

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland

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PRESS RELEASE

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CCA MD Members Gather in Annapolis to Oppose DNR's Netting Proposal

Over 60 members of the Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCA MD) descended on Annapolis yesterday to meet with their elected officials and attend a public hearing on the DNR's proposal to expand commercial netting for yellow perch to the Choptank and Nanticoke Rivers. Lawmakers were asked to weigh in on the DNR proposal and look into the DNR's management philosophy that puts commercial exploitation ahead of conservation and fairness.

As members returned from meetings with their lawmakers to the parking lot of the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium, site of a hospitality tent sponsored by CCA MD, they were greeted with warm food and music. Many expressed surprise at the interest shown by their elected representatives. Several returned with letters from their representatives opposing the netting proposal that were hand delivered to DNR officials at the public hearing. One lawmaker offered to have legislation introduced.

"I have to admit, I was skeptical about giving up the day to come to Annapolis," said Mike Needham, CCA MD member from Montgomery County. "Members of the General Assembly have so many important issues before them, but now I realize, they rely on voters like me to educate them about things they otherwise wouldn't be aware of. I was thanked for bringing the matter of DNR's institutional bias and how it harms the state economically to them."

After the sun went down and the temperature dropped, members abandoned their drafty tent for the confines of the Tawes Building, headquarters of DNR, for the public hearing. Turnout was heavy with over 100 recreational fishermen from various groups presenting a united front.

Sherman Baynard, Chairman of CCA MD's Fisheries Committee, said, "When fisheries managers manage for commercial exploitation they fail to meet the needs of recreational anglers. This results in the loss to the state of valuable recreational fisheries, like yellow perch, that depend on an abundance of the resource. This is the message our members delivered to their lawmakers today."

Yellow perch has become a test case for the DNR and its future. Faced with shrinking allocations from the general fund, DNR's Fisheries Service is becoming increasingly dependent on resource users for funding through license fees and taxes on fishing tackle.

"Given the DNR's need for additional revenue, you would think they would be more responsive to recreational fishermen who provide the bulk of their funding," said Robert Glenn, Executive Director of CCA MD. "The DNR needs to deliver a quality recreational fishery to solve their funding crisis. That's not going to happen until DNR commits itself to managing for abundance. While fishing with a net might not require it, fishing with a rod and reel does."

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Coastal Conservation Association is a national organization of 90,000 members in 15 state chapters. CCA's mission is to advise and educate the public on conservation of marine resources. The objective of CCA is to conserve, promote and enhance the present and future availability of these coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public.