



MUSINGS FROM THE MAIN MOLLUSK

In late 2006, when Karen and I began thinking about establishing an organization to restore oysters in local creeks, the biggest obstacle was deeply rooted skepticism that our effort was futile because pundits said “all the oysters were going to die.” We persevered, found enthusiastic individuals for our board, enrolled new members, and built the solid program we have today.

Several developments this year point to even more robust growth of the SMOCS program in 2011. These include:

Lower Oyster Mortality

According to Dr. Chris Dungan, a DNR patholo-

gist, oyster mortality has dropped from 60% in 2002 to 17% for the last 6 years. His report gives us encouragement that our restoration efforts will succeed if we follow best management practices (which we do!).

DNR Protection of SMOCS Reef Sites

In May this year, Governor O'Malley announced a major new initiative to restore oysters to the Bay. We were thrilled that, Solomons Harbor and Battle Creek were designated oyster sanctuaries! This will protect SMOCS oysters from harvesting.

In the other creeks where we have created

bars but which are not designated sanctuaries, DNR created Demonstration Leases to allow community-based groups such as SMOCS to protect their oysters.

Increasing Community Support

This year started with Dominion Energy granting SMOCS \$10,250 to procure 3,500 bushels of oyster shells that we used to prep creek bottoms and create seed oysters.

That was followed by our not only enrolling several dozen new individual oyster gardeners, but also receiving orders for more SMOCS BOCSes

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OYSTER HABITATS CREATED, EXPANDED By Matt Regan

SMOCS had a great year in 2010. Overall, we planted about 500,000 year-old oysters this year. In addition to greatly expanding the number of oysters planted on the four sites we created in 2009, SMOCS created four new oyster habitats with

the help of our volunteers and other local oyster growers.

In May, SMOCS teamed with the local chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) and residents of Battle Creek to create a new reef in Battle Creek and to plant

approximately 30,000 oysters on it. In July, SMOCS created a clam-shell base for a new reef in St. Leonard's Creek; in August SMOCS and CCA planted approximately 90,000 oysters there.

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The SMOCS Board of Directors wishes you and yours a safe and happy holiday season!





Our Board:

Len Zuza,
President

Matt Regan
Vice President

Karen Zuza,
Secretary

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel,
Treasurer

Jon Farrington

Dom Raino

To volunteer for any of our activities contact Matt Regan, our Volunteer Coordinator.

Email: mattregan@starpower.net

Phone: 301-461-0100

MUSINGS

(continued from page 1) from residents of Oyster Bay and Solomons Landing, communities that are now raising more than 100,000 oysters. Finally, SMOCS was very pleased to enroll residents from Asbury. Their breakwater offers us a unique opportunity to plant our oysters in the gaps between large rocks.

The SMOCS Board will soon be holding a long-range planning meeting

to build on these developments and ensure steady growth in our program. We have the skills and experience to manage our money and other resources effectively.

But we will need increased volunteer support from you, our members and friends to help our program grow. You, as an individual, can make a real difference, especially when working to-

gether with other like-minded individuals. Your support has been invaluable in the past and we sincerely thank you.

We face new challenges and ask that you give thought to taking time next year to help us. We are confident that our program will become even more successful in 2011 – with a little help from our friends!

Len Zuza, President

SMOCS NEEDS YOUR HELP

SMOCS is a grassroots volunteer organization. We started with five charter members in May 2007. From that modest beginning, we now have over 150 members, nearly 100 SMOCS BOCSES, and are raising roughly 500,000 oysters for planting in 2011.

A very large part of the dynamic that fueled our growth is the enthusiastic support of you, our members and friends. We could not have achieved this impressive growth without the time, effort, and financial support that you have provided. As we look towards 2011, we realize that we need your help more than ever!

Many of you have ex-

pressed an interest in helping SMOCS, but have doubts about getting involved. These include:

“I’m really busy ...” We are all busy with family, business, and personal matters. If you have even one day when you could help that would be very valuable. A few hours of your time can make a difference in the success of our program!

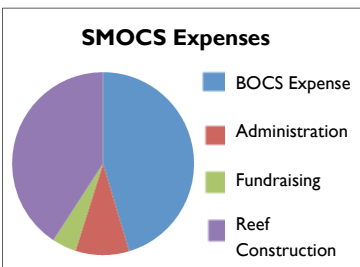
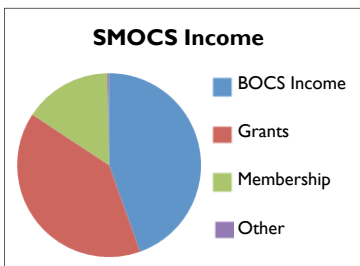
“I don’t know anything about oysters.” Most new volunteers say the same thing, but usually they know a lot more than they think they do. You can provide a welcoming presence to people interested in our program and answer many basic questions. For those questions that you can’t an-

By Karen Zuza

swer, we always have knowledgeable members nearby.

“I am not very strong.” A lot of what SMOCS does is physical – moving and handling BOCSES, shell, and spat. But there are many forms of support that do not require physical effort. Greeting visitors, helping with bookkeeping or organizing mailings are all critical for our program.

I am just like you. I shared your fears four years ago, made the commitment, and am finding the experience very rewarding. I hope that you can see an area where you can contribute. We highly value your help in restoring oysters to local waters.

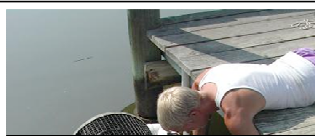


SMOCS income and expenses January through December 2010.



WINTERIZING YOUR BOCS

It's time to winterize BOCSes. Below are the steps that BOCS owners need to take to stop their BOCSes from rotating in ice and to prevent oysters from freezing in the air.



3. Haul ClockWeight and set atop platform, secure w/ bungee or similar line.

NEW AND EXPANDED REEFS

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In October, SMOCS created two new oyster habitats with the help of our members. The residents of Asbury now have a site along their breakwater with approximately 5,000 yearlings and 10,000 spat on shell.

SMOCS is also thrilled to have our first oyster habitat in St. Mary's County, on Mill Cove

Creek. That site has roughly 30,000 oysters.

SMOCS greatly expanded the number of oysters planted on the four habitats we created last year in Mill, St. John's, Back and Hungerford Creeks. In addition to the oysters raised by our members, we received oysters from participants in CCA's oyster gardening program as well.

Altogether, these four reefs received about 365,000 year-old oysters. We also added additional spat on shell to some of the sites to bolster the number of oysters.

Our program is growing thanks to everyone's participation. We have a long way to go, but we are making terrific progress toward our goals!



PO Box 1000
Lusby, Maryland 20657

www.SMOCS.org

410-326-0450 phone

410-326-0702 fax

MrOyster@smocs.org

Cleaning local waters...one oyster at a time.

**Are you a SMOCS
supporter?
Renew your
membership
today!**

SMOCS BOCS SUPPORT PROGRAM

By Dom Raino

SMOCS members are now using 100 BOCS to grow oysters in local creeks. Some have been the home for three generations of baby oysters.

SMOCS has provided our members advice and help with the light maintenance required to keep their BOCS functional. We have also provided replacement of worn or upgraded parts to members at no cost. But, as our program continues to grow, we foresee the need to ask our members to become more active in maintaining their BOCSes. We are developing procedures and

information to continue our support activities in a more formal and sustainable manner.

We are developing a member support program that will define the support on which members owning BOCS can rely. We anticipate producing "How to Do It" guides, building a corps of volunteers available to talk you through maintenance issues, and providing replacements of worn lines, bungee cords and other small components. At some point we would like to include a message board on our website where members could

share their experiences regarding maintenance and other issues.

With so many BOCS now installed, we also may have to establish a small support component to the annual fee charged to members owning a BOCS. Fundamentally, this would be a form of membership renewal.

Details are still to be worked out before we introduce this initiative in the spring, but we would like to get your thoughts and suggestions. Please send your ideas to Dom Raino via email dbraino@comcast.net.



SMOCS is developing a support program for BOCS owners who need information or repairs.