



This is the first of an occasional electronic newsletter to all members of CCA MD. It is designed to deliver important information quickly. We also encourage you to seek information on the chapter website, www.ccamd.org. Thanks to Gene Hansen, Gene Hansen Creative Services, for designing the nameplate above.

CCA MD members gain great fishing opportunity

CCA MD has entered into a partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center (CBEC) in Grasonville to allow members to fish reef balls on the Center's preserve while collecting data that will help the CBEC monitor those reefs. The program will kick off Saturday, July 18 when CCA MD volunteers are taught how to tag and handle fish they catch.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for our members," said Executive Director Tony Friedrich. "We are getting a special invitation to catch good size fish through a program that is not open to everyone while contributing to the work the Center is doing to support marine resources."

The reef balls typically hold stripers, croaker, white perch, and spot while migratory blues, weakfish, drum and flounder also can be found. Last year a 42-inch black drum was caught.

The program has been arranged with Vicki Paulas, restoration manager at the CBEC.

"We offer instruction on fish tagging in conjunction with our Maryland Department of Natural Resources fisheries partners," Paulas said. "The purpose is to collect data on which species show a fidelity to these reef ball areas. Our reef monitoring program also consists of angling surveys and performing invertebrate counts on the surface of these reef structures."

The artificial reefs at CBEC are the first shallow-water artificial reef systems in Maryland. All four reefs are made from different substrates (Reef Balls, Fish Havens, Memorial Stadium Rubble, and a five-acre stone plot) and three of the four reefs contain a total of seven million oysters.

Saturday's instruction will be conducted by Rudy Lukacovic, who has worked as a fisheries biologist for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources since 1973.

The July 18 event is open to all CCA MD members on a first come, first served basis, but they must register to participate in the program by contacting Friedrich at tony@ccamd.org.

More information about the CBEC can be found at www.bayrestoration.org.

Check out the 'new' CCA MD website

If you haven't visited the CCA MD website, www.ccamd.org, recently, take a look. The association has begun a long-term project to upgrade the site, make it more user-friendly, and provide current information.

"We are in the electronic age of communications, and CCA MD needs to take better advantage of the Internet to provide members with up-to-date information," said Friedrich. "We will improve our site during the next 12 months, and I encourage members to check it out frequently and share ideas with us."

Among changes already implemented is a new calendar format that will include more information about chapter and state activities. Details on many events will be available by clicking on the specific calendar item. It can be found by clicking on the "calendar" dropdown menu at the top of the homepage.

Short news articles are also been placed on the homepage, and Friedrich indicated the goal is to change these frequently. Since changes begun last week, two articles have been added. As more appear on the homepage, former stories can be found by using the "read more" links on the homepage.

Friedrich plans to remove options that only state "coming soon" over the coming months. The first such change has been made. A printable membership form has been added to the site to facilitate joining. To see it, to the "get involved" dropdown choice and click "join CCA." Then click on the "printable application form" link.

"With Tony just starting the job and the amount of activity currently taking place, we can't expect all the changes to happen overnight," explained Lew Armistead, communications chairman. "Our goal is to upgrade the site as time allows. By next summer, we hope to have a website that will deliver information to members and the public in a highly effective manner."

CCA MD promotes 'careful catching'

While not all Maryland anglers practice catch and release fishing, CCA MD has begun a web-based program that will assist those who do to learn the best techniques for handling and releasing fish. "Careful Catch" is being promoted through a website, www.carefulcatchmaryland.com.

“Anglers who are interested in catch and release fishing, must understand the best way to do this in order to protect the resource,” points out Chairman Andy Hughes, who initiated the program. “This website offers tips on releasing fish, a study on results of releasing striped bass, and other valuable information. We plan to add more to the site in the coming months.”

Careful Catch is done in cooperation with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), and visitors to the site can download the CBF Careful Catch brochure.

Man O War Shoal in danger

Recreational anglers and all fishermen should be aware of the pending threat to Man-O-War Shoal, one of the prime fishing areas in the Upper Bay, and be prepared to act to protect this valuable resource. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has submitted an application to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to dredge five million bushels of fossil oyster shell contained within the shoal during a five-year period. The ultimate goal is to remove 30 million bushels of fossil shell, or 30 percent, of the entire shoal structure.

While fossil shell is an important raw material for oyster restoration, the finite resource has historically been used, instead, to bolster oyster harvests through a publicly subsidized “repletion” program. At a great cost to taxpayers and upper bay fishermen, this program has had little or no benefit to bay ecology, and has failed to protect the oyster industry from collapse during the last 40 years. Since dredging was halted in 2006, industry has placed increased pressure to begin dredging fossil shell from the last available source, Man-O-War Shoal.

“DNR’s new application recommends that 90 percent of dredged shell be allocated to ecological restoration, but fails to recognize the shoal’s unique ecologic significance, and the permanence of dredging,” said Scott McGuire, CCA MD government relations committee chairman. “Despite other available options, such as use of alternative materials; purchasing shell from other states; and recovering millions of bushels of previously deployed shell; DNR still recommends that upper bay fishermen bear the burden of providing fossil shell for the entire bay while the size and shape of Man-O-War Shoal is permanently damaged. This is a short-term approach based primarily on financial concerns. We must think long term to protect all facets of the bay.”

“This unique structure provides an important fishing location enjoyed by thousands of Maryland anglers each year,” continued McGuire. “Maryland DNR has not adequately demonstrated that the cost of dredging in the Upper Bay has enough benefit to overall bay ecology. DNR is proceeding without a comprehensive restoration plan, or adequate funding, to restore oysters in Chesapeake Bay. This time it is five million bushels over five years and ultimately 30 percent of Man-O-War Shoal. Next time – will it be the whole thing?”

While an opportunity for public comment has not yet been scheduled, when it is CCA MD members must be ready to act.

“We will call upon our members to participate in a Voter Voice campaign that will clearly demonstrate to state officials that anglers are strongly opposed to any further dredging; experimental or otherwise,” McGuire said. “Our voice has made a difference in the past, and this may be one of the most important battles we have to fight.”

Currently, CCA MD is working with other fishing and conservation organizations to coordinate responses to the application and will be contacting both the MDE and ACOE to request a formal public hearing on the application.

CCA MD is opposed to dredging of Man-O-War Shoal and the continued harvest of wild oysters. CCA MD has communicated its position to the DNR and can not support dredging of Man-O-War Shoal because—

- There is no scientific bay-wide plan to restore oysters in Chesapeake Bay;
- It’s not clear that Marylanders are willing to pay \$500 Million to restore oysters;
- There is not enough shell in Man-O-War Shoal to restore oysters;
- Recovery of previously deployed shell and use of alternative materials should be fully explored first. Even at greater cost;
- Even if dredging were to be allowed, all dredged shell is not devoted to oyster restoration.

McGuire also pointed out that according to the DNR application; 30 million bushels of fossil shell will only restore 1,400 acres of oyster habitat. Even with a concerted effort to restore oyster bottom, this will not be enough to outpace sedimentation that accounts for loss of approximately 2,500 acres of oyster habitat per year.

CCA MD members should watch for additional information on action to take in the coming weeks and months.

Learn more about CCA MD at www.ccamd.org