

Wednesday, December 23, 2015

Charlie Stek
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee to the Chesapeake Executive Council
612 Hull Street, Suite 10C
Richmond, VA 23224

Dear Mr. Stek,

Thank you for your letter on December 7, 2015 outlining your concerns with the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership's Oyster Best Management Practice (BMP) Expert Panel. Your letter to Ward Slacum raises a number of questions that are central to our panel. However, as panel chair, I'd like to address the question of additional stakeholder input first. This panel was selected, in conjunction with the CBP partnership, to have a membership that was qualified to address the difficult technical issues associated with the determination of whether oyster restoration or aquaculture merits inclusion as a BMP. We are not charged with determining how to implement BMPs, if approved by the CBP. It is our intention that this panel be science-based, with full documentation of this process.

There are two parts of our work: 1) determining whether there currently is scientific merit in including any aspect of oyster-associated nutrient and sediment reduction in a BMP and 2) where evidence is lacking, identifying a process and creating a decision structure by which new measurements and understanding could be used by the CBP in future re-evaluations. The current panel membership brings considerable expertise to this determination, and I can assure you that we will have a good balance of initial optimism and pessimism regarding the use of oysters as a BMP. Membership was approved by the CBP partnership, following the CBP partnership's *Protocol for the Development, Review, and Approval of Loading and Effectiveness Estimates for Nutrient and Sediment Controls in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model*. There will be time for responses from all interested parties when both the panel's draft recommendations and the rationale for them are released. In the meantime, we encourage the Citizen Advisory Committee to participate in any of the open CBP Water Quality Goal Implementation Team meetings where the Oyster BMP Expert Panel is scheduled to provide updates and provide comments on any Oyster BMP Expert Panel review requests forwarded by the CBP.

We are aware of conclusions of the STAC report and will use those as an important starting point. Major points of discussion will include whether denitrification rates are constrained well enough to generalize them in any restoration/aquaculture application. We have a lot of work to do and we have no basis for recommendations until we review and discuss the data. I look forward to further discussions with the Citizens' Advisory Committee on the important work of this Oyster BMP Panel.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Cornwell
Research Professor and Chair, Oyster BMP Expert Panel