Maryland Oyster Advisory Commission

Economic Restoration Workgroup

Don Webster and Ben Parks, Workgroup Co-Chairmen

What goals should we pursue in trying to rebuild our industry? How can we ensure that the public fishery is operated in ways to have small harvesters operate profitably and sustainably? Several new ideas have come from prior Economic Restoration Workgroup meetings, as well as those arising from other sources. These need to be developed to see how they will fit within the OAC vision of a small but well-managed public fishery. Setting goals determined by the desired production, number of harvesters supported by the resource, continuation of traditional gear types, market targets and penetration, and economic impact of the overall industry should be some of the factors involved in these decisions.

Topics identified for discussion:

I. Regional Oyster Management Councils – develop concepts leading to better management of oysters on an area basis including allocation of funds, setting goals and investigating more efficient production techniques
II. Industry Reserve Areas – recommend new ideas for current Managed Reserves to gain increased revenue through better production methods and the ability to apply funds back into areas for further and sustained production
III. Industry Management Areas – jointly managed areas for groups of watermen to develop oyster resources and control harvest to maximize income
IV. Protecting the Product – investigate industry ideas for better protecting resources to ensure that legal harvest is occurring and to deter those who use illegal methods, equipment or times to take resources
V. Financing Public Fishery Projects – discuss methods of allocating existing sources of funds (bushel tax, surcharge funds) to projects as well as new potential sources that might be applied to development of the resource and industry expansion; collection methods and verification

Steps

1) Expand Workgroup membership
   a) Add additional harvesters
   b) Add DNR manager(s)
   c) Add scientific representative(s)
2) Set meetings
3) Define goals
4) Organize meeting locations and agenda
5) Create recommendations for OAC (tentative Sep 10)
6) OAC recommends to DNR