

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland

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PRESS RELEASE

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CCA Maryland Opposes Hike in Fishing License Fees Absent New Direction at DNR

Annapolis, MD- The Coastal Conservation Association of Maryland (CCA MD) has announced that it will not lend its support to Senate Bill 1012. Written barely two weeks ago, the legislation aims to reform Maryland fisheries management and provide funding for the Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Service through higher fees for recreational fishing licenses. The Association arrived at its decision at an Executive Board meeting last night based on its inability to thoroughly engage its membership in such a hurried process and after considering the substance of the reform provisions in the bill.

"CCA Maryland believes recreational saltwater anglers are willing to accept license fee increases for the privilege to fish," said Ken Lewis, chairman of CCA MD's Government Affairs Committee, "but they need to see a real commitment to major change in fisheries management philosophy that recognizes that the future of sustainable fisheries management lies with the recreational angler and their support."

Since the early 1990's general fund support for fisheries management has continually declined making the Fisheries Service more dependent on special funds obtained through fishing license fees. This has placed the burden for additional funding for fisheries management on the backs of recreational fishermen, the majority stakeholder of the state's fisheries resources.

"Senate Bill 1012 is well intentioned but hastily conceived," said Bill Curry, chairman of CCA MD. "While it contains provisions addressing our long-term goal of fisheries management reform and offers needed funding to support such management, it came at such a late date in the legislative session that we were unable to effectively engage our membership and the public on these far reaching issues."

Of particular concern to CCA MD's Executive Board was the lack of communication with the recreational fishing public that should precede raising user fees and deciding public policy issues about DNR reform. The Sport Fish Advisory Commission, an official DNR advisory commission that represents recreational fishermen's concerns, had no input into the legislation and was first informed of the legislation Monday night.

"CCA MD is not closing the door to supporting a much needed increase in funding for DNR's Fisheries Service through higher license fees", said Robert Glenn, Executive Director of CCA MD. "In fact, we look forward to working with DNR to adopt reform measures that make higher license fees a good investment in abundant fisheries for recreational anglers for generations to come."

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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.