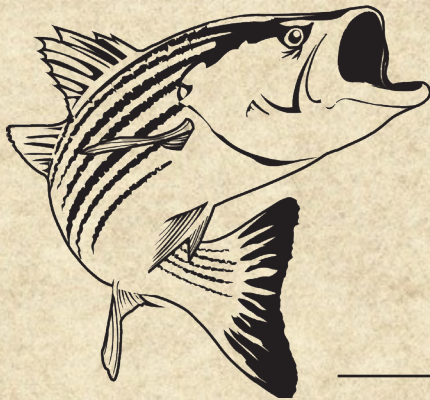


The Maryland Department Of Natural Resources  
and  
The Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

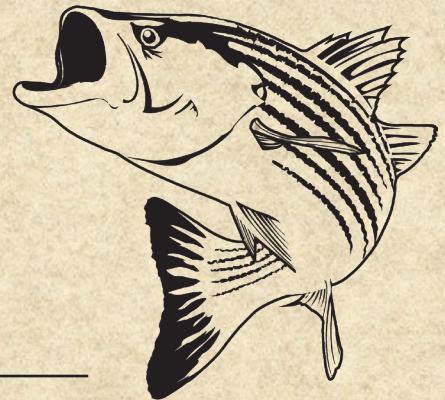
# Annual Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award



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**2022 Recipients**  
Captain Bruno Vasta  
and  
James 'Jim' W. Gracie  
(Posthumous)

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**David Sikorski**  
Chairperson  
Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

**Lynn Waller Fegley**  
Acting Director  
Department of Natural Resources,  
Fishing and Boating Services

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## **2022 Award Presentations**

**Captain Bruno Vasta,**  
nominated by Dr. Jerry G. Gaff

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**James 'Jim' W. Gracie,**  
nominated by Jason Andrick



# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2022 Recipient

# Captain Bruno Vasta

*Nominated by Dr. Jerry G. Gaff*

An officer of the Southern Maryland Recreational Fishing Organization (SMRFO) wrote, upon learning of the prospect of nominating Captain Bruno for this award, "Bruno has done more for fishing in the Chesapeake and clubs than anyone!" This nomination letter will explain why his sentiment is both accurate and widespread.

After earning degrees from Georgetown University and George Washington University in biochemistry, he started his long career at the National Institutes of Health. When the Environmental Protection Agency was created, he was transferred there to identify the chemicals toxic to humans and create regulations to protect the public. Bruno returned to the NIH where he provided leadership within the National Library of Medicine to determine the effects of various chemicals on people. He was instrumental in building TOXNET, a revolutionary online system for disseminating toxicology information. Bruno was appointed a charter member of the Senior Executive Service by order of President Jimmy Carter. He was awarded the NIH Merit Award and the NIH Director's Award for his vision, creativity, and leadership using TOXNET to deliver toxicology data to the biomedical community.

After his retirement from government service, Bruno finally was able to pursue his passion for fishing, especially in the Chesapeake Bay. He joined the Solomons and Maryland Charter Captains Associations as well as the Southern Maryland Chapter (SMC) of the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association (MSSA). Soon he created and edited an SMC Newsletter that was the means to spread valuable information about fishing to its members.

In 1999, Capt. Bruno was elected President of the SMC Chapter, where he helped launch several educational activities to teach children how to fish and to become good stewards of the water resources. One activity was a partnership with St. Mary's County schools and parks that brought scores of children to the Point Lookout Fishing Pier where many Chapter volunteers helped the children catch fish. He initiated a relationship with the Greenwell Foundation that culminated in SMC sponsoring week-long fishing camps where students learn to identify the various fish in the local waters, make their own bottom rigs, and participate in casting contests. The highlight of the week was fishing off one of several boats captained by club members. Capt. Bruno's boat, the Dotty-Vee, always took at least six children for the outings. Capt. Bruno invited charter captains, scientists, DNR policy makers, and other experts to speak at monthly member meetings. In this way, he expanded his influence, create a network of fishermen, and gained the respect of untold numbers of saltwater fishermen.

In 2002 and 2003 Capt. Bruno was elected President of the MSSA statewide organization, the only person from Southern Maryland to be so honored. In that capacity he (1) expanded the organization's ability to lobby the State legislature for laws and regulations designed to preserve various fish species; (2) increased membership to thousands of anglers; and (3) encouraged all 14 chapters to devise their own fishing activities for kids.

In 2003, Capt. Bruno was appointed by Governor Robert Ehrlich to serve as a Commissioner to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) which sets regulations for fishing along the entire East Coast of the U.S. There he advocated promoting sustainable fishing, cleaning up the Bay, and advancing the interests of Maryland.

Through a partnership with the Solomons Charter Captains he provided leadership for creating artificial reefs to attract and support sportfish. He saw the potential in the debris of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge as it was being replaced by a new structure. The remains of the old bridge were barged down the Potomac River to the Bay where they were deposited to create artificial reefs. This project grew so big and successful that it was eventually taken over by the State's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide professional management and continuity.

In summary, after decades of working for the fish and recreational fishermen, Capt. Bruno is known and respected for all that he has done for fishing in the Chesapeake Bay. Like star entertainers who are so good that they only need to use one name (e.g. Cher, Madonna, and Prince), Bruno is a superstar known all around the Chesapeake Bay simply as Captain Bruno. He would be an excellent choice for this award.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

## 2022 Recipient

### James ‘Jim’ W. Gracie (posthumous)

*Nominated by Jason Andrick*

Nominating Jim Gracie for the Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award was one of the most natural actions I have ever taken in my life. Jim Gracie’s mettle and courage as an outdoor conservationist are unmatched. I would argue not just in Maryland, but throughout our vast country. Grit is what Jim had and he fostered this same spirit in many of us who volunteered alongside him.

#### **G**reat Outdoors

Not only did Jim fall under Mother Nature’s spell as a young boy in the Baltimore area (banks of), but many a story about how he built his circle of influence through trout fishing and grouse hunting. Whether on/in the water or in the woods, Jim had friends, colleagues and partners from Garret County across the Chesapeake and to the Eastern Shore. Truly, he understood the importance of the Great Outdoors to all mankind.

#### **R**ecruitment

Jim was always on the lookout for folks who shared his passion and had the ability to make a difference. I was involved with Trout Unlimited before I knew Jim, but my involvement in cold water conservation grew and continues due to Jim’s personal influence. There are countless other Marylanders who have been influenced to make an impact in the consecration area due to Jim’s influence.

#### **I**ntegrity

A man of faith, Jim’s tenacity was rooted in his heavenly beliefs. Integrity was ever present, but really just a natural consequence of his faith.

#### **T**enacity

Jim’s grip on a Brookie was tender and gracious. His grip on conservation pursuits were firm and deliberate. State agencies and leaders quickly recognized this trait. His love for Mother Nature never faltered. His passion was infectious.

As a result of Jim’s passing, several wonderful writings were produced about Jim. I argue volumes could be written. As a Marylander who grew up in the mountains of western Maryland, I am very humbled to have worked with him to further influence cold water conservation in our great state.



# **Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award**

## **Past Recipients**

**2020 - Dr. Kenneth Lewis**

**2020 - Benard 'Lefty' Kreh** (posthumous)

**2021 - Robert Wall**

**2021 - Joseph W. Brooks** (posthumous)



# Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

The commission was established to advise the Maryland Department of Natural Resources on matters referred to the commission by the department. The commission is comprised of individuals from across the State who represent the interests of various constituencies in recreational fisheries (and one member represents the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission).

The Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award was established in 2019 by the commission for Maryland-related recreational fisheries. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have provided sustained efforts in habitat management, conservation, education, research, and / or other meaningful contributions that benefit fish and recreational fishing in Maryland. The award is a celebration of conservation, education, and sportsmanship. Thank you to all in attendance today and thank you to all nominators for submitting nominations representing individuals from around the State.



# The Maryland Department of Natural Resources

In a sustainable Maryland, we recognize that the health of our society and our economy are dependent on the health of our environment. Therefore, we choose to act both collectively and individually to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance our environment for this and future generations.

The Department of Natural Resources leads Maryland in securing a sustainable future for our environment, society, and economy by preserving, protecting, restoring, and enhancing the State's natural resources.

## Objectives

- Sustainable Populations of Living Resources and Aquatic Habitat
- Healthy Maryland Watershed Lands, Streams and Non-Tidal Rivers
- Natural Resources Stewardship Opportunities for Maryland's Urban and Rural Citizens
- Conserved and Managed Statewide Network of Ecologically Valuable Private and Public Lands
- Diverse Outdoor Recreation Opportunities for Maryland Citizens and Visitors
- Diverse Workforce and Efficient Operations



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and  
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# Annual Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Awards

