

Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) criticized President Bush for eliminating funding in his proposed fiscal 2006 budget for the Oyster Restoration Project, which is coordinating the revival of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay.

"I am extremely disappointed with the president's cuts to programs dedicated to cleaning up one of our nation's most treasured natural resources, the Chesapeake Bay," Hoyer said in a statement released by his office.

"I am particularly disappointed that funding for the Oyster Recovery Project has been eliminated from the president's budget," he said.

In 1993, the Maryland Oyster Roundtable completed an action plan to restore the ecological and economic benefits of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. The plan designated seven tributary rivers (Chester, Choptank, Magothy, Nanticoke, Patuxent, Severn and Potomac) as oyster recovery areas, where efforts would be undertaken to replenish the oyster populations of the bay. The goal is to increase the oyster population tenfold from the 1994 levels by the year 2010.

Hoyer noted that the president has presented budgets in the past that eliminated this program or provided insufficient federal funds, only to be rebuffed by Congress, which restored or increased the amount of funding every year.