

SAPELO SEAFARMS

418 Sapelo Avenue NE
Townsend, GA 31331
(912) 832-4423 Office
(912) 832-6228 Fax

To Ga Legislators:

Sapelo Sea Farms is the largest aquaculture clam farm in GA doing roughly 90% of all clam aquaculture along with some wild oyster harvest and other experimental work with shellfish. We are also the largest farm on the East Coast south of VA having been in business since around 1997 when we were supported by UGA marine extension to start the clam farm. For many years we have worked with UGA, CRD and the Ag Dept in providing and growing shellfish for the public. Our shellfish are sold to Canada, New York, Atlanta, Charleston and as far west as California. Aquaculture is an environmentally clean industry and also helps clean our waters.

Sapelo Sea Farms does not support the current bills under consideration. They do not take the industry to the level of production that is possible for GA to be a leader in oyster production, nor do the bills make shellfish any safer than they are now. The NSSP regulations along with the regulations and sanitation standards required by the Ag Dept keep the public safety in the forefront.

These CRD bills, HB 501 and SB 182, were not crafted with industry input and are overly restrictive. They will hinder rather than help the oyster industry grow. I respect CRD's efforts to support the growth of oyster aquaculture but the path forward for growth will be minimal without serious industry input. The growers will be the ones to figure out how to make GA a major oyster producer with help from UGA doing research.

Problems include they "may" allow oyster seed from out of state. CRD could allow seed importation tomorrow if they wanted to, just like they allow certified disease-free clam seed to be imported. They would come from some of the exact same hatcheries that supply clam seed now.

The Dept "may" allow summer harvest if they deem it safe. Again, tightening up time/temperature requires using NSSP guidelines for summer can be done as it is done in other states.

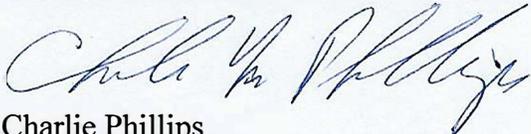
The lottery is vague and is a concern of growers.

Cultch requirements for wild oyster harvest has no scientific basis and needs review, as do the recreational limits to help control illegal sales of oysters.

Industry requests an advisory board appointed by the governor that would represent State and industry interests, nor an advisory panel that reports only to CRD.

GA wants and needs oyster aquaculture, Georgians should not be forced to depend on other states for single oysters. Industry needs a level playing field to produce and compete with production from all of the other southern states. Taking the time to get this right is more important than passing a bill that doesn't fulfill its intended purpose.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Charlie Phillips
Sapelo Sea Farms