



Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association

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Crabbing Regulations Necessary for Restoration and Sustainability

(PASADENA, MD) – On Thursday, April 10th, the Department of Natural Resources and the Sport and Tidal Fisheries Commissions held a public meeting at the United Methodist Church in Annapolis regarding the DNR's proposal on new crabbing regulations.

The Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association (MSSA) along with several other recreational crabbers, conservationists, and commercial watermen listened as the DNR presented their options for restoring and sustaining the crab population in the Bay.

Secretary John Griffin started the evening by reminding the audience that the goal of the DNR is to, "restore and sustain a healthy crab population." The Secretary also pointed out that cooperation from Virginia is necessary to increase population.

The proposal is based on data collected through the winter dredge survey. For 18 years this survey has been used to collect and analyze the Bay's crab population. Through this survey the DNR is capable of predicting the commercial harvest within 9%. This accuracy allows the DNR to propose regulations which will restore and sustain the crab population.

The DNR presented several options for both the recreational and commercial crabbers. On the recreational side the DNR suggests several options: a prohibition on the female harvest, increase the time difference between recreational and commercial trotlines from ½ hour to 1 hour, make the end time consistent for the Bay and its tributaries (at sunset), or only allow 5-6 dozen per license.

The Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association (MSSA) supported the prohibition of female crabs for both sides, but strongly opposed the time increase from ½ hour to 1 hour.

The MSSA recognizes and supports the DNR in their long-term sustainability plan but feels the problem lies in the commercial harvesting therefore stronger restrictions on the commercial industry are imperative to restoring the Bay's crab population. These regulations include bushel limits, early closing on female harvest, 10-14 day female prohibition, and/or 40% reduction in female harvest.

To view all of the proposed regulations go to: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/regulations/draftregulations.html>