



Martin O'Malley, Governor

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**MARYLAND HONORED WITH
EXEMPLARY ECOSYSTEM INITIATIVE AWARD**

Unique Partnership Creates Oyster Habitat in Severn River

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 19, 2009) – Governor Martin O'Malley today announced that the Federal Highway Administration has honored the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and numerous partners with the Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative Award for creating the Asquith Creek Oyster Reef in the Severn River last fall. The award recognizes the unique public-private partnership for sustainable transportation and environmental protection that is now providing an oyster sanctuary with the sole purpose of improving the quality of water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay.

“The Asquith Creek Oyster Reef project serves as a model of how diverse groups can work together on habitat restoration for enhanced ecological benefits at both the local and national level,” said Governor O'Malley. “This project is an excellent example of our *Smart, Green & Growing* initiative and our commitment to restoring the Bay for future generations of Maryland families and watermen who continue to keep Maryland's rich heritage alive.”

The MdTA and DNR joined their partners, including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation, to create the three-acre oyster reef with four million juvenile oysters and demolished concrete from the Bay Bridge Preservation Project. The concrete was cleaned of all excess materials, inspected and ground into chunks about four to eight inches in size. Approximately 2,500 cubic yards of concrete rubble was hauled on barges to the reef site in the Severn River. Because the bridge concrete is a weathered and all-natural material with no accelerants used in its hardening, it was found to be oyster-friendly in replicating natural ecosystem conditions conducive to oyster growth.

The Asquith Creek Oyster Reef will serve as a sanctuary for oysters with no harvesting allowed to ensure the oysters will clean the Bay waters for years to come. This *Smart, Green & Growing* project was made possible through the collaborative effort of the following partners: MdTA, DNR, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Foundation, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Langenfelder Marine, Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative, Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus and Oyster Recovery Partnership.

Introduced by Governor Martin O'Malley in October 2008, Maryland's *Smart, Green & Growing* initiative was created to strengthen the state's leadership role in fostering smarter, more sustainable growth and in inspiring action among all Marylanders to achieve a more sustainable future. The initiative brings together state agencies, local governments, businesses and citizens to: create more livable communities, improve transportation options, reduce the state's carbon footprint, support resource based industry, invest in green technologies, preserve valuable resource lands and restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

For more information on the Asquith Creek Oyster Reef, visit “What's New” on baybridge.com to view a brief video about the project.

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