

SFAC Message:

Dear SFAC Commissioners,

As you may recall, a regulatory proposal is required to make additions or deletions to Maryland's list of designated License Free Fishing Areas.

At the March 2014 Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission, it was agreed that while LFFAs were originally created for subsistence fishing following the creation of the tidal fishing license in the mid-1980s, the mission of these areas should be updated to focus on increasing new participation in Maryland's recreational fishery, with an emphasis on family fishing opportunities as well as subsistence fishing. Criteria for evaluating LFFAs include quality of fishing, public safety, geographic location, proximity to other LFFAs, and site usage by anglers. There are currently 23 public ramps and piers designated as License Free Fishing Areas in Maryland (<http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/license-free.aspx>).

It is important to recognize that while LFFAs are a useful tool in increasing new participation, because they allow for year-round fishing without a license, these areas do have potential for impacting revenues from sales of recreational fishing licenses. License revenues are vital to the Department's ability to protect and manage Maryland's recreational fisheries. Therefore, the number of LFFAs must be maintained at a level which is appropriate based on the Department's mission. Recognizing this, it is incumbent that the Department work to maintain a geographically diverse network of License Fee Fishing Areas throughout the state in order to promote sustainable fishing while simultaneously holding the number of areas to an appropriate level.

Fishing and Boating Services (FABS) has received four inquiries for addition of a new area; however we do not currently have in place a formal application process or schedule for evaluating proposed additions, weighing them against existing areas and proposing changes. This is a necessary framework in light of: (1) requests for new areas; (2) the need to maintain a geographically diverse network of LFFAs; and (3) the potential impact to license sales.

The process outlined below will allow FABS to efficiently accept applications, work through the necessary evaluation of such requests (including internal review and site visits), scope potential changes with SFAC, and, where appropriate, prepare a regulatory proposal that would allow changes to be effective January 1.

- Develop a formal application (draft attached). Applications will only be accepted from the appropriate local or county government with jurisdiction for the area described in the application. The 4 jurisdictions that have already inquired will be asked to submit an application in accordance with this process.
- January 1 – March 31 - applications accepted (any applications arriving after April 1 will be held for the following year.)
- April 1 – May 31 - Internal review and evaluation of applications against LFFA goals and criteria.
- June 1 – June 30 – Development of potential regulatory proposals as appropriate.
- July – Scope potential LFFA regulatory changes at SFAC meeting.

LICENSE FREE FISHING AREA DESIGNATION

A license is required to fish in Maryland beginning at age 16 but at License Free Fishing Areas (LFFAs), anglers of any age can try fishing any time of the year without having to purchase a license (anglers must follow all other fishing laws and, except where noted, have completed a free Maryland Saltwater Angler registration).

Originally created in the mid-1980s, LFFAs have evolved into a tool that is helpful in increasing new participation in Maryland's recreational fishery, with an emphasis on family fishing opportunities as well as subsistence fishing.

Maryland is working to maintain a geographically diverse network of License Fee Fishing Areas throughout the state in order to promote sustainable fishing. Criteria for evaluating LFFAs include quality of fishing, public safety, geographic location, proximity to other LFFAs, and site usage by anglers. There are currently 23 public ramps and piers designated as License Free Fishing Areas in Maryland (<http://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/license-free.aspx>).

To request an area under your jurisdiction be evaluated for potential designation as a License Free Fishing Area, please complete the application form on the reverse side.

Applications are accepted annually from January 1 – March 31. Applications received after April 1 will be held for next calendar year.

**LICENSE FREE FISHING AREA DESIGNATION
APPLICATION FORM**

Applications are accepted January 1 – March 31 each year.

Applications received after April 1 will be held for next calendar year.

Upon submission of your application you will receive a notice confirming it was received.

Applicants will receive a message no later than July 15 regarding evaluation of your application and whether the proposed area has been accepted for consideration as a new License Free Fishing Area.

Application Date _____

Applicant (jurisdiction name & main contact) _____

Applicant Mailing Address _____

Applicant Phone & Email _____

County where area is located _____

Address or location of area (provide GPS coordinates if possible)

- 1) Describe area's proximity to residences, vehicle traffic and parking availability.

- 2) Describe area's ease of accessibility, cleanliness and fishing success.

- 3) Describe how the area is well suited to families, new or inexperienced anglers, and/or subsistence fishing.

- 4) Additional information that you request be considered in evaluation of the area

Submit your application via email to erik.zlokovitz@maryland.gov or fax to 410-260-8279. To submit by US mail, send to Erik Zlokovitz, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Fishing and Boating Services, 580 Taylor Avenue, B-2, Annapolis, MD 21401.