

Susanna Musick recognized by Virginia Beach Angler's Club

By Erin Kelly

(March 29, 2013) Marine Recreation Specialist Susanna Musick of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science has been selected by the Virginia Beach Angler's Club as the recipient of the prestigious Dr. James C. Wright Conservation Honorary Award.

The VBAC—a family oriented angler's club located in Virginia Beach—presents the award annually to an individual who has substantially contributed to the conservation of freshwater or saltwater fishes. The club not only promotes recreational angling and encourages sport-fishing activities, but also supports the preservation, conservation, and ecology of all marine life.

"I was both surprised and humbled to receive the Dr. Wright Conservation Award," says Musick. "It's an absolute honor to be recognized by fellow anglers who are as passionate as I am about the conservation of fisheries stocks."

Butch Eason has been a VBAC member for 30 years and serves as chairman of the committee that selected Musick for the award. "Various candidates were proposed this year, but Susanna was the best fit for our ongoing efforts in conservation," says Eason.

At VIMS, Musick serves as the Principal Investigator for the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program (VGFTP)—a cooperative project between VIMS' Marine Advisory Services program and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. The program—in operation since 1995—is primarily funded with revenue from Virginia's saltwater recreational fishing license, and also receives support from VIMS. VGFTP trains volunteer taggers to provide fisheries managers with data on migration patterns and habitat use of 10 species of recreationally important finfish.

The VGFTP targets recreational finfish species not tagged by any other programs, promotes proper techniques and benefits of catch-and-release fishing, and provides data on the movement and habitat use of recreational finfish in Virginia's coastal waters.

A native of Gloucester, Musick grew up fishing and exploring the Ware River, which has led to a lifelong interest in angling and a love of Chesapeake Bay. "Fishing is one of my favorite pastimes," says Musick. "It's one of those activities where time just slips away, and I want future generations to be able to enjoy it as much as I do."



Winner: VIMS Marine Recreation Specialist Susanna Musick was awarded by the Virginia Beach Angler's Club with the Dr. James C. Wright Conservation Honorary Award in March. Photo by Mark Pearson

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In addition to her work with the VGFTP, Musick provides fisheries extension services to the VMRC, the charter boat industry, and the public angling community. “My job combines all of the things I love the most,” says Musick. “It’s the perfect combination of research and working with anglers. I get to fish too, so that’s got to be the best part!”

Musick earned her undergraduate degree in biology from the College of William & Mary while working as a summer aide in Marine Advisory Services at VIMS. After a stint in the Peace Corps and obtaining her Master’s in biodiversity and conservation from the University of Exeter, Musick worked for the United Kingdom Overseas Territories as head of the Conservation Department on Ascension Island. Musick returned to her Gloucester roots in 2010 to occupy her current position as Marine Recreation Specialist at VIMS.

Though not a member of the VBAC, Musick introduced club angler’s to the VGFTP after being invited to come speak at one of their meetings last December, with the hope that some of the angler’s would volunteer for the program in the future. The VBAC is one of Virginia’s oldest angling clubs, promoting the interest and participation of its members in recreational angling and sport fishing since 1959.

Read more about the Virginia Beach Angler’s Club here: <http://www.virginiabeachanglersclub.org/index.html>



Training Taggers: Susanna Musick, who oversees the VIMS component of the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program, shows new taggers how to measure the length of their catch. Photo by David Malmquist