

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

# Annual Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award



---

**Dr. Ray Morgan**  
2024 Recipient

---



**Josh Kurtz**

Secretary

Department of Natural Resources

**Lynn Waller Fegley**

Director

Department of Natural Resources,  
Fishing and Boating Services

**Scott Lenox**

Chairperson

Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission

**2024 Award Presentation**

October 15, 2024

**Dr. Ray Morgan,**

nominated by

John Neely and JP Andrick

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

2024 Recipient

## Dr. Ray Morgan



*Nominated by John Neely (first of two nominations)*

Dr. Morgan (Ray) was a long time Commissioner on the Maryland Governor's Sport Fisheries Commission; his final term ended in June, 2023. Ray's academic background was originally centered around saltwater species, particularly striped bass. Over time his focus changed to coldwater species, concentrating on Maryland's native brook trout.

Dr. Morgan's work as Director at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science Appalachian Lab in Frostburg led to national recognition in pioneering genetic studies on brook trout. This research has led to the identification of genetically distinct native brook trout populations in different stream drainages. Ray is generally considered to be one of the leading university academics on coldwater species, and in genetics in particular, the leading authority in the United States.

Ray, in collaboration with others or on his own, has authored approximately 125 papers. In 2023 he was recognized by the American Fisheries Society with their highest honor, the Stevan Phelps Award for work in genetics. His study of 1,700 brook trout in Maryland waters, including 22,000 samples, is the largest genetic study of any single fish specimen that has been written.

Dr. Morgan was a full professor at the UMCES Appalachian Lab, serving as its director for many years. He has awarded three PhD degrees and more than twenty Masters level degrees. His graduates have gone on to distinguished careers, and among others, include Maryland DNR's Tony Prochaska and Matthew Sell. He also raised more than \$7 million in grants for the Appalachian Lab.

Dr. Morgan's legacy is in the ongoing work of his students, and his cutting edge research in fish genetics. Moreover, because of numerous remediation projects he personally instituted to counteract the effects of Acid Mine Drainage, Maryland's Lake Louise and six streams are considered recovered and now support naturally reproducing wild trout. Ray is presently researching the effects of road salt on aquatic organisms and water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, with the results of his studies yet to be published.

It is my high honor to nominate Dr. Ray Morgan for Maryland's highest fisheries award, the Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

2024 Recipient

## Dr. Ray Morgan

*Nominated by JP Andrick (second of two nominations)*

It is my honor, on behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Council of Trout Unlimited, to nominate Dr. Ray Morgan for consideration to receive the Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award. Having recently turned 80 years of age, retired and completed his service to the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission as a multi-term commissioner; Ray has truly demonstrated a lifetime dedicated to positive impacts on trout and coldwater fisheries through research, conservation, habitat management and education. The reach of Dr. Morgan's impacts go well beyond the borders of Maryland, although within Maryland he has fostered fish and habitat related friendships with DNR fisheries staff (a large percentage are former students), local and statewide conservation group volunteers, anglers, academic researchers and government officials. In fact due to this, Dr. Morgan is better known as simply "Ray" to countless Marylanders who love fishing and brook trout.

Interestingly enough, Ray is a native Marylander and pursued his education within the state borders. He earned a bachelor of science degree from Frostburg State College (now Frostburg State University) in biology in 1966. He went on to obtain a Phd in zoology from the University of Maryland in 1971. Professionally, Ray identifies as an ecotoxicologist. In fact, he is certainly a pioneer in this field. A large portion of Ray's career was spent at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, located in Frostburg, MD, as a researcher, educator and mentor.

His research interests were Pollution and Aquatic Restoration Ecology and Conservation Biology and Fishery Genetics. His work not only considered acid mine drainage (AMD) habitats in Western Maryland, but largely the effects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. His research has been cited at least 1,993 times since 2019.

His areas of expertise include:

- Stream ecology
- Fishery genetics
- Pollution ecology
- Urban ecology

Ray's research and role as an educator - not to mention his informal advice and counsel when called upon by DNR staffers and Trout Unlimited staff/volunteers alike - has been influential to furthering policy, management plans, projects and overall awareness in regards to habitat management, conservation and education.

Ray has been an active member of Trout Unlimited in Western Maryland. His support, involvement and advice have assisted not only the local (western MD) Youghiogheny and Nemascolin chapters, but also the Mid-Atlantic Council (our multi-state - DC/MD/DE - organization). As an avid sportsman (angler and fly tyer), Ray's enthusiasm for local fishing, fly tying and materials, and decoy collection give him plenty of fuel for conversation a little more toned down from his research.

In summary, Dr. Ray Morgan has demonstrated a lifetime of contributions and passion oriented to advancing awareness, education, conservation, research in regards to brook trout, water quality and their habitat within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Through his work and the work/influence of his former students (DNR staffers) and conservation groups (Trout Unlimited - staffers and volunteers) fish and recreational fishermen in Maryland have all benefited. We cannot think of another living Maryland citizen more deserving of this Sport Fisheries Achievement Award.

# Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award Past Recipients

**2020 - Dr. Kenneth Lewis**

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

**2021 - Robert Wall**

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

**2022 - Captain Bruno Vasta**

**2022 - James 'Jim' Gracie** (posthumous)

**2023 - Captain Monty Hawkins**

# 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.



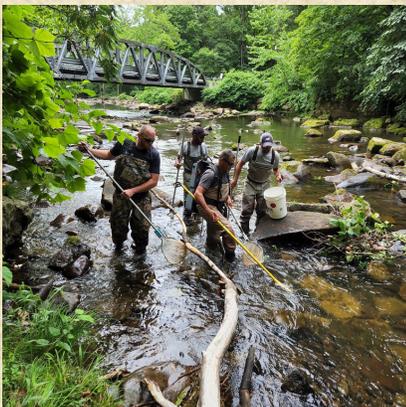
# The Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Inspired by nature and rooted in science to improve and grow stewardship for Maryland's natural resources.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources leads the state toward a resilient future by using data, partnerships, and an innovative spirit to improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all Marylanders.

## 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



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

# Annual Maryland Sport Fisheries Achievement Award

