



Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association

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MSSA 2008 General Membership Meeting



On February 2, 2008 the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association (MSSA) held its General Membership Meeting during their 18th Annual Convention in Ocean City. The convention was held at the Princess Royale Hotel on 91st Street and Ocean Highway.



Governor Martin O'Malley accepted MSSA's invitation and was their keynote speaker. Joining the Governor was John Griffin, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Eric Schwaab, Deputy Secretary (DNR), Senator John Astle, Delegate Jim Mathias, Mayor Rick Meehan, Jim Donafrio of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and Bill Miles of the Maryland Legislative Sportsman's Foundation.



President Stephen Shechtel presided over the meeting and stated that "we are very optimistic about improving Maryland fisheries for the future". Many of the members stood and told of their experiences such as walking the grasses for soft crabs, crabbing with handlines from a rowboat and catching a bushel of crabs in an hour, seeing the Bay's bottom in six feet of water and the look on a daughter's face as she caught her first Rockfish. During the Governor's address he too recalled several stories of his childhood fishing and crabbing in the Chesapeake Bay.



President Shechtel stated that "we are grateful that Maryland now has a Governor who possesses the foresight and courage to make the tough decisions, and take the necessary actions to preserve Maryland's fisheries for present and future generations".

Governor O'Malley addressed the audience and gave a summary of his support for the banning of hydraulic dredging of clams in the back bays of Ocean City, regulations for yellow perch management, signing of a \$750,000 bond bill for the artificial reef program the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative (MARI), funding of \$3 million dollars to rebuild oyster reefs and \$4.1 million for state parks. He also pledged to meet and keep his promise to create matching funds for recreational fishing licenses.

Governor O'Malley made everyone aware that he knows what recreational fishery means to the economics of the State. O'Malley stated that "\$3.3 billion represents the economic impact of fishing and boating to Maryland". The Governor also said that the health of our waters is in jeopardy and together we can work toward solving the Bay's problem. He looks toward the MSSA as being the leader from the recreational fishing community.



MSSA presented the Governor a plaque inscribed with "Champion of Fisheries" along with a trophy sized mounted rockfish.