Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association

"Maryland's Sportfishing Advocates"

Est. 1981

PN15-88 (MD DNR Chesapeake Bay Artificial Reefs) - 2015-60904: To continue placing reef material at the 21 existing artificial fish reef sites in the Chesapeake Bay from Pooles Island south to Tangier Sound, throughout Maryland waters.

January 8, 2016

Dear Mr. Schwarm,

As Executive Director of the region's largest collective group of recreational anglers, the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA), I am writing to you on behalf of our membership, encouraging the Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District to approve the Maryland Department of Natural Resource's permit to continue the original 21 reef sites, administered by the Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative (MARI).

For over 30 years the MSSA has fought for the rights of anglers and also worked with fisheries managers, and the Corp, to enhance and restore the Chesapeake Bay's ecology. One of the most significant impacts we have had, is working with the MARI building and monitoring reef sites throughout the Bay. The MSSA, its volunteers, and partners have worked extensively to enhance our fisheries resources by restoring and creating reef sites.

The purpose of the Maryland Artificial Reef Program is to provide artificial reef habitat on selected Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Ocean and coastal bay sites to:

1.Enhance habitat for fish and benthic organisms associated with reefs,
2. Increase reef biological carrying capacity;
3.Enhance biological diversity;
4. Increase fish populations,
5. Provide sustainable fishing opportunities.

I want to make sure you know how important artificial reefs are to the sport fishing industry in Maryland. Maryland has over a half a million anglers generating annual economic activity of $844 million. The US Government estimates that Maryland recreational fishing creates annual state and local tax revenue of approximately $52 million per year. Recreational fishing in Maryland is about clean, outdoor, family recreation. And it also is about jobs and the economy. Approximately, 80,000 non-resident anglers come to Maryland, buy licenses, and fish each year.

Artificial reef sites are proven to increase fish populations, improve water conditions, and enhance Bay ecology. Couple that with Maryland's recreational fishing community and we are looking at a sustainable and thriving fishing industry.

Thank you in advance for your support of the artificial reef program here in Maryland. We hope to continue the good work restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Respectfully,

Dave Smith
Executive Director
Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association

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