

## **Sport Fishing magazine honors VIMS professor**

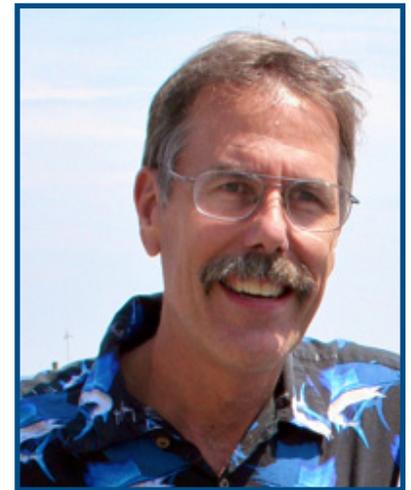
(August 1, 2011) *Sport Fishing* magazine has chosen professor John Graves of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science as one of five winners of its inaugural *Making a Difference* awards.

With more than 100,000 readers in the United States and Canada, *Sport Fishing* is North America's leading magazine for saltwater anglers.

A panel of judges from the recreational-fishing community joined with on-line voters to select the winners, based on the nominees' contributions to saltwater recreational angling in areas such as resource conservation and management, access to public waters, habitat protection, public education, technological innovation, and scientific research.

In their award announcement, the awards panel writes that Graves, Chancellor Professor of Marine Science at VIMS, is "one of the most important advocates for recreational sport fishing on the planet."

Graves, an expert in fish genetics, has served as Chair of the U.S. delegation to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) for the past 17 years, and is a member of the National Marine Fisheries Service's advisory panels for Billfish and Highly Migratory Species. He also serves on the Department of Commerce's Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, the nation's top advisory body for management of commercial and recreational fisheries in U.S. waters.



VIMS professor John Graves.

The awards panel notes that Graves' genetics research on billfish allowed federal fisheries officials to distinguish Pacific blue marlin from illegally sold Atlantic blue marlin. They also note that his early work with pop-up satellite tags led directly to the use of circle hooks for billfish, sharply increasing the survival rate of marlin, swordfish, and sailfish in the catch-and-release fishery.

Graves has also contributed to the saltwater angling community through his 20-year association with the *Mid-Atlantic* \$500,000, the "Mother of All Marlin Tournaments" and one of the top competitive billfishing events in the world. Graves and colleagues in the Fisheries Genetics Lab at VIMS have used biological samples collected from fish brought to weigh stations during the tournament for a host of research projects. These projects have re-ordered the billfish family tree, and give encouraging signs of a rebounding population among white marlin in the Atlantic.

Other winners of the inaugural *Making a Difference* Awards are Captain Al Anderson of Narragansett, Rhode Island for his contributions to scientific understanding of migratory fishes in the Northeast; Tom Twyford Jr., of West Palm Beach, Florida, a leading member of the West Palm Beach Fishing Club; Captain Billy Sandifer of

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Corpus Christi, Texas for his stewardship of the Padre Island National Seashore; and Steve Medeiros of Coventry, Rhode Island for his work with the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association.

The awards panel states “These men hail from a wide range of backgrounds, but all exhibit several similar characteristics: All are leaders. They believe in grassroots organizing. All are proactive. And none is afraid to speak his mind about recreational fishing.”