

Chapter 552

(House Bill 893)

AN ACT concerning

Tidal Fish Licenses – Oyster Authorizations – Administrative Penalties

FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources to suspend for a certain time ~~periods~~ period, rather than revoke, a person's oyster authorization for a first offense of knowingly committing certain violations in the oyster fishery; ~~requiring the reinstatement of a person's entitlement to engage in the oyster fishery under certain circumstances~~ providing for the reinstatement for certain persons of an oyster authorization and an entitlement to engage or work in the oyster fishery; altering a certain offense related to the use of prohibited gear that serves as grounds for suspension of an oyster authorization; repealing a certain time period within which a certain administrative hearing must be held; and generally relating to administrative penalties for oyster authorizations.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 Article – Natural Resources
 Section 4–1210
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Natural Resources

4–1210.

(a) (1) In addition to any other penalty or fine provided in this title, a person who holds an authorization to catch oysters under § 4–701 of this title and receives a citation for an offense listed under paragraph (2) of this subsection may, **IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION**, have the authorization [revoked in accordance with this section]:

(I) **FOR A FIRST VIOLATION, SUSPENDED FOR UP TO ~~2~~ 5 YEARS;**
 AND

(II) **FOR A SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT VIOLATION, ~~SUSPENDED FOR UP TO 10 YEARS~~ REVOKED.**

(2) The following offenses, committed in violation of this title or of any regulation adopted under this title, are grounds for [revocation] **SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION** of an authorization to catch oysters under this section:

- (i) Taking oysters located more than 200 feet within a closed or prohibited area;
- (ii) Taking oysters with gear that is prohibited in that area **WHILE MORE THAN 200 FEET WITHIN THE PROHIBITED AREA**;
- (iii) Taking oysters outside of a time restriction for the harvest of oysters by more than 1 hour;
- (iv) Taking oysters during closed seasons; and
- (v) Taking oysters from a leased area by a person other than the leaseholder or the leaseholder's designee.

(b) (1) [(i)] Before the [revocation] **SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION** of an authorization to catch oysters under this section, the Department shall hold a hearing on the matter in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the State Government Article.

[(ii)] A hearing held under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph shall be held within 90 days after the cited individual commits the offense listed under subsection (a)(2) of this section.]

(2) After a hearing is conducted under paragraph (1) of this subsection, if the presiding officer finds or concludes that the person knowingly has committed an offense listed under subsection (a)(2) of this section, the Department shall [revoke] **SUSPEND OR REVOKE** the person's authorization to catch oysters **IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (A)(1) OF THIS SECTION**.

(c) A person who is aggrieved by the final decision of the Department may obtain judicial review of the decision in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act under Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the State Government Article.

(d) A person whose authorization has been [revoked] **SUSPENDED OR REVOKED** in accordance with this section may not engage or work in the oyster fishery **WHILE SUSPENDED OR REVOKED** whether or not [it] **THE WORK** requires the use of another license.

(E) (1) ~~THIS SUBSECTION APPLIES TO A PERSON'S AUTHORIZATION TO CATCH OYSTERS THAT WAS REVOKED UNDER THIS SECTION BEFORE JULY 1, 2025.~~

~~(2) A PERSON DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL HAVE THEIR ENTITLEMENT TO ENGAGE IN THE OYSTER FISHERY REINSTATED IF:~~

~~(I) 1. THE AUTHORIZATION HAS BEEN REVOKED FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS; AND~~

~~2. THE REVOCATION WAS THE PERSON'S FIRST OFFENSE ADJUDICATED AS A KNOWING VIOLATION UNDER THIS SECTION; OR~~

~~(H) 1. THE AUTHORIZATION HAS BEEN REVOKED FOR AT LEAST 10 YEARS; AND~~

~~2. THE REVOCATION WAS THE PERSON'S SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT OFFENSE ADJUDICATED AS A KNOWING VIOLATION UNDER THIS SECTION~~ THE DEPARTMENT MAY ACCEPT AN APPLICATION FOR AND ISSUE AN OYSTER AUTHORIZATION TO A PERSON WHOSE OYSTER AUTHORIZATION WAS REVOKED UNDER THIS SECTION BEFORE JULY 1, 2025, BEGINNING 5 YEARS AFTER THE DATE OF REVOCATION.

(2) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REINSTATE A PERSON'S ENTITLEMENT TO ENGAGE OR WORK IN THE OYSTER FISHERY FOR A PERSON WHOSE AUTHORIZATION TO CATCH OYSTERS WAS REVOKED UNDER THIS SECTION BEFORE JULY 1, 2025, BEGINNING 5 YEARS AFTER THE DATE OF REVOCATION.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

Approved by the Governor, May 13, 2025.