

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

March 4, 2015

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
U.S. Army
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

I request that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District approve oyster aquaculture permits more expeditiously.

I have been advised by Maryland oyster farmers that the Baltimore District is dragging its feet on issuing these permits. In fact, the Baltimore District is sitting on many permits already approved by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

The oyster aquaculture industry is a twofer for Maryland: offering environmental benefits for the Chesapeake Bay; and economic benefits to Maryland's watermen and our large seafood industry. Sadly, Maryland's oyster aquaculture industry has been stymied by the long and arduous permit approval process while Virginia's is flourishing under a less complex process.

I request that you investigate what's happening in the Baltimore District and suggest solutions for breaking this logjam. Does the Baltimore District need more staff to process the permits? Should the Baltimore District adopt the model used in the Norfolk and New England Districts?

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request. The livelihood of Maryland oyster farmers depend on a swift resolution to this problem.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator