
FISHING AND THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

Maryland is a state amply blessed with water resources. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries abound with fish, providing a playground for sportsmen as well as the basis for a prosperous seafood industry. Governor Tawes, who grew up in the Eastern Shore fishing community of Crisfield, had an intimate knowledge of the problems facing the watermen of Maryland's Tidewater section. He was convinced that the continued well-being of the State's fishing industry was dependent upon industry-government cooperation.

A major project during the Governor's first term was an attempt to check the long-term decline in the State's oyster production. The most far-reaching effort ever undertaken to redevelop the oyster resources of the Chesapeake Bay was begun during the summer of 1960. One of the first steps taken by the Tawes Administration was the reorganization of the Department of Tidewater Fisheries in 1959, placing the Department under the direction of a five-member commission. In addition, the Department's primary role was altered from that of law enforcement to one of responsibility for the rehabilitation of the State's commercial fishing industry.

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The reorganized Department of Tidewater Fisheries has been operating now for less than three months, and it is therefore not possible to make a proper appraisal of its performance. A final judgment on the worth of this all-important reorganized State agency must await the passing of years. But the amount and quality of the work already done by the new Commission which I appointed the first of June, in my belief, justifies the confidence I have that this division of our State government will be one of the highlights of my Administration and that it will go down in history as the organization which brought new life and new strength to our declining seafood industry.

The energy and resourcefulness of this new Commission—the speed with which it went about its task—caused many skeptical Marylanders to gasp with amazement. Its very first meeting was packed with action,