

CATCH & RECEIVE

The 2013 Maryland Fishing Challenge

By Martin Gary



Letha Gimnes

Families and friends enjoy a backyard fishing event at Warfield's Pond Park.

Looking for something fun to do? Something that allows you to enjoy Maryland's great outdoors and provides the opportunity to win prizes? For free? Whether you are looking to spend quality time with friends and family, or to be alone for some peace and quiet, fishing in Maryland offers the opportunities you seek.

The Challenge

Now in its 9th consecutive year, the 2013 Maryland Fishing Challenge offers extra incentives to fish our State's waters with chances to win great prizes. Thanks to generous sponsors, this year's rewards include a boat from Tracker Marine, an all-expenses paid fishing vacation from the World Fishing Network, tackle and merchandise from Bass Pro Shops, Bill's Outdoor Center and Under Armour, and maybe even a set of diamond stud earrings!

Up-to-Date Fishing Info

For tips on where to find the best fishing read DNR biologist Keith Lockwood's weekly Fishing Report at dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/fishingreport and the DNR Angler's Log at dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/fishingreport/log.asp

Sponsored by DNR and fishing organizations and donors, the Challenge is a free, year-round recreational tournament funded by revenue from fishing licenses, motorboat fuel and a federal excise tax on sport fishing equipment.

Showcasing Maryland as a sport fishing destination with affordable, accessible, diverse and high quality fishing opportunities, the Challenge lures families and friends out to enjoy the State's wonderful aquatic resources.

Angler Award Program

Any recreational angler fishing in Maryland can qualify by catching a minimum size fish from more than 80 eligible species, and submitting it at one of more than 75 DNR-designated Angler Award Centers (tackle shops). An eligible catch earns an official entry to the Challenge awards ceremony in September.

Catch and Release anglers may participate by bringing a photo of a qualifying catch — measured against a ruler along with the signature and contact information of a witness — to an Angler Award Center.

With Bluegills, Bass, Trout and Catfish in freshwater; Striped Bass, Bluefish, Croaker

and White Perch in the Chesapeake Bay; Flounder, Sea Bass, Tuna and Marlin off the Atlantic coast; and many more from the mountains to the ocean, there is plenty for everyone to catch. Even recreational crabbers have a chance to qualify by checking in a Blue Crab measuring at least nine inches from point to point.

Diamond Jim

The hunt for *Diamond Jim* honors Maryland's official State fish and the crown jewel of our waters — the Striped Bass. Established in 1956, the original *Diamond Jim* contest featured a single tagged fish and was sponsored by a Baltimore brewery, awarding \$25,000 to the lucky angler that caught him. In 1958, longshoreman William Simmons caught the elusive fish, wound up paying off several bills, and had enough money left over to buy a house and boat so he could fish more!



News American

\$25,000 BEAUTY—William Simmons, Baltimore, left, gets official confirmation from Brewery Official R. Leiter Fitz-Simmons, that the 10-pound rockfish he's holding is "Diamond Jim III," worth \$25,000. A local brewery in Baltimore turned the fish loose June 19 as a promotion stunt, offering the prize to anyone who caught the fish before Sept. 1. Simmons is unemployed.

A clipping shows one of *Diamond Jim*'s earliest winners.

Area tackle shops add to the excitement by providing bonus \$100 gift certificates to the first lucky angler who catches the real *Diamond Jim*. They include Alltackle and Anglers Sporting Goods in Annapolis, Marty's Sporting Goods in Edgewater, Fish Bones Bait & Tackle in Pasadena, Clyde's Sport Shop in Landsdowne and Herb's Tackle Shop in North East. As a special bonus, Zachary's Jewelers in Annapolis is offering a set of one-carat total weight diamond stud earrings for the first angler to reel in *Diamond Jim*.

Today, DNR Fisheries biologists and members of the Maryland Youth Fishing Club catch and tag as many as 600 Striped Bass over the summer months and release them back into the waters of the Chesapeake. Each month from June through Labor Day, one of these tagged fish is designated an authentic *Diamond Jim*.

The value rises each month he remains uncaught, with the potential to reach \$25,000. If no one snags the real deal, anglers who catch tagged imposters will split the reward. Those fish have a minimum value of \$500 each, and there is no limit to the number an angler can catch and enter. Therefore, by the first of August there will be more than \$300,000 in potential prize money swimming in the Chesapeake Bay and the tidal tributaries.

Be on the lookout for fish with bright green tags bearing the inscription *MD 2013 Diamond Jim Fishing Challenge* through midnight, September 2. If you catch a tagged fish, do not remove the tag (doing so will make your catch ineligible). Call the telephone number listed and keep the fish on ice or frozen until a DNR biologist can inspect and certify it.

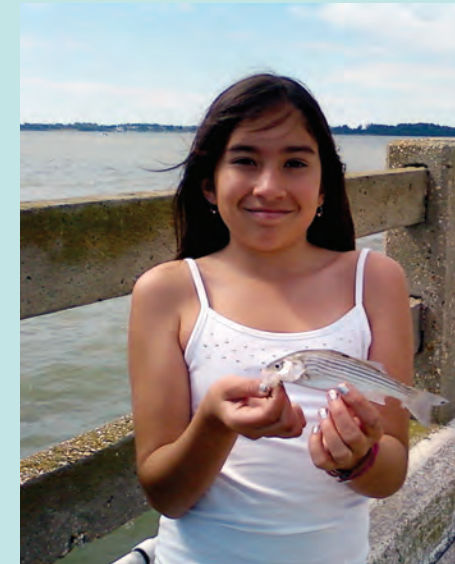


Fisheries Service

A *Diamond Jim* tag

Youth Anglers

The third component of the Challenge features youth anglers — the future of the sport. At selected youth rodeo events sponsored by local community and fishing organizations, one young angler under the age of 16 will be chosen to advance to the Finale.



Letha Gimnes

A pleased participant in the Bill Burton Family Fishing Rodeo

Not all youth rodeos are included in the Challenge. Check with the organizer of the rodeo to find out if the winner can advance. More information is available at dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/keepfishing.

The Grand Finale

The Challenge culminates at the Grand Finale during the Maryland Seafood Festival at Sandy Point State Park on September 7. DNR invites Angler Award winners, those who caught tagged *Diamond Jims* and/or imposters, and selected youth rodeo anglers and their families to the final awards ceremony for the chance to win prizes.

Since the Challenge began, DNR and the contest sponsors have given away more



DNR Archives

Anglers are recognized at the Grand Finale.



Edward Koubeck

This mini angler looks like a pro!



Lori Knight-Lakkey

Friends cast a line.

than \$600,000 in cash and prizes. The Maryland Fishing Challenge was created with input from more than 25 recreational fishing organizations. It remains a year-round contest, open to anyone who fishes recreationally in Maryland.

So gather your gear and cast a line. You will be a winner for going, and could be an even bigger winner by September!

For more information on the Maryland Fishing Challenge, contact Martin Gary at mlgary@dnr.state.md.us ■

dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/challenge

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