

Fishing and Boating Services

Fiscal Year 2025

Budget Report

to the

Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

INTRODUCTION

Within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), activities related to fishing and boating are managed within the Fishing and Boating Services (FABS). FABS' fisheries-related responsibilities include: assessing, protecting, conserving, fairly allocating, and promoting the sustainable utilization of the wild and farm-raised fish resources of Maryland, for balanced ecological and economic benefits. This is accomplished through scientific investigation, application of data, and proactive involvement with an informed citizenry.

FABS' fisheries-related responsibilities fall into four core functions:

1. Protect, conserve, and enhance fisheries resources.
2. Provide and enhance fishing opportunities, including access.
3. Provide sustainable economic opportunities.
4. Promote and protect fisheries resources through public outreach and education.

This report to the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC) focuses on revenues and expenditures associated with the unit's fisheries-related funding sources and activities.

Revenue from sport anglers provides funding for almost half of all DNR fisheries programs in Maryland. This revenue is derived from the sales of fishing licenses, gasoline sales surcharges, and a federal excise tax on sport fishing tackle and related equipment. Other funding sources include general funds from state taxpayers, commercial license sales, reimbursable funds, and federal grants.

Natural Resources Article § 4-745 requires DNR to publicly report annually the amount of sport fishing license revenues credited to and expended from the Fisheries Research and Development Fund (FRD) which supports work in tidal waters of the State. In the annual preparation of plans to expend this revenue, DNR is required to solicit advice and opinions from the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC), representative fishing and boating associations, and other interested parties. Sport fishing fees associated with the nontidal licenses are assigned to the Fisheries Management and Protection Fund (FMP).

This report meets statutory requirements and shows the importance of angler contributions to state programs and services.

BUDGET

Reporting Period and Budget Terminology

This report provides budget information for revenues and expenditures during Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025), the most recently completed fiscal year. Here is a description of terms used in this report:

- **SPECIAL FUNDS** – Consists of revenues collected by the state, the use of which is statutorily limited to certain purposes. For FABS, special funds are derived from fees collected from recreational fishing license sales, commercial fishing license sales, the oyster bushel tax, aquaculture fees, gasoline sales surcharges, and agreements with non-government organizations. Recreational tidal license sales and fee revenues are deposited into the Fisheries Research and Development Fund (**FRD**). Nontidal license sale revenues are deposited into the Fisheries Management and Protection Fund (**FMP**).
- **FEDERAL FUNDS** – Are made available to state and local governments under programs administered by agencies of the U.S. government. Federal grants are classified as block grants or categorical grants. Block grant funds typically have fewer federal restrictions associated with their use than categorical grant funds, which generally are limited to the specific purposes authorized by law or federal agency rules. In most instances, federal funds must be matched by state funds (general or special) in a prescribed ratio. FABS relies on revenue from a federal tax on sport fishing tackle purchases (Wallop-Breaux Amendment), and federal partners grant awards from federal taxes.
- **GENERAL FUNDS** – The general fund consists of any revenues collected by the state that are not dedicated by law to a specific purpose. The individual income tax, retail sales tax, and state lottery are the three largest sources of general fund revenue. Other sources include corporate income tax and other business taxes, alcohol and tobacco taxes, and miscellaneous taxes and fees.
- **REIMBURSABLE FUNDS** – Revenue from Maryland state agencies including, but not limited to the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Department of Environment.

License Sales, Revenues, and Expenditures

A. License Sales

Maryland recreational fishing and crabbing licenses are valid for 365 days from the date of purchase (excluding three and seven day licenses) and therefore, license sales are reported by fiscal year. Sport fishing and crabbing license sales for FY19 through FY25 are provided in Tables 1 and 2, along with the Maryland Saltwater Angler and Private Property Crab Pot registrations.

There were **392,966** revenue-generating recreational fishing licenses obtained in Maryland during FY25 (Table 1). A total of **60,413** revenue-generating licenses for recreational crabbing activities were obtained in FY25 (Table 1). The FY25 total figures do not include free registrations (these are located at the bottom of Table 1).

Table 1. Maryland Recreational License Sales by Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)

RECREATIONAL FISHING OR CRABBING LICENSE, STAMP, OR REGISTRATION TYPE	FISCAL YEAR						
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Resident Nontidal	103,760	106,150	107,513	108,186	122,113	119,640	105,927
Nonresident Nontidal	15,779	15,835	16,019	16,033	17,397	14,371	13,379
3-Day Nontidal	7,832	7,734	7,827	7,954	9,125	7,174	7,334
Resident 7-Day Nontidal	6,094	5,551	5,120	4,845	6,164	5,167	4,793
Nonresident 7-Day Nontidal	3,419	3,570	3,219	3,454	3,697	2,978	3,065
Resident Trout Stamp	35,994	37,172	38,704	40,579	45,085	41,354	41,153
Nonresident Trout Stamp	7,325	7,372	7,673	7,970	8,641	6,601	7,035
Senior Consolidated License	34,325	33,042	34,935	34,097	34,902	30,471	30,494
Resident Bay and Coastal Sport	93,327	96,862	100,509	100,623	112,837	113,328	97,723
Nonresident Bay and Coastal Sport	24,279	24,385	25,214	24,333	26,693	23,969	21,814
Resident 7-Day Bay and Coastal Sport	4,227	4,779	4,468	4,404	5,262	5,063	4,424
Nonresident 7-Day Bay and Coastal Sport	14,895	14,237	13,957	14,660	15,370	14,104	14,905
Resident Bay and Coastal Sport Boat	30,822	33,469	38,068	37,945	39,073	36,518	40,907
Nonresident Bay and Coastal Sport Boat	7,864	9,468	10,329	10,435	10,969	10,137	10,506
FISHING TOTALS	390,044	399,626	413,555	415,518	457,328	430,875	402,967
Resident Recreational Crabbing	42,999	44,673	46,969	49,522	55,186	51,806	47,284
Nonresident Recreational Crabbing	6,200	6,359	6,465	7,323	8,267	6,515	6,138
Resident Recreational Crabbing Boat	7,973	6,980	7,315	7,583	7,496	5,910	5,328
Nonresident Recreational Crabbing Boat	3,049	2,897	2,849	3,209	3,430	2,764	2,779
CRABBING TOTALS	60,221	60,909	63,598	67,637	74,379	66,995	61,529
Resident Saltwater Angler Registration	7,126	6,435	7,578	6,979	7,639	7,647	7,296
Nonresident Saltwater Angler Registration	4,207	3,579	4,774	5,391	6,305	6,142	6,958
Private Property Crab Pot Registration	3,971	3,703	4,189	4,086	4,065	3,684	3,256

The following licenses (Table 2) are issued by the DNR for recreational fishing businesses and contribute to the recreational license revenue.

Table 2. Maryland Recreational Fishing Business License Sales by Fiscal Year (July 1 - June 30)

RECREATIONAL FISHING OR CRABBING BUSINESS LICENSE TYPE	FISCAL YEAR						
	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Resident Bay and Coastal Charter Boat 7 Plus	118	151	209	169	173	212	242
Nonresident Bay and Coastal Charter Boat 7 Plus	1	0	0	2	2	2	2
Resident Bay and Coastal Charter Boat Up to 6	304	372	377	329	356	333	345
Nonresident Bay and Coastal Charter Boat Up to 6	14	15	13	8	12	11	15
Resident Fishing Guide with Tidal	14	7	11	15	14	10	17
Nonresident Fishing Guide with Tidal	3	4	2	4	6	3	4
Resident Freshwater Fishing Guide	26	31	27	25	28	26	30
Nonresident Freshwater Fishing Guide	17	21	22	22	13	13	16
Resident Limited Fishing Guide	23	17	17	15	20	10	8
Nonresident Limited Fishing Guide	2	3	6	2	3	1	4
Commercial Fishing Pier License	5	5	6	4	6	2	2
Crab Charter	87	89	77	71	52	47	51
TOTAL	614	715	767	666	685	670	736

B. Revenues

Total FY25 fisheries revenues (all fund sources) were **\$27,120,190** and are broken down as follows: 53% Special Fund, 18% Federal Fund, 23% General Fund, and 6% Reimbursable Fund.

In FY25, FABS began with \$788,243 in encumbered funds (as noted in the FY24 Budget Report). An encumbrance is a restriction on use, or setting aside of funds, to ensure that there will be sufficient funds available to pay for specific obligations or contracts. The majority of these funds were paid out during FY25 which ended with an encumbrance of \$150,576. In the event the contract or agreement is no longer needed, the funds will remain in the special fund beginning balance without a spending restriction.

FABS began FY25 with a reserve fund balance of \$8,235,629 and \$3,563,869 in the FRD and FMP funds, respectively for a total reserve fund balance of \$11,799,498 (Table 3).

Table 3. FABS – Special Funds – FY25

	Fisheries Research and Development Fund	Fisheries Management and Protection Fund	Total
Beginning Balance	8,235,629	3,563,869	11,799,498
Revenues	8,021,543	3,635,621	11,657,164
Adjustments		246,017	246,017
Total Funds Available	16,257,172	7,445,507	23,702,679
Summary of Expenditures			
Fishing and Boating Services	9,115,718	4,483,588	13,559,306
Operational Support:			
<i>Office of the Secretary</i>	54,272		54,272
<i>Office of the Attorney General</i>	22,915	25,007	47,922
<i>Fiscal and Administrative Services</i>	482,228	382,840	865,067
<i>Human Resource Services</i>	40,864	54,011	94,875
<i>Information Technology</i>	38,283	58,324	96,607
<i>Office of Communications</i>	58,390	6,060	64,450
<i>Licensing and Registration Service</i>	1,501,413	250,236	1,751,649
<i>Natural Resources Police</i>	108,583	412,028	520,611
Total Operational Support	2,306,949	1,188,505	3,495,454
Total Expenditures	11,422,667	5,672,093	17,094,760
Ending Balance (Total Funds Available – Total Expenditures)	4,834,505	1,773,444	6,607,949
Year End Encumbrance Balance	150,576	59,670	210,246

C. Expenditures

In FY25, FABS expended \$6,323,364 in General Funds, \$4,564,769 in Federal Funds, \$1,662,013 in Reimbursable Funds, and \$17,094,760 in Special Funds, a combined total of **\$29,664,906**. Special Fund expenditures can be broken down into **\$11,422,667** from FRD and **\$5,672,093** from FMP. This includes overhead expenditure of \$3,495,454 paid to other units within DNR in support of FABS' fisheries-related mission, consistent with priorities identified in the 2008 report of the Task Force on Fisheries Management (Table 3). This includes but is not limited to: the enforcement of fisheries management rules (i.e., Natural Resources Police); habitat preservation and restoration (i.e., water quality monitoring, benthic habitat surveys, prioritization of critical habitats, environmental review), fiscal services, legal issues, communications, information technology and licensing services.

D. Summary

Fishing and Boating Services is highly vigilant on managing revenue generated through license sales so that we maintain our core work to manage and conserve our fisheries resources and bolster our outdoor economy. During the 2025 legislative session, non-tidal license fees were increased for the first time since 2007 and the cost of a trout stamp was raised for the first time since 1992. This action will offset the trending increase to operational costs in FMP-funded projects which are carried out statewide in a variety of habitats including coldwater streams, tailwaters, warmwater rivers, impoundments and tidal freshwater. The new fees became effective on June 1, 2025 will ensure the continuation of core projects, and support a healthy FMP fund reserve going forward.

Over the last few years, the maintenance of core projects funded by the FRD fund (tidal license sales) has required use of reserve funds and this trend continues into the foreseeable future. The Department and FABS is carefully monitoring this situation given the highly variable nature of general funds and the static or declining trend in federal funds.