



WHY SELLING OYSTERS MATTERS

Oysters are essential to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Each adult oyster filters up to 60 gallons of water per day. The food they eat is algae, which just happens to be the biggest environmental problem facing the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay's biggest pollutants today, the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus, combined with sunlight produce algal blooms which then die and consume all the oxygen in the water creating "dead zones". Oysters filter out the algae and naturally clean the Bay, much like kidneys in a human body.

If we had enough shellfish in the Chesapeake Bay, it would trigger a chain reaction of positive events that would benefit every living organism in the Bay. If we had enough shellfish to filter the water properly, sunlight would penetrate to the bottom in three to six feet of water. Submerged aquatic vegetation would immediately start to grow.

SAV has many benefits. SAV provides escape cover for juvenile fish and crabs. SAV puts oxygen back in the water through photosynthesis. Soft crabs shed their shells in SAV. SAV "calms" the wave action and prevents shoreline erosion.

The Bay's oyster population which is currently at one percent of historical levels, has been ravaged by disease and overharvest. MSX and Dermo are viruses that kill oysters when they mature. MSX wiped out Delaware Bay's oysters in the 1950's and they have never come back. The oyster aquaculture industry has exploded over the last 6 years. **Restaurants play a vital role in promoting this item to their customers thereby improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay.**