

# **Oyster Ecosystem Impacts Model Peer Review and Lead Agency Response**

## **Report Content and Charge:**

This report describes the decision regarding the peer review process for the oyster ecosystem impacts model used for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Evaluating Oyster Restoration Alternatives for the Chesapeake Bay, Including the Use of Native and Non-Native Oysters (EIS).

The oyster ecosystem impacts model was used as a supporting document for the EIS. The process followed for this peer review is consistent with the peer review plan that was developed by the Lead Agencies for the EIS project. This peer review plan was specifically designed in order to comply with the December 16, 2005 Office of Management and Budget's Peer Review Guidelines and was accepted by the US Army Corps of Engineers for this purpose.

## **Study Objective:**

The objective of the Oyster Ecosystem Impact Model was to quantitatively assess the ecosystem impacts of oyster restoration, as a result of potential population growth of *C. ariakensis* and *C. virginica* within Chesapeake Bay for each of the oyster restoration alternatives being evaluated in the EIS.

## **The Lead Agencies Review and Response Process:**

As stated in the peer review plan, the Lead Agencies agreed that it would not be necessary to have the Ecosystem Impact Model itself undergo peer review because "The Chesapeake Bay Program recently reviewed and approved the use of this model to examine the impact of a 10-fold increase in the Bay's oyster population. The same version of this model is used in the EIS to examine the ecological effects of a wider range of restored oyster population levels.

Therefore, no further peer review of this model is planned at this time." A description of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Modeling Subcommittee and agendas and summaries from their model review meetings is available at the following website:

[http://www.chesapeakebay.net/committee\\_msc\\_info.aspx?menuitem=16522](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/committee_msc_info.aspx?menuitem=16522)

The Oyster Advisory Panel (OAP) was charged in the peer review plan with "review the adequacy of data and assessments used to identify the ecological, economic, and cultural risks and benefits, and associated uncertainties for each EIS alternative." The OAP held three meetings in 2005 and one meeting in July 2007 primarily for the purpose of reviewing the development of the Oyster Demographic Model and the final model report. As part of this review, the OAP reviewed the use of the Ecosystem Impact Model data in the Oyster Demographic Model and discussed the use of the model in the Ecological Risk Assessment.

Information about the Oyster Advisory Panel and their review of the Oyster Demographic Model is available for review at [http://www.nao.usace.army.mil/OysterEIS/PeerReviews/PRG\\_Oyster\\_Demographic\\_Model.pdf](http://www.nao.usace.army.mil/OysterEIS/PeerReviews/PRG_Oyster_Demographic_Model.pdf).