

methods will have been determined by the experience of the Department in the last few years.

It was not until 1927 that any constructive legislation was passed to take care of the natural oyster bars. Funds for the rehabilitation of these bars, in order that they may once more become productive, were provided for at this session of the General Assembly, utilizing the gasoline tax on work boats, supplemented by a twenty thousand dollar appropriation for shell planting. The Conservation Department in carrying out this act, has been able to plant approximately three quarters of a million bushels of shells and seed oysters a year.

It is believed that the production from the oyster bars will show a marked increase in the next two years. (The annual reports of the Conservation Department, which are available on application, give in detail where oyster shell plantings have been made annually.)

1930 was a banner year as far as the catch of spat was concerned. The catch was not only on shells planted during the spring of that year, but it was also on those planted in years previous. Some sections of the State were very urgent during the last session of the General Assembly to close a number of rocks against the taking of oysters this coming year in order to give the young oysters a chance to mature. For instance, a bill to close Tangier Sound entirely against scraping was proposed but in view of the fact that dredging and scraping were curtailed in other sections of the State, this bill was withdrawn by its advocates.

The tonging grounds abound with young oysters and reports are continually coming in that the dredging rocks in the Bay are showing up well. Conditions throughout the State waters, as far as oysters are concerned, make it very much easier for the Department to advocate legislation and further conserve the oysters and the Legislature of 1931 is almost a record one insofar as the enactment of conservation laws is concerned.

## LEGISLATION

Below may be found a summary of the legislation passed in 1931.

### OYSTERS

The principal laws passed regarding oysters are as follows:

1—Chapter 517 closed the Potomac River against the use of dredges or any similar instrument for the taking of oysters. This law had already been passed by the State of Virginia and the Governor of Maryland is about to proclaim the Maryland law to be in effect.

This river will be closed against dredging by either State for at least two years or until the next Legislature convenes, at which time the advisability of keeping it closed longer will be determined.

This work was the result of a survey of the Potomac River, which was authorized by the Legislature of 1929 under Joint Resolution No. 12.

2—Scraping for oysters in the greater part of the Great Choptank River is now prohibited due to the oystermen of Talbot and Dorchester Counties getting together on this measure. In addition to curtailing scraping in this river, there were further conservation measures passed which reduced the length of oyster tong shafts to 27 feet and the weight of scrapes to 70 pounds in those waters where scraping is still permitted.

The Choptank River being closed, most of the oystermen of lower Dorchester County deemed it necessary to close Honga River against scraping. Consequently Honga River and Tar Bay were also closed against this method of catching oysters.