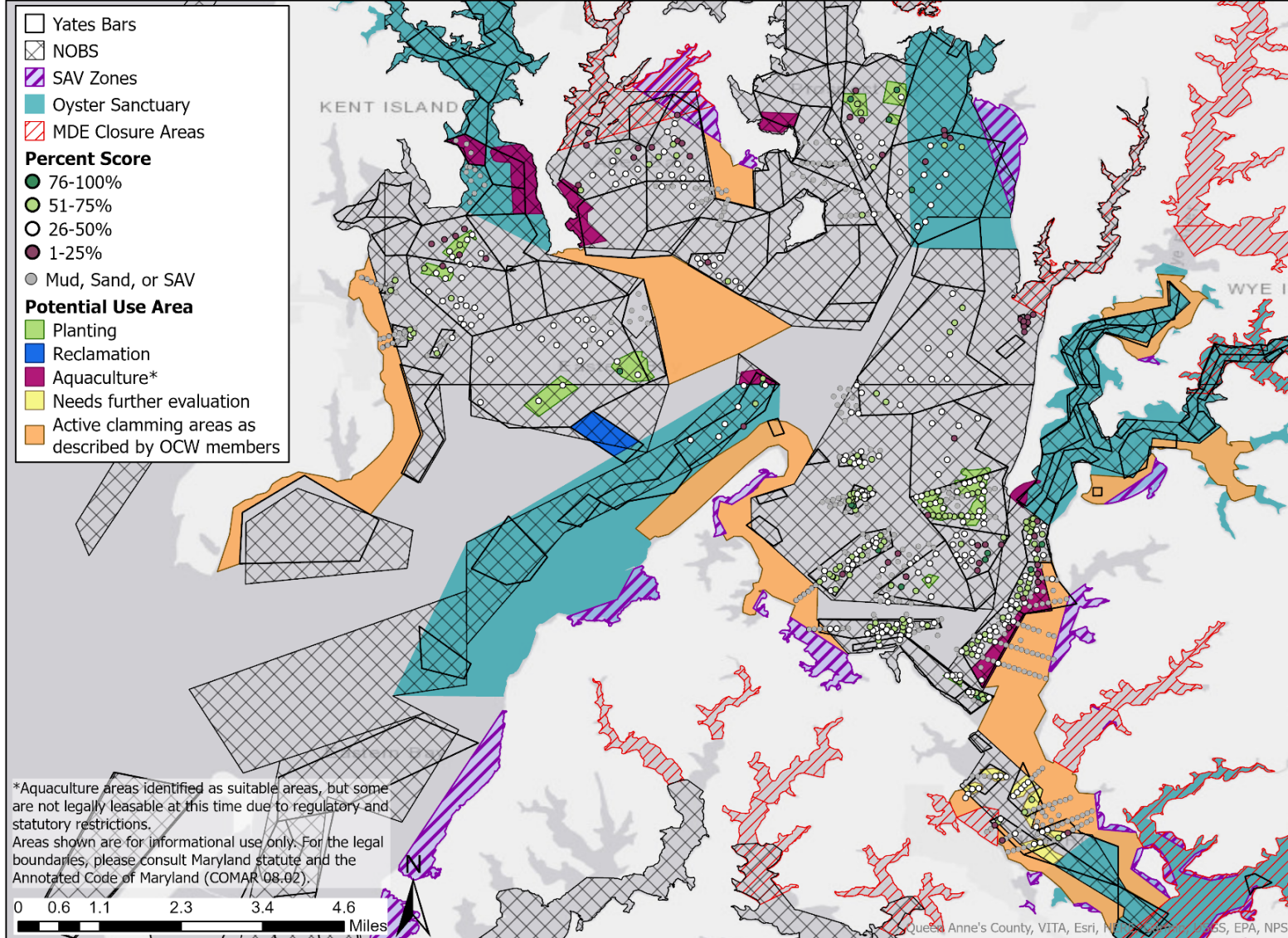
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Queen Anne's County (2022) Queen Anne's County Comprehensive Plan.

<https://www.qac.org/1575/2022-Comprehensive-Plan>

Talbot County (2016) Talbot County Comprehensive Plan. <https://talbotcountymd.gov/About-Us/departments/planning-and-zoning/planning/comprehensive-plan>



**Figure 5.** Draft Eastern Bay spatial plan outlining current oyster boundaries, oyster habitat quality results from ORP surveys (Appendix J), and proposed locations for implementing OCW recommendations

## 8.0 Appendices

- *Appendix A. Key to Common Abbreviations*
- *Appendix B. Glossary of Oyster Coalition Workgroup Project Terms and Definitions*
- *Appendix C. Oyster Coalition Workgroup Membership and Leadership Team*
- *Appendix D. Oyster Coalition Workgroup Meeting Schedule and Workplan*
- *Appendix E. Oyster Coalition Workgroup Operational and Procedural Guidelines*
- *Appendix F. Oyster Coalition Workgroup Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Summary Report*
- *Appendix G. Oyster Coalition Workgroup Options Evaluation and Consensus Process*
- *Appendix H. Options Evaluation Worksheet from the July 31-August 1, 2024, Meeting with Complete Rankings*
- *Appendix I. Resources for Implementation of the Plan*
- *Appendix J. Habitat Survey Methods and Oyster Habitat Map*

## ATTACHMENT 7

### ABOUT THE OYSTER COALITION WORKGROUP'S FACILITATOR

**Jeff A. Blair** has over 30 years of experience in assessing and analyzing complex issues and facilitating meetings designed to build consensus between stakeholder interests, and is the principle and owner of **Facilitated Solutions, LLC**. In addition, Jeff is retired research faculty at Florida State University (FSU) and served as Associate Director for the FCRC Consensus Center at FSU for twenty-one years. He specializes in facilitation and process design and in addition his work includes situation assessment, strategic planning and implementation, and consensus building among diverse stakeholder interests with divergent perspectives on complex issues. He has worked with federal, state, local government, non-governmental organizations, and private sector representatives to design and implement collaborative approaches to consensus-building, planning, rulemaking, and dispute resolution with an emphasis on stakeholder participation in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of policy actions in more than 197 projects and over 2500 meetings.

Ongoing projects include serving as process designer, lead facilitator, and conflict resolution consultant for stakeholder groups including: The Oyster Recovery Partnership's Oyster Coalition Workgroup tasked with developing recommendations for a *Sustainable Oyster Restoration and Management Plan for Eastern Bay, Maryland* (Chesapeake Bay); and the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation's Florida Building Commission's ongoing process of building consensus on all facets of the Florida Building Code System including facilitating over 1,500 individual meetings for the Commission since 1999 including 70 special issue stakeholder workgroup projects, all culminating in unanimously adopted consensus recommendations.

Relevant project examples include designing the process and approach for the projects, iterative evaluation of issues and options using the *Consensus Solutions Process*, and successfully facilitating a unanimous consensus between diverse stakeholder interests for the following related projects:

- Apalachicola Bay System Initiative. Community Advisory Board. (2019 – 2023). Florida State University Coastal Marine Lab. Recommendations for the *Apalachicola Bay System Ecosystem-Based Adaptive Management and Restoration Plan*. **Adopted Unanimously 29 November 2023**. Resulted in the formation of *The Partners for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay* to ensure the Plan is implemented, monitored, and adapted as needed.
- Greater Pensacola Bay Oyster Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Plan. Pensacola Bay System Stakeholder Working Group. (2019 - 2021). The Nature Conservancy. Recommendations for an Oyster Fisheries and Habitat Management Plan for the Pensacola Bay System. **Adopted Unanimously 17 March 2021**. Resulted in NOAA awarding the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program \$10.9 million for implementation of the Plan.
- OysterFutures. OysterFutures Stakeholder Workgroup. (2015 – 2018). University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and Florida State University FCRC Consensus Center. National Science Foundation. Coastal SEES. Recommendations for Oyster Management and Restoration in the Choptank and Little Choptank Rivers. **Adopted Unanimously 24 March 2018**. Resulted in the Maryland Legislature codifying the *Consensus Solutions Process* for use by the Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission.
- Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative (2015 - 2016). Gulf Angler Focus Group. American Sportfishing Association, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. Recommendations for Private Recreational Management Options for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper. **Adopted Unanimously 30 November 2016**.
- Project FishSmart. (2008). Atlantic King Mackerel Fishery Stakeholder Workgroup. University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and Florida State University FCRC Consensus Center. Recommendations for an Atlantic King Mackerel Fishery Management Plan. **Adopted Unanimously 7 November 2008**.
- Lobster Advisory Board. (2005 - 2006). Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Florida Lobster Fishery Management Plan. **Adopted Unanimously 15 May 2007**. Resulted in implementation of Plan revisions.
- Blue Crab Advisory Board. (2003 - 2005). Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Florida Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan. **Adopted Unanimously 5 January 2005**. Resulted in implementation of the Plan.