



CHESAPEAKE TIDE



Breaking News

Volume 10, Number 2 • 2005

Menhaden Victory at ASMFC

By Karen L. Ripple

Perhaps you've heard about it on the news. Or maybe you received the CCA MD Info Alert email. For those of you who missed it, CCA MD, recreational anglers, and the State of Maryland scored a big victory at the February ASMFC Atlantic Menhaden Management Board meeting in Alexandria, Virginia. A motion was made and passed "to initiate an Addendum to the Atlantic Menhaden Management Plan under the adaptive management provisions of the Plan **to limit the catch of menhaden in Chesapeake Bay by purse seine, to no more than 110,400 mt annually** in 2006 and 2007 and to initiate a research program immediately to determine the status of the menhaden population in the Chesapeake Bay in order to conserve the species while more complete population information is obtained to assess whether localized depletion is occurring in Chesapeake Bay."

Now some people are saying: "Why isn't the tonnage limit lower?" and "Why not eliminate the purse seine fishery completely in the Bay?" And the answer is that we really do not yet know why the menhaden numbers are so low in the Bay. We can look at the purse seine fishery at the mouth of the Bay and logically deduce that they are the primary cause, but we do not KNOW that—yet. The scientists have been gently saying that other factors appear to be contributing to the localized depletion as well. So far we have only a few "snapshots" of information about menhaden during their lives, and these do not show a broad enough picture to understand what is happening to them in Chesapeake Bay. Fortunately, that is about to change.

Why is the limit for 2006 and 2007, but not 2005? Because, the addendum process takes time. A draft addendum is being developed based on the motion passed and will include a suite of management options for consideration by the public. That draft will be presented to the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board for discussion and approval during the ASMFC Meeting Week in May. Then the addendum goes out for public hearings and comment. (Details will be posted on the CCA MD website and sent by email to those CCA MD members who have provided their email addresses.) Public comments are reviewed and considered, and then the Board can vote to approve the addendum, possibly as early as the ASMFC Meeting Week in August.

There will continue to be complaints that the process is taking much too long, and that menhaden will be long gone from the Bay before the scientists decide they have

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No New Shell Dredging

By Karen Ripple, Ken Lewis, and Sherm Baynard

On February 17th the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) agreed to a request by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to withdraw an application for dredging of fossil oyster shell at Worton and Plum Points, popular fishing areas for both recreational and commercial fishermen north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

For forty years DNR has been altering fish habitat in the upper Chesapeake Bay by dredging fossil oyster shell for use in its failed oyster restoration programs. Through letter writing campaigns, at public hearings, and through correspondence with involved federal agencies over the past three years, CCA MD has steadfastly opposed the permit application to dredge at new sites in designated striped bass spawning areas. By working through the available process, our persistence has finally been rewarded.

Past DNR applications to the ACOE for fossil shell dredging permits were routinely awarded until 2002, when CCA MD opposed permits for Plum and Worton Points because of concerns about potentially negative impacts on essential fish habitat and endangered species, as well as DNR's use of outdated and incomplete data in support of the application. CCA MD's concerns were shared by federal agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

DNR had sought the permit to dredge fossil oyster shell to construct new oyster reefs, a noble intention that has failed on many levels for decades. This dredging for fossil shell has cost millions of dollars and destroyed acres of fish habitat. Yet the dredged shell quickly becomes useless as it is covered with silt, a process that causes problems throughout the Bay.

Although CCA MD has successfully opposed this shell dredging permit, we will continue to support efforts to restore our native oyster through use of alternative oyster reef-building materials, such as limestone marl, clam shells, environmentally approved construction materials, and previously spread fossil oyster shell that can be reclaimed responsibly.

Congratulations and thanks to all our CCA MD members. Without your support we could not have been successful. While the process has taken a great deal of time, the end result will hopefully prompt DNR to take a fresh look at the oyster restoration program and pursue alternative strategies that are less destructive of fish habitat.

**Twin victories
for CCA MD
and the Bay**

Striped Bass: The Road Not Taken

By Dick Brame, CCA Atlantic Fisheries Consultant

For striped bass fishermen on the East Coast, there has been quite a bit of disturbing news recently regarding the most popular sport fish in America. Specifically, there have been two significant developments, and though it is easy to get lost in the technical language, it is important for serious conservationists to understand the game, if CCA is to be successful in its efforts to bring this fishery back to its historical size and geographic distribution.

■ The latest striped bass stock assessment showed that the fishing mortality rate for fully recruited fish (fish over 8 years old) was $F=0.62$. When factored with the estimated natural mortality rate (fish that die from causes other than fishing), that means about 43 percent of striped bass over 8 years old die each year as a result of both commercial and recreational fishing. According to the Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan, no more than about 24 percent (the target) of those fish should be taken by fishing gear each year, and we must never take more than about 31 percent (the threshold).

In fact, should more than 31 percent be taken in any year, the management plan requires that immediate action be taken in the following year to end over-fishing. According to the latest assessment, based on the best scientific advice available, we have been fishing over the target of about 24 percent since 1997 and, most recently, fishing at a rate 100 percent over the target and 50 percent above the threshold.

However, managers not only dodged their obligation under Amendment 6 of the Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan, which requires action if the mortality threshold is exceeded, they dismissed the $F=0.62$ figure as “uncertain” and chose to wait an entire year to see what the next assessment says.

■ The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), however, apparently does put some credence in the latest mortality estimates, as they have put their efforts to open the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on indefinite hold until they can be sure that over-fishing is not occurring. States control marine waters out to three miles. The area from three to 200 miles offshore falls under federal control and is referred to as the EEZ.

NMFS is clearly concerned that opening up thousands of square miles of federal waters to striped bass harvest can only increase the pressure on this already heavily fished stock, and so it is taking a cautious approach. CCA agrees with this approach, as do most anglers.

When NMFS originally proposed plans to open the EEZ last year, CCA members and concerned anglers expressed strong opposition at public hearings. In fact, keeping the EEZ closed was one of the issues that CCA National Chairman Walter

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enough information. You ARE BEING HEARD; that is precisely why the two-year cap on the purse seine industry has been proposed. During the meeting some Board members commented that they had never before experienced such pressure from recreational anglers. So, all our efforts for menhaden ARE beginning to have an effect.

Please remember, however, that CCA has always supported scientific management of our fisheries resources. Science-based management by its very nature is slow and deliberate. Management cannot move faster than the science without running the risk of becoming arbitrary.

One thing CCA cannot and should not do is push fisheries management to shut down the business of purse seine fishing for menhaden, just because it seems to be causing localized depletion of menhaden in the Bay. That would be irresponsible. We MUST be patient and wait for the science.

CCA MD thanks Governor Bob Ehrlich and DNR Secretary Ron Franks for supporting the Maryland delegation in their affirmative vote. That action was clearly supported by Pete Jensen of DNR, Bruno Vasta of MSSA, and Larry Simms of the Maryland Watermen's Association, who made up the Maryland delegation at this meeting. Larry Simms, standing in for Del. Rich Colburn, commented before the vote that “it was the right thing to do.”

This victory resulted from the actions of many people and organizations: some new to the process and some who have been at it for a long time. Some of our team mates in this success were the Sportsmen's Caucus, Menhaden Matter, and MSSA.

The process of managing menhaden is far from over. Many people involved in this vote had to make hard choices, and they will need to continue to reaffirm those choices in future votes. But this is a major victory for Atlantic menhaden management, because for the first time catch limits are being placed on the industrial harvesting of menhaden in the Bay. 🐟

ChesapeakeTide/Breaking News is published by the Coastal Conservation Association Maryland, a non-profit organization of recreational anglers dedicated to marine resource conservation and science-based fisheries management.

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Newsletter design and production by
Gene Hansen Creative Services, Chester, Maryland



This victory resulted from the actions of many people and organizations

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April Means Shad Fishing

By Wayne Blottenberger

The wait for early April and the start of the annual shad migration can be like that of a trout fisherman waiting for opening day. Where else can you hone skills lost over the winter by starting your season catching two-pound fish in large numbers? For most of my adult years fly-fishing for shad along Deer Creek and the Susquehanna River has been my passion.

What attracted me in the beginning was the ease with which shad can be caught with little knowledge and basic tackle. Sure, I have in my arsenal what it takes to catch a trout with a dry fly and rockfish with various large deceivers. Really, this is a fun fish for everyone from entry-level anglers with low funds to the very experienced. Standing side by side with others year after year becomes a social sport: trading jokes, stories, and new flies. I'm not the best fisherman that ever set foot in Deer Creek, but I catch my fair share. So maybe I can pass along what works for me, hoping it might make your outing more successful.

For me, living within sight of Deer Creek and a short 15-minute drive to the river, makes both my home waters. I fish mostly the area on Deer Creek from Stafford Road Bridge up to the pumping station. Fishing from the mouth of Deer Creek to Stafford Bridge is good, but not that productive for me, although I'm sure there are many that would argue this point. It's not difficult during the spawning run to spot large concentrations of fish, or for that matter fisherman, in deep pools staging for the next run to start.

The problem is that it's sometimes difficult to entice shad to take a fly. Several things to consider are: first, while they can be caught during a bright sunny day, it's very unlikely. The most productive times are early mornings, evenings, and all night. The best catches are in the fast water just above a large pool, the crease of fast water around the edges of the rocks, and a long, deep, fast water trench. Just after a hard rain when the water is high and off-color is my most productive time. Several years ago a close friend and I fished in high, fast, and almost muddy water under Stafford Bridge using 6-weights and 200 grain line. We had a high double digit day with not another fisherman in sight.

So what tackle do we need? Again rods and reels can range from entry level to the very best in nine-foot 4 to 6-weight combos. The majority of anglers use a five-foot sink-tip line; some use a short section of LC13 on a floating line. The object is to get the fly down and moving for best results. Your cast should be up and across with a lot of strikes coming on the sweep. I'm not sure why that is, but it must have something to do with the accelerated speed and action of the fly. The lengths of the leader and tippet vary with each person, but I like a fairly long leader (6 to 9 feet) and a 5x (4 lb) fluorocarbon tippet. Get it down, get it moving, and make them mad, so you entice a strike.



Wayne Blottenberger fly fishes for shad with his faithful yellow lab.

The most important piece of tackle is the fly. The best by far on the creek is red marabou tied on a long shank #8 with just a hint of yellow marabou on the bottom just behind the eye. I got my first from Joe Bruce at *The Fisherman's Edge* in Baltimore (now closed). But any combination of colors in marabou or crystal flash will work. Favorite colors are red, pink, orange, purple, white, and of course chartreuse. For first time hickory shad fisherman I would recommend stopping at a local shop to find out what's hot and what's not. I do have photo files of flies on my computer which I can email on request.

I didn't forget about fishing the river. The tackle I mentioned above works just fine from the banks along the river, but remember, the water is deep and fast, so leave the four-weight rod at home and bring a 5 to 7-weight. The difficulty here is finding room to cast. There is good fishing from the Lapidum Ramp to the dam, but the most productive areas are from the mill to the mouth of Deer Creek.

The last week of April has an extra bonus with hickory (1 to 2 lb) and white shad (3 to 6 lb) both arriving in the river.

Good luck, and if you see a gray haired old man with a mustache and a yellow lab tagging along, that would be me.

Wayne Blottenberger is a member of the Baltimore Chapter of CCA MD. Contact him at deer.creek@erols.com for fly photos or more specific timing of the shad run. A reminder for those new to this fishery: it's catch and release only. 🐟

The most important piece of tackle is the fly.

Monitor Legislative Actions

The homepage of our CCA MD website provides a listing of bills currently being tracked through the legislative process, their progress, and links to the text. Just go to www.ccamd.org for the latest news.

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Fondren raised at a meeting with James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, during his visit with President George Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, last year.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

CCA pushed hard for conservative management of striped bass during the two year run-up to Amendment 6. We argued that the Atlantic Coast striped bass population was not fully recovered despite its apparent abundance, because the historic age structure of the population was not yet restored.

Striped bass can live up to 25 years or more. Yet, in its zeal to finally declare a victory for fisheries management, the ASMFC declared striped bass fully recovered in the mid-1990s, long before fish more than 15 years old comprised a significant portion of the population. CCA believed then, and still believes today, that striped bass harvest should have remained limited until the historic age structure began to fill out and anglers were seeing fish over 15 years of age, weighing in excess of 40 or 50 pounds.

Instead, the population was declared restored, because the spawning stock biomass (SSB—the total poundage of sexually mature fish) had been restored to historic levels. Little emphasis was placed on the fact that the vast majority of that biomass was comprised of fish less than 10 years old. Most anglers believe a large spawning stock implies an abundance of big, old female fish. Most would be surprised to learn that the vast majority of the striped bass SSB resides in fish under 10 years old.

In the end, what this means is that the restoration of SSB had nothing to do with the presence of larger, older female striped bass in the population, but rather an abundance of newly mature fish. While we may have had a high SSB, it is because most of the fish belonged to a very few, relatively recent year classes, rather than older fish that have survived 15 or more years in the wild.

This population structure can create an unstable population that is very vulnerable to a sudden increase in fishing pressure or natural calamities, such as epidemic or consecutive spawning failures, both of which contributed to the population crash of the 1970s and '80s.

THE RIGHT ROAD

The only way to grow large old fish is to reduce the mortality on the younger fish so they have a chance to grow up, a strategy in complete contrast to the manner in which ASMFC is currently managing the striped bass fishery. Managers are taking what is arguably the premier inshore game fish on the Atlantic coast, and perhaps the only fish that gives shore-bound and protected-water anglers a chance to catch a true “trophy,” and turning it into another pedestrian panfish that can often fit in a five-gallon pail.

With proper management both high abundance and a fair chance of encountering a trophy fish (60 pounds plus) could have been realized, but managers sadly lacked the patience to attain such a complete recovery.


CCA's position supports precautionary management for striped bass. If there is uncertainty in the assessment, managers should take steps to reduce harvest sooner rather than later. As long as the fishing mortality rate stays high, the chance of restoring the historic age structure remains remote. Year-long delays to study a mortality rate that is twice the target pushes the day when females more than 15 years old make up a significant portion of the spawning stock far into the future.

Recreational anglers should abhor that delay. We need to support taking action now to constrain harvest, rather than waiting a year or two.

Had fisheries managers taken the advice of CCA during the Amendment 6 public hearings and set the mortality target at a lower level, the restrictions they would have had to impose then would have been minor compared to what they may have to impose, if the fishing mortality estimate of 2004 again exceeds the threshold.

Is quick action justified? Ask yourself this question: If the best scientific advice was that the fishing mortality rate was half the target ($F=0.15$) instead of twice the target, would managers have been cautious about accepting the advice? Or, more likely, would they have fallen all over themselves to relax restrictions immediately?

The pressures placed on ASMFC and fishery managers are real. For every conservation-minded CCA member who works to recover this fishery the right way, there are vocal commercial fishermen who lobby to loosen the regulations as fast as possible to increase harvest. The crucial point to remember, and one that is frequently lost in the clamor of fishery management, is that if we manage the resource correctly, there will be plenty of fish for everyone.

If not, we'll be right back in the 1970s. 

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The web of acronyms and scientific jargon used in fisheries management is enough to chase away even the most tenacious. Here are definitions for just a few of the terms found in this article.

Biomass: The total weight of a species, usually used as a measure of the health of a stock.

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): All waters from the seaward boundary of coastal states to 200 nautical miles offshore. State waters extend out to three or nine nautical miles.

Fishery Management Plan (FMP): A highly scrutinized and detailed management plan for a fishery. It includes extensive data and analysis from both scientific and user group input. A FMP equally includes necessary management measures for the longevity and total health of the fishery.

Fishing Mortality (F): A measurement of the rate of removal of fish from a population by fishing. Fishing mortality can be reported as either annual or instantaneous. Annual mortality is the percentage of fish dying in one year. Instantaneous is that percentage of fish dying at any one time.

Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB): The total weight of sexually mature fish in a stock.

Year Class: Refers to the fish spawned and hatched in a given year.

CCA pushed hard for conservative management of striped bass

Yellow Perch: It's Almost Time

By Ken Hastings

After months of cabin fever and cold weather, it is almost time for the yellow perch to make their annual appearance in our waters. We don't know where they all go for most of the year, but we can predict with some accuracy where many will be sometime during the first couple of weeks in March. By then the spawn will be in full swing and many of the perch hot spots will be littered with eggs.



A female yellow perch extrudes her egg mass.

For some fishermen the yellow perch spawning run marks the beginning of the new fishing season, as the sporty little perch congregate in shallow fresh water streams to continue an ages old tradition. However, this phenomenon isn't as common as it once was and, like most of our marine species, yellow perch populations seem to be declining in places once known for impressive spawning runs

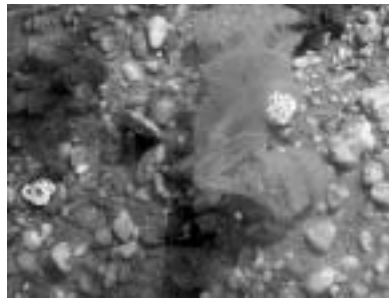
and fabulous fishing.

For several years CCA volunteers have conducted spawning surveys of many places where yellow perch activity is expected. Even in "good" years the fishermen and the fish don't always meet up, but if the fish spawn there the evidence will be left behind for several days until the new brood hatches. The long streamers of eggs are a sure indication of spawning activity, and you don't have to see the fish to know they were there.

In 2004 over 50 sites were surveyed in spite of an extremely wet spring with high water and turbidity. Some of the volunteers combined a fishing outing with their survey activities, but others went wading just to look for perch eggs as a way of helping to document spawning trends. Eggs were reported at 18 sites, but not in the quantities reported in past years.

We have a unique program among fishing and conservation groups, that is made relatively easy by the unique physical appearance of yellow perch egg masses. It also establishes CCA as a true stakeholder in the future of marine species like yellow perch. We have become more than just exploiters of the resource, having demonstrated a concern for the health of our environment and a willingness to invest in its future.

If you want to help survey for yellow perch eggs, contact Ken Hastings at <kensandy@olg.com> or 301-884-4872. You can report your observations via email or snail mail, and you don't need any special equipment or talent. All it takes is a willingness to spend a couple of hours wading and hiking along stream banks looking for the tell-tale signs of spawning. It doesn't get much better than that.



In water the yellow perch egg mass released by one female forms a pale jagged cylinder.



Since spawning usually occurs in tidal water, the egg masses may become stranded on streamside vegetation when water levels drop. They then resemble bread wrappers caught on branches.

EVENTS CALENDAR

■ March

- 3 Annapolis Chapter Banquet and Fundraiser, 6 to 10 pm
- 7 Legislative Reception at Senate Office Building, 6 to 8 pm
- 7 Southern Maryland Chapter Meeting at 7:00 pm;
Capt. Wayne Morgan on Spring Trolling
- 12 Mid-Shore Chapter Super Fishing Seminar and Raffle Boat Drawing,
9 am to 1:30 pm
- 12 CCA National BOD Meeting in Houston, Texas
- 14 Kent Narrows Chapter Meeting at 7:30 pm
- 22 CCA MD Executive Committee Meeting in Annapolis at 7:00 pm

■ April

- 4 Southern Maryland Chapter Meeting at 7:00 pm;
Howard King and Kenny Keen of DNR
- 11 Kent Narrows Chapter Meeting at 7:30 pm
- 11 Lower Shore Chapter Fishing Super Seminar, 6-10 pm in Salisbury
- 14 Mid-Shore Chapter Meeting at 7:30 pm;
Kurt Freund on Fishing Martha's Vineyard
- 16 Opening Day Rockfish Tournament & Party at Boatyard Bar & Grill in
Eastport, Annapolis. Benefits CCA
- 28 Greater Washington Chapter Pigs on the Potomac Banquet and Auction
- 30 North Anne Arundel Chapter Banquet and Auction

■ May

- 2 Southern Maryland Chapter Meeting at 7:00 pm;
Dr. George Krantz on yellow perch
- 9-12 ASMFC Meeting Week in Alexandria, VA
- 9 Kent Narrows Chapter Meeting at 7:30 pm
- 12 Mid-Shore Chapter Meeting at 7:30 pm;
Jim Uphoff on Menhaden and the Chesapeake Bay

■ June

- 4 Kent Narrows Chapter Second Annual Fishing Tournament
- 11 Mid-Shore Chapter Bill Perry Memorial Kids Fishing Derby, 9 to noon

CCA Md Position Statement: Introduction of *Crassostrea* *ariakensis* into the Chesapeake Bay

Approved by the Executive Committee, 2/18/05


Coastal Conservation Association Maryland (CCA MD) represents Maryland recreational anglers who recognize and enjoy the intrinsic values of the Chesapeake Bay and other coastal saltwaters. In order to improve water quality and the ecological balance in finfish populations our interests focus on ensuring that management actions be based on a decision-making process that is both technically accurate and biologically beneficial. The current decision-making process often seems heavily biased towards the social, economic, and political needs of a select few, instead of the majority of Maryland's citizens.

Our organization is concerned that neither the introduction of *C. ariakensis*, nor the continuation of the present "put and take" native oyster management strategy will have significant, measurable, and positive impacts on Bay water quality or on the benthic ecosystem that supports numerous finfish species that use the Bay during their life cycles. We also believe the present management philosophy supporting the continuation of the "put and take" native oyster repletion program will need to be replaced by a philosophy that places the native oyster's value solely on its ecological importance until restoration is complete.

CCA MD's present position on the introduction of *C. ariakensis* mirrors all aspects of the position articulated by the National Academy of Sciences with emphasis on the recommendation that THIS SPECIES NOT BE INTRODUCED until more technically accurate information is generated to address all of the issues in their report as well as the numerous public health issues that have recently been raised.

CCA MD Position: CCA MD will not take a "pro" or "con" position on the introduction of *C. ariakensis* into Maryland waters until more scientific facts are available and the proposed environmental impact statement (EIS) with all supporting documents, a task specific management plan, and projected operating budget are peer-reviewed by persons with appropriate scientific and technical skills.

CCA MD strongly recommends that the EIS, management plan, and operating budget be reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences technical team that prepared the comprehensive report on *C. ariakensis* and other persons with appropriate scientific and technical skills. The comments of this group and their publicly announced approval of Maryland's planned introduction of *C. ariakensis* must precede any physical introduction of live oysters. This ecologically important decision can not be made in an unbiased way by employees of state funded organizations or individuals who have a vested interest in this issue because of the diverse and complex social and political issues involved.

The Maryland Legislature is considering two bills concerning the introduction of a non-native oyster to the Chesapeake Bay. To monitor progress of HB 430 and SB 405, check the Homepage of our CCA MD website. 

CCAMD Chapter Reports

■ Annapolis

President: Jim Flannery

Meetings: Third Tuesday of the month at Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills Mall.
Thanks to all volunteers who helped make the banquet and auction on March 3rd a success.

■ Baltimore

President: Scott Hopkins, 610-869-4490, Baltimore@ccamd.org

Meetings: Third Tuesday of the month at Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills Mall.
Plans are being developed for the coming year.

■ Greater Washington

President: David Dickerson, 202-721-1610, GreaterWashington@ccamd.org

Meetings: Third Tuesday of the month at Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills Mall.
Due to snowstorm our Pigs on the Potomac Banquet and Auction has been rescheduled for April 28th.

■ Kent Narrows

President: Ed Liccione, 410-829-5771, KentNarrows@ccamd.org

Meetings: Second Monday of the month at Fishermen's Inn.
Planning is underway for a Fly Fishing and Light Tackle Tournament on June 4th. Contact Ed if you can help or wish to register for the event.

■ Lower Shore

President: Mike Ruggiero, 302-875-5446, LowerShore@ccamd.org

Meetings: Inactive
Fishing Super Seminar, 6-10 pm in Salisbury on April 11th.

■ Mid-Shore

President: Chris Cianci, 410-820-4070, MidShore@ccamd.org

Meetings: Second Thursday of the month at MEBA Engineering Center
Plans have been finalized for the March 12th Super Fishing Seminar to be held this year at MEBA Engineering Center on Rt. 33 from 9:00 to 1:30 pm. Call Ed Kilduff for details (410-745-6558) or check the website. Preliminary plans are being made for the Tenth Annual Bill Perry Memorial Youth Fishing Derby on June 11th. Many hands are needed to help unhook, measure, and identify fish for the kids on the Choptank River Fishing Bridge. Contact Chris Cianci to volunteer your Saturday morning.

■ North Anne Arundel

President: Jack Streb, 410-255-0193 NorthAnneArundel@ccamd.org

Meetings: Third Tuesday of the month at Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills Mall.
Plans for the April 30th Banquet and Auction at the Maryland Yacht Club are progressing. Call Jack Streb if willing to help.

■ Southern Maryland

President: Dennis Fleming, 240-538-1260, SouthernMaryland@ccamd.org

Meetings: First Monday of the month at the NEW Hughesville American Legion
Thanks to all volunteers who helped make the February 26th BBQ and Auction such a tremendous success. Yellow perch restoration activities are underway; contact Ken Hastings to volunteer.

CCA Maryland Officers

Chairman: Don Silliman, 410-226-0285, Chairman@ccamd.org

President: Bill Curry, 410-586-0016, President@ccamd.org

Secretary: Ken Hastings, 301-884-4872

Treasurer: Diane Baynard, 410-758-1162

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Government Affairs: Ken Lewis, 410-377-2793,

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Management: Bill Curry, 410-586-0016, President@ccamd.org

The Maryland Legislature is considering two bills concerning the introduction of a non-native oyster to the Chesapeake Bay.

Fisheries Management: Past, Present, Future

Part One

By Sherman Baynard, Chairman of Fisheries Committee

If you had a magic fishing rod that could change things with a single cast, how would you change saltwater fisheries management in Maryland? This is a rhetorical question, but give it some serious thought. You can send your opinion to CCA MD; we want to know what you think. (Email: Fisheries@ccamd.org.)

Surely your choices may be very different from the next angler, and so it becomes apparent that fisheries management will have to be a compromise, trying to provide the greatest benefit for the citizens of the state and fishermen in general. So, how are fisheries being managed now, and how should they be managed for the future? We will delve into these complex questions during the year and with your input provide a vision of fisheries management for the future.

It has been said that fisheries management is like forestry management, except you can't see the trees, and they move. Lack of good data, unforeseen problems, budget difficulties, and politics are some of the issues that make fisheries management more complex and difficult. At its simplest level fisheries management is about providing scientific answers to managers, who then modify those answers due to political, social, economic, budgetary, and other influences. It may not be pretty, but it is what we have.

Saltwater fisheries management has another complex issue that most other natural resources don't have: the distribution of the fish between commercial and recreational fishermen, also known as allocation. Wild game and freshwater fish allocations were resolved decades ago by deciding not to commercially exploit these resources.

There is a valid perception among recreational saltwater anglers that management favors the commercial fishermen. That bias came naturally because recreational fishing was virtually a non-issue when management was originally established for commercial fishing. The emergence and growth of recreational fishing in the last half-century has altered the exclusive relationship commercial fishermen once had with management. Yet the commercial fishermen have effectively promoted their traditions and livelihoods as being sacrosanct.

Originally, management provided the commercial fishing industry with an orderly harvest, and dealt with allocation and gear disputes among commercial fishermen. After it became apparent that saltwater species could be threatened by over-exploitation, managers developed conservation rules to provide some form of protection for the resource. With the evolution of modern fisheries management most fisheries with science-based management plans (FMP) are now managed for sustainability.

Recreational and commercial fisheries do not have mutually compatible requirements where management is concerned. Commercial fishermen are usually much more efficient than recreational anglers due to methods and gear differences, expertise, timely knowledge, and economic incentive. This divergence of needs results in a conflict over how each wants saltwater fisheries managed.

Traditional management met commercial fishermen's needs by providing the maximum pounds of marketable fish using a method called maximum sustainable yield (MSY). MSY can be defined as the largest average catch that can be taken continuously from a stock under average environmental conditions, and is based solely on the biology of the species.

In contrast, recreational anglers require a reasonable expectation of fishing success by having a sufficient abundance of fish in the water with a broad age structure. We are better served under a management goal of optimum yield (OY). OY is based on a harvest level of fish that achieves the greatest overall benefits, including economic, social, biological, and ecological factors.

Maryland's current DNR Fisheries Service has not evolved to where they are capable of addressing the allocation dilemma, nor in most cases can they be pro-active in addressing fisheries problems. They maintain a defensive, status quo, fisheries management policy that in many cases better serves the managers than the resource. There is little upside for managers to be pro-active and stop a problem before it becomes extreme. If they take precautionary measures, they are blamed for unwarranted actions, because no severe problem exists later. Better for job security to wait until the stakeholders demand action or the problem cannot be ignored. As for allocation, most fisheries managers would rather be tortured with fishhooks than deal with this thorny issue.

In future issues we will examine the budget and revenue problems of the Fisheries Service, who pays for the cost of management, commercial and recreational fishermen's contributions to the state economy, what the future could look like, and how to change it. 🐟



Dr. Ken Lewis of the Baltimore Chapter had a successful trip to the Bay Bridge Tunnel this fall, landing a 46", 39 lb. stripper by drifting eels. Recreational anglers expect to occasionally catch a big fish, but this requires the presence of a broad age structure within the fishery.

There is a valid perception among recreational saltwater anglers that management favors the commercial fishermen



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