

**Severn River homeowners become oyster caretakers | [View Clip](#)**  
**08/28/2009**  
***Capital, The***

Piloting his powerboat along the Severn River Thursday morning, Gary Allanson captained what amounted to an on-the-water oyster-delivery service.

Paul W. Gillespie The Capital Tom McCollum, right, hands a cage full of oysters to Gary Allanson at Smiths Marina in Crownsville.

#### Marylanders Grow Oysters program

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Oyster Recovery Partnership delivered 250 oyster cages and spat to citizens along the Severn River. Recipients are the newest in the State's Marylanders Grow Oysters program. The event was held at Smith's Marina in Crownsville.

Allanson was accompanied by his neighbors from Long Point on the Severn, Ronnie Langle and Tom McCollum, and state Department of Natural Resources employee Chris Judy on a mission to deliver cages full of baby oysters to piers in the community.

Langle consulted a list of participants in the new Marylanders Grow Oysters program, while McCollum kept a watchful eye on dozens of oyster cages stacked in the stern.

They went from pier to pier, dropping the oyster cages in the water and tying them to cleats or pilings. McCollum noted with pride that about three dozen homes in the small community in Crownsville are participating.

"People are getting together for a great cause," he said, as Allanson motored to the next pier.

Participants in the Marylanders Grow Oysters program agree to keep watch over the oysters from late summer until the next spring.

By then, the oysters should be large and healthy, and will be planted on sanctuary reefs, where they will filter water and attract fish and crabs without being subject to being harvested by watermen.

Marylanders Grow Oysters is similar to oyster-gardening programs run by the nonprofit Chesapeake Bay Association and a new Annapolis group called Chesapeake BaySavers. There also are private companies that sell oysters to be raised by homeowners, such as Pasadena-based Oyster King.

Many Long Point homeowners already have Oyster King floats full of baby oysters.

The upside of the Marylanders Grow Oysters program, however, is that people can join for no cost. The cost of \$18 to \$20 per cage is part of the Department of Natural Resources budget.

The cages are built by prison inmates and the baby oysters come from the University of Maryland oyster hatchery at the Horn Point Lab in Cambridge.

DNR officials launched Marylanders Grow Oysters last year on the Tred Avon River near Easton in Talbot County.

This year, the program was expanded to 11 rivers. Locally, the Magothy River Association, Severn River Association and South River Federation are participating.

Statewide, about 5,000 cages will be put in the water. Each has 500 to 800 tiny baby oysters

attached to larger shells.

Yesterday's delivery to Smith's Marina in Crownsville was the first of the season. As the truck with the oysters arrived, there was a small cheer and someone cried out, "The babies are here!"

On the Severn, river association members worked with neighborhood groups to line up participants. The Severn will have more than 900 cages of oysters growing in Herald Harbor, Long Point and the lower river - Spa Creek, Saefern and Whitehall Creek.

Tom Lengle, Ronnie Lengle's husband and Long Point's representative to the river association, said he was eager to do his part to improve water quality. Oysters are filter feeders, gobbling up impurities from the water.

"If we can bring back these oyster reefs, it can only help," he said.

Kimberly Benson of Herald Harbor said her family is devoted to the Chesapeake Bay. She took pictures of her 5-year-old daughter Callan and 4-year-old son Reece sitting alongside their new cage of baby oysters.

Benson said everyone should do what they can to help the bay.

"People need to take ownership of being part of the problem and part of the solution," Benson said.

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## HOME-GROWN OYSTERS

The Marylanders Grow Oysters program is already set for this year, but the Chesapeake Bay Foundation just announced details of its 'oyster gardening' program.

Anyone with access to the water can sign up to be an oyster gardener, caring for cages of oysters hanging from a dock or pier. In early summer, the oysters are planted on sanctuary oyster reefs.

Workshops where participants build their cages will be offered at 6 p.m. on Sept. 16, 6 p.m. Oct. 21 and 10 a.m. on Oct. 25 at the foundation's headquarters at 6 Herndon Ave. in Bay Ridge.

Attendance at one workshop is required. The fee is \$75.

For more information, e-mail [MDOysterGardening@cbf.org](mailto:MDOysterGardening@cbf.org) or visit [www.cbf.org](http://www.cbf.org) and click on the 'act' section.