

# Residents, Bays Program Partner On Oyster Gardening Effort

Posted on 07/09/2015 by DispatchAdmin in The Dispatch



Amanda Poskaitis, who coordinates the oyster gardening for the Maryland Coastal Bays Program, is pictured examining an oyster cage in Ocean Pines. Photo by Charlene Sharpe

BERLIN – Ocean Pines residents are doing their part to help regenerate the local oyster population.

In conjunction with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP), a group of Ocean Pines residents are participating in an oyster gardening program. Cages of oyster spat have been hung off piers throughout the community.

“We have seen the oysters doing well mostly in intertidal zones,” said Amanda Poskaitis, coordinator of the oyster program for

MCBP. “The oyster cages have been really successful.”

Each fall Poskaitis fills several cages with old oyster shells and spat — basically baby oysters — that will gradually attach themselves to the old shells and grow. This past fall, seven of the cages were hung off the gazebo at the Ocean Pines Swim and Racquet Club while another 23 were distributed to residents who attached them to their private piers. Residents who volunteer their piers for the program are simply tasked with checking the cages throughout the summer to make sure they’re not getting covered with algae.

“Caring for them is relatively simple,” Poskaitis said. The issue with algae, she explained, is that it can provide a base for oyster drills — snails that are the primary predator of oysters in this area — to grow on.

“The problem with loads of algae on the cages is it creates a substrate for oyster drills to colonize and wipe out all of the oysters,” Poskaitis said. “We have seen this in cages in the past that were not cared for during the summer months.” Though cold water temperatures this winter kept some of the young oysters from growing, by this time of year most of them are on their way to adulthood and are visible as half-dollar sized shells.

In September, Poskaitis says the MCBP will transfer the then year-old oysters to modified bulkheads in Ocean City. The bulkheads, she said, were fitted with “Peruvian Flutes,” or devices constructed from PVC piping to promote the growth of seagrass. The “Peruvian Flutes” were designed by Evamaria Coch of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and, with funding from MCBP, were attached to bulkheads in two places in Ocean City.

“They are an innovative way to provide seagrass and marsh grass habitat using PVC piping,” Poskaitis said. “Bulkheads eliminate natural shoreline habitat and being so common in Isle of Wight

Bay, it is more difficult for organisms that need this environment to thrive. Many organisms rely on this land-water interface. Our Peruvian flutes have been successful in providing habitat and are where we place grown oysters from the oyster gardening program.”

This article was written by **DispatchAdmin, Charlene Sharpe.**