

## THE SIGNING OF THE ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMPACT

State House, September 5, 1941  
Annapolis

**T**HE signing on behalf of the State of Maryland of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Compact is undoubtedly an event of more than ordinary interest, in view of the significance of this occasion in relationship to the protection and rehabilitation of the seriously-depleted fisheries resources of the Atlantic Coast.

The necessary enabling legislation with respect to this Compact was passed at the last session of our General Assembly. Similar action has been taken by the Legislatures of six other coastal States along the Atlantic Seaboard, namely, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey and Delaware. Other interested states have not yet had the opportunity of ratifying the Compact as their Legislatures did not meet this year.

The Governors of the above-enumerated States either have already affixed or are about to affix their signatures to this Compact and when the Congress of the United States acts to give its consent, which action it is expected to take very promptly, the Compact will be in full force and effect.

Now, what is the special significance of this action? It is simply this. The seemingly inexhaustible fisheries resources of our Atlantic Coast and its bays and tributary rivers have been found to be subject to the same depletion when they have been the object of uncontrolled exploitation as has been the case with the myriad forms of wildlife which the early settlers in such abundance in the forests and on the plains of a new continent.

In our own Chesapeake, for instance, we note the very great decline in the annual shad migration to our waters, now only a small fraction of its former abundance. Our Atlantic Coast fish are no respectors of State boundaries, and as a result of this self-evident fact, past efforts between interested States and the Federal Government to protect and regulate these fisheries resources have been for the most part ineffective. As a result the downward trend in fishery abundance has continued unchecked.

This Compact, providing as it does the machinery for the achievement of the cooperative and uniform action of the States sharing in common fisheries and providing also for the technical advice and assistance of the Federal Government through the agency of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gives promise of progress in the direction of the effective management of our Atlantic Coast fishery resources such as we have not had in the past.

The Commission, authorized by the Compact, provides for representation on it of the administrative heads of the Department concerned with fishery problems in the signatory States and also for representation of the Legislatures of the several States as well as the commercial fishing interest. It is felt, and