



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe

For Immediate Release
August 19, 2014

Governor McAuliffe Announces Creation of Virginia Oyster Trail

*~ Proclaims November as Virginia Oyster Month, Recognizes Virginia
as “Oyster Capital of the East Coast” ~*

Virginia Is Leading East Coast Seafood Producer, Third Largest in the Nation

RICHMOND– Governor Terry McAuliffe today announced the creation of the Virginia Oyster Trail, a major tourism development project connecting travelers to Virginia oyster purveyors, raw bars and restaurants, and the watermen culture throughout Coastal Virginia, the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula and Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

“Virginia produces the best oysters in the world and as the oyster industry continues to grow, we want to let it be known that Virginia is also the Oyster Capital of the East Coast,” **said Governor McAuliffe**. “In addition to growing, harvesting and selling the best oysters, our watermen are providing good jobs in their communities, generating revenue and tax dollars throughout their region, and helping improve the environment of the Chesapeake Bay as their oysters filter millions of gallons of water each day.”

“As my team and I work to build a new Virginia economy, I want to make sure that our tourism and agricultural industries, including our outstanding and diverse marine products sector, can and will play a significant role in that effort.”

This year, a public-private partnership of stakeholders began working together to brand the Virginia oyster travel experience to show the world that Virginia is for Oyster Lovers. The trail offers visitors a way to enjoy Virginia’s seven different oyster regions, as well as experience the

unique culture of watermen in the Chesapeake Bay. As a result of these exciting developments with the Virginia oyster, Governor McAuliffe officially declared November as Virginia Oyster Month and named Virginia the “Oyster Capital of the East Coast.”

“The Virginia oyster pairs perfectly with another widely recognized Virginia product – wine – and some of Virginia’s oyster regions share watersheds with a number of Virginia’s outstanding wineries,” said **First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe**. “I believe this goes a long way to proving the old saying of “what grows together, goes together.” Indeed, we have two world-class products – oysters and wine – right here in Virginia and I know that the Virginia Oyster Trail will provide new economic opportunities for both those sectors and many other businesses as we work to create a new Virginia economy.”

Virginia’s oyster harvest increased by 25 percent from 2012 to 2013, with more than 500,000 bushels – the most in nearly a generation. Over the past 12 years, the oyster harvest in Virginia has increased from approximately 23,000 bushels in 2001 to last year’s level of just over 500,000. This is the highest level since 1987. The dockside value alone of the oyster harvest in 2013 was more than \$22 million, up from approximately \$16 million in 2012.

“In addition to being the nation’s third largest producer of marine products, Virginia is the leading East Coast seafood production state and the oyster industry plays a significant role in those both of these high rankings,” said **Todd Haymore, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry**, noting that the Commonwealth had more than 400 million pounds in landings last year placing it behind only Alaska and Louisiana. “We’re proud to promote Virginia oysters here and on international trade missions, where we’ve generated new export sales to China, Hong Kong, and Canada. As we answer the Governor’s call to build a new Virginia economy, we must take an inclusive approach by working with some of our oldest businesses, such as our seafood industries, as they continue to provide good jobs and outstanding products. With today’s announcement of the Virginia Oyster Trail, we’re hoping to spur more growth and opportunities for our watermen, the marine product sector, and other businesses along the trail.”

Virginia’s seven different oyster regions produce the largest quantity of fresh wild-caught and farm-raised oysters in the United States and each region produces oysters with distinct flavors, offering an oyster for every palate. The Virginia oyster industry is one of the longest-standing industries in the state, providing bountiful meals for Virginia’s first inhabitants.

“The continued growth of the oyster industry and our fisheries management programs, combined with private sector investment, positively impacts the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia’s economy, particularly with respect to tourism,” said **Maurice Jones, Secretary of Commerce and Trade**. “Tourism is an instant revenue generator for Virginia, accounting for over \$21.2 billion in revenue and supporting 210,000 jobs in 2012. The Virginia Oyster Trail is sure to continue this growth in tourism around the Commonwealth.”

“Virginia is in the oyster business in a major way,” said **Rita McClenny, President and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation**. “With seven different oyster regions, we are unlike any other state in the nation. The development of the Virginia Oyster Trail will allow travelers to

experience the state with taste by pairing the Virginia oyster with other quality products made in Virginia, including wine, craft beer, cider and spirits.”

The Virginia Tourism Corporation partnered with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Shellfish Growers of Virginia, the Virginia Seafood Council, the Virginia Marine Products Board, and the Artisans Center of Virginia, in addition to local tourism offices and planning district committees, to make this project a reality. For more information on the Virginia Oyster Trail, visit virginiaoystertrail.com. Learn more about the various tourism economic efforts of the Virginia Tourism Corporation by visiting vatc.org/PAM.