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March 6, 2017

Mark Belton, Secretary  
Mr. Scott Egleseder and Ms. Kelley Cox, Co-Chairs  
Oyster Advisory Commission  
c/o Department of Natural Resources  
Tawes State Office Building C-2  
580 Taylor Avenue  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Secretary Belton, Mr. Egleseder and Ms. Cox:

Thank you for your warm welcome at last month's Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC) meeting. I appreciate the opportunity to represent the Chesapeake Bay Foundation on the Commission, and I look forward to working with all of you as the Commission moves forward.

The spirited discussion of the last OAC meeting and of meetings prior demonstrates the many diverse stakeholders who value oysters, not only for their harvest value but also for the intrinsic benefits they provide. Thus, it is critically important that the deliberations of this Commission are not only well-informed, but also balanced, to represent the full suite of stakeholders with an interest in oyster management. With these goals in mind, I am writing to request some additional information and several items I believe are critical to the discussion at the upcoming March OAC meeting.

1. Discussion of the December 2016 letter from 29 environmental and community organizations

The management proposal from 29 environmental organizations representing more than 100,000 Maryland citizens has yet to be discussed or presented in any detail at the OAC, despite the Department's full presentation and analysis of County Oyster Committee proposals and individual community organizations' proposals. The environmental community's proposal was thoughtfully developed with a great deal of engagement from the organizations represented in the letter. It represents a comprehensive framework that aims to balance ecological and economic needs that could inform further discussions on oyster management. I would like to request that the December 2016 letter be placed on the March meeting agenda for discussion.

2. Further information from the Department of Natural Resources on considering proposals counter to the Department's recommendations.

I share the concerns voiced by Commissioners at the February meeting that proposals included in the strawman seemingly conflict with the management objectives and recommendations put forth in the recent 5-Year Report, which is meant to inform the OAC process. I ask that the Department provide the OAC with further justification at the

March meeting on why the Commission should consider proposals counter to their peer-reviewed recommendations and why those recommendations need not be heeded.

3. Presentation from and/or Q&A with a representative from the Natural Resources Police (NRP)

No matter the final recommendation of the OAC, a management action is only as good as its enforcement. Given the existing management strategy and proposals put forth in the strawman both require policing of closed areas, I believe the Commission would benefit from information on existing capacity and potential benefits or impacts of proposed management strategies on NRP's ability to enforce the laws and regulations of the oyster fishery.

4. Detailed breakdown of the 'equivalent' exchange of bottom put forth in the strawman proposal.

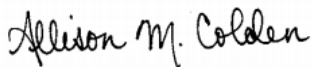
Several of the proposals in the strawman are labeled as equivalent exchange of bottom for opening of sanctuaries; however, it is unclear which proposals these exchanges are intended to address and whether the Secretary's recommendation for equivalent exchange has been met in acreage. A table outlining the credits and debits by Tier would be beneficial to better inform the discussion of the strawman proposal.

5. Map of sanctuaries and public fishery areas coded by tier.

I believe a visual depiction of the existing sanctuary network and public fishery areas coded by Tier would be especially beneficial for the Commissioners during discussions so that areas referenced in discussion could easily be pointed out on the map with a quick visual reference as to the quality of the habitat or area based on its Tier designation.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Should you require additional information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-268-8816. I look forward to next week's discussion.

Sincerely,



Allison M. Colden, Ph.D.  
Maryland Fisheries Scientist

cc: David Blazer, DNR Fisheries and Boating Director  
Chris Judy, DNR Shellfish Division