

**Department of Natural Resources - Finfishing - Closure of State Waters**

FOR the purpose of ~~prohibiting~~ authorizing the Department of Natural Resources ~~from completely closing to close~~ an area of State waters to all finfishing ~~unless~~ if the Department satisfies certain requirements; requiring the Department to publicize in certain ways certain information regarding certain public hearings and to make a certain report available at a certain time; requiring the Department to prepare a certain report at certain times; ~~requiring the Department to reopen a certain area under a certain circumstance~~; providing for the application of this Act; and generally relating to certain closures of State waters to finfishing.

BY adding to

Article - Natural Resources

Section 4-215.1

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2000 Replacement Volume and 2003 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, The waters of Maryland are among the State's most renowned resources; and

WHEREAS, Effective assessment, management, and planning in the conservation of Maryland waters are vital tools in the protection of the aquatic environment; and

WHEREAS, There are more than 700,000 Maryland recreational anglers, and recreational fishing is the most popular outdoor sporting activity in the State; and

WHEREAS, Recreational fishing provides more than 11,000 jobs in the State in the retail, wholesale, and manufacturing sectors, and its average annual total economic output is estimated to surpass \$1.06 billion; and

WHEREAS, Commercial fishing contributes an additional estimated economic output of \$100.4 million per year, and 7,600 licensed harvesters, 225 dealers, and more than 2,000 processing jobs rely on the productivity of State waters for their livelihoods; and

WHEREAS, These commercial fisheries supply hundreds of local and national restaurants and retail seafood outlets with the high quality seafood for which Maryland is world famous; and

WHEREAS, The conservation of the State's aquatic resources and fisheries is in the best interests of all of Maryland's citizens, and the General Assembly regards fishing in Maryland waters as critical to the State's economy and way of life; and

WHEREAS, The sports fishery and commercial fishery alike have historically demonstrated sound conservation ethics by seeking and supporting effective fishery management plans and by participating in voluntary research and educational outreach programs; and