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For immediate release: April 27, 2010 – Contact Bob Lewis 301-862-3517 or Joe Anderson 301-737-5708

1000 Letters Delay Oyster Sanctuary Decision

More than 1000 letters are clogging up the process of mapping oyster sanctuaries around the Bay. Heavily dominated by supporters of the Governor's *Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Development Plan*, this body of testimony will likely result in 24% of the Chesapeake's productive oyster bars being mapped as sanctuary.

The proposed sanctuary for the upper St. Mary's River continues to garner opposition from local public officials and watermen, although with some movement towards a compromise. On Monday, April 19, representative of St. Mary's County watermen met with Maryland DNR Secretary John Griffin, where they proposed a smaller sanctuary for the upper river north of Pagan Point, in exchange for other smaller sanctuary bars around St. Mary's County tidal waters. Possible sanctuaries in Breton Bay and Clement's Bay, and a modification to the proposed Point Lookout sanctuary's new enlarged boundaries are being considered.

Secretary Griffin told SMRWA in an email last week that he hoped the Plan would become effective in June 2010. DNR is expected to announce final mapping and text later this week with at least 30 days of open public comment prior to enacting the Plan.

Oyster are filter feeders and cleanse our waters. They are the most important tool in our restoration-of-the-Bay toolbox. Currently oysters are at 1% of historic levels. Oysters on public oyster bars (nearly all of the upper St. Mary's) are a public resource.

Please drop Secretary Griffin a thank you note for holding strong against stiff opposition from rural counties and local watermen.

Secretary John Griffin
Maryland Dept of Natural Resources
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[Caption: A cluster of five-month old oysters being stewarded by the Marylanders Grow Oysters.]

