

oyster production. Since that time, in a greatly accelerated oyster repletion program, the State has planted nearly 30 million bushels of shells and more than 4 million bushels of seed. Rehabilitation is of necessity a slow process, but the results of the action we took six years ago now are becoming apparent. Acute drought conditions in this area of the country have caused a marked increase in the salinity of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and MSX, the oyster malady associated with high salinity, has taken a heavy toll of marketable oysters in Tangier Sound, Hooper Straits and other of the more southern producing areas. But despite this misfortune, the oyster yield during the current year is running substantially higher than any year since 1959. For the first time in many years, Maryland now has an excellent crop of oysters of all sizes, and the prospects for a betterment of oyster production is bright indeed.

Regarding seafood in general, Maryland's landings for the first ten months of 1965, as reported by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, totaled 77.9 million pounds, valued at \$9.8 million, the highest production since 1929 when accurate catch statistic became available. New records were set in the production of soft shell clams and hard crabs. We must, to be sure, continue our support of the rehabilitation program carried on by the Department of Chesapeake Bay Affairs so that this important area of our economy may prosper.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

American people have more time for play and recreation and they travel more than ever before in history, and therefore it is not surprising that more people use our parks than ever before. Last year, 4 million persons visited Maryland's 33 parks and recreation areas. It is interesting to note that 32.7 per cent of these were from out of the State. The Department of Forests and Parks has estimated that these facilities contributed \$25 million to the economy of local areas within the State during fiscal 1965.

Since I have been Governor, I have witnessed a vast enlargement of our park system and some notable improvements in the recreational opportunities they provide. This program of enlargement and improvement must continue unabated, so that our park system is second to none in the nation. The budget I am recommending to you reflects this policy. The \$4,939,000 in capital funds allowed the Department of Forests and Parks is exceeded in the budget only by the amounts allocated to the University of Maryland and the Department of Mental Hygiene.