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April 18, 2018

John Griep, Executive Editor
The Star Democrat
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29088 Airpark Drive
Easton, Maryland 21601
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Re: "A slow start expected as striped bass season begins" by reporter Chris Knauss

Dear Mr. Griep:

In the article referenced above, published on April 14, 2018, reporter Chris Knauss presented information on the new regulation for striped bass (rockfish) in Maryland. He referred to the commercial netters as having "preferred status," and went on to describe them as not "average citizens." At Delmarva Fisheries Association (DFA), a registered 501(c)(6) Trade Association representing commercial fishermen (or "netters" as Mr. Knauss prefers) and the local seafood industry, we agree with the letter, if not the spirit, of his remarks. Our position is that our members, hard-working men and women who make their living in the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, are in fact *above average* citizens. I will elaborate:

1. Commercial fishermen, unlike recreational fishermen, must tag *every fish* they bring in. Recreational fishermen have 52% of the available quota for striped bass, yet do not report their catches in any meaningful, organized fashion. The accountability measures are in place in the commercial industry;
2. DFA, on behalf of commercial fishermen and the seafood industry, lobbied for these regulation changes in order to protect the striped bass population. It is well-documented that a lower length limit results in far fewer catch-and-release situations in which the fish are thrown back only to die. Which is why...
3. ...Commercial fishermen have also lobbied for a gear regulation requiring a non-offset circle hook to be used; this gives the fish a greater chance of survival if they are caught short (pun intended) and therefore re-released. This is an important piece of the proposed DNR regulation that Mr. Knauss failed to mention in his article.

We here at DFA are proud to represent the men and women of the commercial fisheries and the seafood industry on the Eastern Shore, and we share the outrage they have communicated with us following *The Star Democrat's* publication of this article. The swipe that Mr. Knauss took at our constituents was not only misleading, it was also disrespectful of the rich cultural heritage and large economic impact represented by the working watermen and women of the Chesapeake Bay. For proof, I draw your attention to the Maryland State Seal, which emblem features a

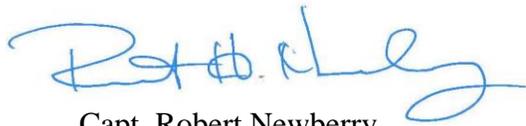
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waterman and a farmer as the two representative industries of our great State. Our members are amongst the loudest calling for important conservation efforts as their very livelihoods depend on a robust marine ecosystem. Thank you for the opportunity to set the record straight in the specific instance of new striped bass regulations, as well as Bay conservation initiatives more broadly. If anyone on your staff or in your readership cares to delve more deeply into these issues, we are always open to conversation.

Sincerely,



Capt. Robert Newberry
Chairman

