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A Definition of a Natural Oyster Rock

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A DEFINITION OF A NATURAL OYSTER ROCK

Prepared for
The Offices of Legislative Services
Virginia General Assembly

By

D. S. Haven, H. M. Austin,

and

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and

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Gloucester Point, Virginia 23062

January 9, 1981

Virginia Marine Resources Report #81-2

VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF MARINE SCIENCE

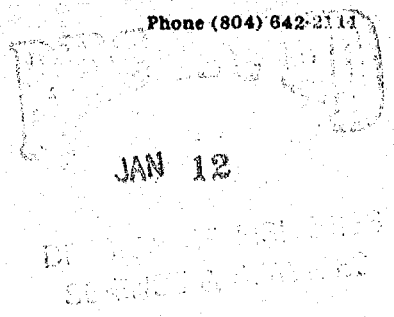
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January 9, 1981

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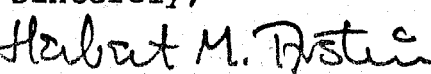
Dear Bernie:

Just prior to the Christmas holiday you asked Dexter to prepare a definition of a naturally productive oyster bottom. After considerable thought, we arrived at the definition which is enclosed with this letter. As you will see, this definition utilizes concepts derived from our four-year study of Baylor bottoms. This study is now in its final stages. When it is completed copies of the charts showing bottom types, as well as a text discussing other aspects will be forwarded to various State agencies. If desired, copies can be prepared for Legislative purposes.

While we believe that the definition submitted to you is accurate, we must point out that we have previously submitted to your office a study entitled, "A Classification of Baylor Bottoms in Virginia." This is dated October 1978. It divides many of the State's Baylor bottoms into five classes, with Class I being the most useful and V being least of value. The option given in this report is that the legislative branch may decide on areas which might be included in a redefinition of Baylor bottoms.

Perhaps at some future date our definition which is enclosed may be helpful in a further intergradation of these two studies.

If we can be of further help, please let Dexter or me know.

Sincerely,

Herbert M. Austin
Assistant Director

HMA/gbr

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Merdis

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A natural oyster rock is defined as a productive area of bottom which has a functional set which will support a reasonable level of commercial harvest for market or seed oysters. A set may typically occur each year, but the annual interval between sets may be as long as 15 years.

~~Such bottoms would necessarily have substrate~~
classed as rock, mud-shell, sand-shell or buried shell as defined by the Baylor Ground study to be completed by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in April 1981.

Moreover, the total volumes of shell, oysters and cinder in the substrate in any designated areas should equal or exceed on the average 10% by volume of the material in the upper five inches of the bottom.