

## **GEAR — Fishing in Assateague State Park**

### **What is being considered?**

The Department is considering implementing restrictions on fishing methods at Assateague State Park during the April through October camping season which would be similar to restrictions already in place in the Town of Ocean City. The specific limits would be to prohibit the use of chum and to prohibit the delivery of bait by any means other than rod and reel when fishing from shore. In practice, this means that shore-based anglers would no longer be able to use kayaks, rockets, or drones to deliver baits. Those methods are currently in use to deliver baits further than anglers are able to cast with their rod.

### **Why is this change necessary?**

Ocean City Town ordinances restricting shark fishing have caused an increase in anglers at Assateague State Park and put more pressure on an already limited space. The purpose of implementing the restrictions which are under consideration would be to reduce conflicts between shark fishermen and other recreational users of Assateague State Park. Over recent years, Assateague State Park has reported seeing an increase in complaints from other recreational users regarding certain fishing methods that have increased in popularity with shore-based shark anglers. Conflicts between user groups are higher at Assateague State Park when compared to Assateague Island National Seashore because the state park has a much smaller footprint and no over sand vehicle area, which would otherwise allow user groups to spread out and minimize overlap. Furthermore, by adopting regulations for the park that mirror the restrictions already in place in Ocean City, recreational users will have consistent rules in these two highly used spaces.

### **Who will this affect?**

This change would affect anglers who fish at Assateague State Park.

### **Has this change been discussed with stakeholders?**

Aspects of this topic were first discussed with SFAC in October 2022 and formally scoped with SFAC and TFAC at their January 2023 meetings.

### **When would this be effective?**

The Department projects that this change could be effective in the early summer of 2023, however the exact date cannot be determined. The Department will follow our normal proposal procedures if this concept moves forward.

This idea is in the scoping process (January 27—February 12). During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a fishery problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the Department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

If the action is necessary and appropriate, the rules will be promulgated following the Administrative Procedures Act described in Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State Government Article Annotated Code of Maryland.

- The General Assembly's Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee reviews the regulatory proposal for fiscal and legal analysis.
- The proposal is printed by the Division of State Documents in the Maryland Register.
- A 30 day public comment period begins on the day of publication.
- After review of the comments, the Department may adopt the changes.
- If the Department adopts the changes, they become effective after a notice is published in the Maryland Register that announces approval and the effective date.