NEWS RELEASE

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Using Solar Power to Help Save the Chesapeake Bay

Oysters Grown Using Solar Energy Placed on Restoration Reef

Baltimore, MD – On June 26, 2023, Solar Oysters, LLC, in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and with funding from the Abell Foundation, placed a second batch of oysters grown using solar energy on the expanding restoration reef off the shores of Fort Carroll, located in the Patapsco River, just south of Baltimore.

These tiny oysters, also known as spat, were first placed on the Solar Oyster Production System (SOPS), a solar-powered platform located in Baltimore Harbor eight months ago, where they thrived extraordinarily well. While survival rates on oyster farms can vary drastically, survival rates of over 90% have been observed consistently on SOPS.

The SOPS is an innovative technology that uses clean energy via roof-mounted solar panels to power rotation of oyster cages. By rotating vertically through the water column, oysters have access to more abundant food sources and exposure to sunlight when out of the water for periods of time to reduce fouling.

The current compact design can produce up to 250,000 oysters in a 0.02-acre space compared to multiple acres used in traditional oyster farming on the Chesapeake Bay. “This technology has the potential to shift the oyster aquaculture industry by reducing labor while producing healthy oysters for both restoration and consumption. The Solar Oyster Production System’s automatic oyster cage rotation system dramatically increased oyster survival versus oysters sitting stationary,” said SOPS Platform Manager Emily Caffrey. “The more oysters that can be grown, the faster we can improve the bay’s water quality, and oyster farmers will have more product to sell at market,” continued Caffrey.

Oysters improve water quality by filtering water as they feed, removing excess harmful nutrients and increasing water clarity. Additionally, their reef systems create habitat for native fish species. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Chesapeake Oyster Alliance have an ambitious goal of adding 10 billion oysters to the bay by 2025. “New technologies such as SOPS give us the ability to think innovatively and increase oyster production to help us achieve this goal. Over the past two years, we were able to increase the numbers of oysters grown in Baltimore Harbor by more than 60% by working with Solar Oysters,” said CBF’s Oyster Restoration Coordinator Kellie Fiala.

More than 356,600 oysters grown on the SOPS platform were transferred and planted at Fort Carroll yesterday, where they are expected to continue to thrive on the reef, doing their part to help improve bay water quality. The first batch of spat was placed on the SOPS in October 2021 and placed at the Fort Carroll restoration reef in November 2022. Solar Oysters continues to refine their technology to maximize oyster quality and output. The SOPS technology is being marketed to those interested in oyster restoration and aquaculture farming for consumption.

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Solar Oysters provides innovative, sustainable technology for the aquaculture industry. Their first commercially available Solar Oyster Production System (SOPS) is being sold for both oyster restoration and consumption. solaroysters.org

Founded in 1966, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is the largest independent conservation organization dedicated solely to saving the Bay. cbf.org

Abell Foundation is committed to improving health, economic, and educational outcomes in Baltimore City so that all people can thrive. abell.org