

Fisheries reform



Photo by Rip Woodin

Fishermen at the Cape Lookout rock jetty would see major increases in fish stocks under new legislation.

Coalition begins major legislative push for change

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

CCA NC has joined a broad group of conservation organizations and outdoor industry leaders to support legislation that would radically change fisheries management policy from maximum harvest to science-based, long-term sustainability.

The Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Economic Development Act (House Bill 867) was recently filed in the N.C. General Assembly by a bipartisan group of responsible legislators. HB 867 would promote the economic development of coastal North Carolina through the restoration and long-term conservation of North



YARBOROUGH

See **COALITION, 2**

Study: New economic benefits could reach \$4.2 billion

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Before House Bill 867 was even written, the fledgling NC Sound Economy coalition raised \$150,000 to fund an independent study that concluded the state's fisheries, if managed differently, could generate \$4.2 billion in total revenue over a 30-year period.

In addition to the sales figure across all areas of commerce, the study found state fisheries could generate \$829.7 million in profit and consumer surplus

The parameters of the study were limited to eight of 17 species of fish that the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries lists

For more on fishery reform, see:

- A report on a study by a Maryland biologist - page 6
- Raffle will help finance HB867 efforts - page 12

while creating 1,493 additional jobs worth \$1.6 billion in new labor income.

The parameters of the study were limited to eight of 17 species of fish that the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries lists

as "depleted" or "of concern."

The state is experiencing tremendous economic loss because of short-term planning, NCSE said on its website.

"This groundbreaking study provides an in-depth examination of benefits to our fishing economy if fish populations

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COALITION

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Carolina's public, coastal fisheries resources.

This is a goal that has been advocated by CCA NC for decades, and whose time is long overdue, explained David Sneed, CCA NC executive director. But HB 867 is much bigger than just CCA NC, he said.

"For years, we have witnessed the fights between commercial and recreational fishermen over a dwindling resource. Every small effort to increase the number of fish in our coastal waters is met with stonewalling, and no progress is ever made," Sneed said.

Burlington businessman Allen Gant formed the NC Sound Economy coalition, which CCA NC supports, last year to change North Carolina's failed fisheries management policies and restore our coastal fish stocks, said Bud Abbott, CCA NC chairman. HB 867 would replace our current fisheries management model of short-sighted maximum harvest benefiting a very few, with a model based on long-term, sustainable harvest for all citizens, he said.

"Doing so would move North Carolina from very last among coastal states that responsibly manage their public trust fisheries resources to the top of the list, and make our state the leader in good coastal fisheries management," Abbott said.

NC Sound Economy is an expanding coalition of fishermen, conservationists, businesses and concerned citizens with a goal of passing HB 867 into law to achieve resource conservation, economic growth and ending the unproductive fights over shrinking fish stocks, he continued.

In addition to CCA NC, the N.C. Chamber of Commerce, North Carolina Wildlife Federation, the American Sport-fishing Association, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, and outdoor industry leaders Big Rock Sports, Yamaha Marine, Grady-White Boats, Summit Hospitality Group, Neuse Sports Shop and Custom Marine Fabrication all support the coalition.

HB 867 would fix significant problems with the now 20-year-old Fisheries Reform Act of 1997, which has led directly to a continued shrinking of our coastal fish stocks, Sneed explained.

"Fisheries management under current



Photo by Rip Woodin

The N.C. House is considering a bill that would change the way marine resources are managed.

law has led us to the point where only five out of 22 state-managed coastal fin-fish and shellfish stocks are considered viable."

Abbott said an independent study by the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science concluded restoring N.C.'s fish stocks to historic levels would have a \$4.2 billion annual economic impact. HB 867 would:

- Affirm that our coastal fisheries are a public trust resource and must therefore be managed for the benefit of all citizens.

- Move state fisheries management policy from a maximum harvest model to a conservation model that ensures the long-term benefits of coastal fisheries resources.

- Require consistent state agency management decisions based on the best available science by setting specific biological benchmarks and requiring other

measures to ensure the long-term viability of each species.

- Ensure that the state law prohibiting the overfishing of any coastal fish stock is actually enforced in every case where overfishing is occurring.

- Streamline the regulatory process with the creation of the Marine Fisheries Resources Advisory Council.

- Provide the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission with temporary rulemaking authority in line with the authority held by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

"This is a visionary approach that is right for our state," Abbott concluded.

State House Rep. Larry Yarborough (R-2) is a primary sponsor of the bill along with Reps. John Bell, Ted Davis and Jay Adams. Although he isn't from a coastal district (Granville and Person Counties), he brings a unique perspective

to the fisheries issue.

"I grew up on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and have fished saltwater since I was a little kid," Yarborough explained. His first job was a fishing guide.

"When I moved here 28 years ago, I got a boat and a place on Harkers Island and started fishing only to find out there were no fish," he explained. "I watched the nets come out of the water in all the other southern states and the fishing got so much better in Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida," Yarborough said.

"I could catch more fish in one weekend on the Gulf Coast than all summer at Harkers Island," he added.

Yarborough sponsored HB867 because he wants to see the fighting between commercial and recreational interests stop. He witnessed the same fight in other states 25 years ago.

"Now those states have a much better commercial and recreational fishery and a prosperous guide community," he said.

Laughridge details shrimp trawl ideas

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Experts gave participants at a March CCA NC fishing seminar in New Bern an eye-opening look at details that prompted the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission to approve a petition that would radically change shrimp trawling within nursery areas of North Carolina sounds.

By law, shrimping isn't allowed in primary or secondary nursery areas. This leaves a lot of inshore water open to shrimp trawling without restriction. MFC Commissioner Chuck Laughridge of Harkers Island said the well-written petition filed by the N.C. Wildlife Federation asks that any water not a current primary, secondary or special secondary nursery be declared a special secondary nursery, where shrimping will be allowed only by a proclamation from the DMF director.



LAUGHRIDGE

"If you hear anything that says the petition would end shrimping in North Carolina, it's just not true," he added.

There might be some restrictions such as time, head rope length or towing time, Laughridge added.

"We would be going back to levels of shrimping we had in 2010-11," he added. "We're trying to let the industry continue but want it to do less harm to areas that are secondary nurseries."

Currently large, ocean-size trawlers, some from out of state, sail up the Intracoastal Waterway into the Pamlico Sound. By-catch rates of juvenile finfish like spot, weakfish and croaker amount to three pounds for every pound of shrimp harvested, and 4.5 pounds overall. Stocks have declined in the past 20 years from nine of 13 fish species in a healthy status to only four of 13 today.

A January advisory committee public hearing in



Photo by Rip Woodin

A shrimper culls his catch just off Shackleford Banks as sea birds gather for a free meal.

New Bern turned into a circus, Laughridge said. The petition, vilified by the commercial industry, has led to a "tremendous amount of contentious statements on social media that turned half-truths into lies," he said.

"So it's very important you know the facts on this," Laughridge told the audience.

The petition awakened the commission "to glaring

problems we weren't aware of either through DMF intent or ignorance in denying us facts that go back to the late 1970s," Laughridge continued. Five commissioners, nicknamed the "shrimpy five," voted to accept the petition and consider new rules in the coming year.

See LAUGHRIDGE, 5

MFC takes action on striper decline

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

In a surprise move at its May 18 meeting, the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission adopted a motion on a 6-1-1 vote that asks DMF staff to predict how a ban on the commercial harvest of striped bass in any stocked river would preserve and restore the spawning population.

Commissioner Chuck Laughridge made the motion that would also require 24-hour monitoring of any large or small mesh gillnet that could possibly interact with striped bass and American shad. The measure also restricts recreational harvest to one fish per day with seasons being restricted as needed.

Laughridge said both these commercial and recreational restrictions would

remain in effect until spawning stock biomass reached 50 percent of historic levels. Based on reports by N.C. Marine Fisheries staff, the commission could vote to enact these or similar regulations.

The motion came in contrast to a lack of action in the past year by Dr. Braxton Davis, director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, who was given proclamation power by the MFC to change striped

bass regulations in the Central Southern Management Area that includes the Neuse, Trent and Tar/Pamlico Rivers.

Dr. Chris Elkins, president of CCA NC, told an audience of concerned fishermen in New Bern that CCA NC asked Davis at each of the past five MFC meetings to take action that would alleviate the declining striped bass population in the state's CSMA.

"But he refused," Elkins said. "Specific biologists at DMF are advising him on

See STRIPED BASS, 8

CCA NC is a non-profit community of recreational anglers working to protect our marine resources for future generations to experience and enjoy.

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in our fight to preserve
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memberships are available
starting at \$30.

CCA NC features full, varied agenda for spring

Spring is a great time to be in North Carolina and a great time to be a member of the Coastal Conservation Association. The winter weather this year has made it tough on coastal anglers but the warming temperatures have sent a wake-up call across the state that has us excited to get back out onto the water and excited about the pro-resource activity heating up in the General Assembly.

Going into the 2017 Legislative long-session, CCA NC put out the call for a broad-based coalition to support much-needed reform of the 20-year-old Fisheries Reform Act of 1997 and boy has it been answered. In addition to CCA NC and the NC Wildlife Federation, the NC Sound Economy coalition is supported by the American Sportfishing Association, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, the North Carolina Chamber and a growing list of businesses including Big Rock Sports, Grady-White Boats, Regulator Marine, Summit Hospitality Group and the Neuse Sports Shop, all in support of House Bill 867, the Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Economic Development Act.

But CCA NC has grown to be so much more than just an advo-

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



**BUD
ABBOTT**
Chairman

Shelley Smith has led the effort to introduce the kids in the Swansboro area to both fishing and conservation by once again partnering with the Hook and Bones Redfish Open and members of the coastal fisheries scientific community on Aug. 12.

Kids will compete in separate age categories for multiple prize packages including: First Fish of the Day, Most Fish Caught, Most Unusual Fish, Top Lady Angler, Longest Redfish, Longest Flounder and many more!

Last year, every child registered received a free tournament t-shirt, rod and reel combo, ready to fish tackle box and captain's bag filled with swag from tournament sponsors. As an added bonus this year, the first 50 participants to register will have their names put into a special drawing for a Fathom Prize Pack that will include Fathom apparel, a 4-foot cast net and other prizes.

See **AGENDA, 9**

Improving fish economy benefits all

Editor's note: The following opinion first appeared in the April 22 edition of the North State Journal just before House Bill 867, the Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Economic Development Act, was filed.

By Alen Gant
NCSE Founder

What if I told you that North Carolina could have the best fishing waters in the country? We already know that our unique coastal fisheries are a great source for local seafood and an excellent place for recreational anglers. But to answer the above question, we now have a chance to exponentially improve all parts of our state's fishing economy for years to come.

A group of lifelong fishermen has formed in North Carolina who are committed to restoring our position as one of the best places in the country to fish. This legislative session, we will be looking for common-sense solutions to help our state's fishing economy become stable,

sustainable and enable long-term economic benefits. If we improve our fisheries as a resource, everyone will be better off.

The state's management of our publicly owned fisheries is based on laws from 1997 that could use some updating. Although the number of fish in our waters has steadily declined over the years, we now have the chance to pursue policies that maximize the economic benefits of our sounds and create more jobs. And while many aspects of the fishing economy are struggling, we can now push for solutions that benefit everyone for future generations.

To know where we are going, we can't forget where we've been. For years, commercial and recreational fishermen have argued over short-term fixes that do not allow dwindling fisheries to properly recover or increase in population. Commercial fishermen benefit directly from their

catches, meet consumer demands and provide jobs. Recreational anglers create travel, tourism and manufacturing jobs.

It's time that our state looks at what is working and not working in the way that our state and others are managing their fisheries. From Murphy to Manteo and Shallotte to Corolla, we can all agree that the state must grow the resources in our sounds and increase its economic benefits.

Throughout the next few weeks, we hope that citizens of our state will join groups like N.C. Sound Economy to advocate for common-sense solutions to fix a struggling fishing economy.

Here's why:

First, North Carolina has outdated fishery management laws that must be updated. Secondly, we should prioritize the growth and sustainability of our fisheries and their economic impacts. Finally, the decision-making process for marine fisheries must be streamlined and more efficient.

See **BENEFITS, 8**

STUDY

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are able to recover and grow,” NCSE continued.

The coalition — a group of conservation organizations, anglers, retail associations and marine manufacturers — hired Dr. Christopher F. Dumas, an economic professor at UNC-W, and Dr. Geneviève Nesslage, an assistant research professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences, to conduct the study.

“The researchers ran multiple management scenarios on each species. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to conserve and grow fish stocks in order to increase economic benefits,” NCSE said. Some scenarios show that cuts need to be made in current harvest levels, the study summary said.

“When cuts are made in the short term, the stock recovers to a higher level allowing more harvest and driving more economic benefits. It is clear the state has an incredible opportunity to restore its status as a premier fishing destination. In addition to benefits to the recreational fishing economy, the struggling commercial sector can be a premier local and sustainable seafood producer,” NCSE wrote.

The research team found “the state can take a range of steps to strengthen coastal livelihoods, raise incomes and make coastal communities more resilient,” it concluded.

The 188-page study is broken down into three reports. The first is an evaluation of the biological and economic benefits of improving the status of eight North Carolina stocks. Number two looks at the effects of the shrimp trawl fishery on three non-target stocks in North Carolina: Atlantic croaker, weakfish and blue crab. The final report is an evaluation of the DMF’s marine stock assessment program in North Carolina.

Dr. Dumas said Dr. Nesslage looked at different ways each fishery could be managed, species by species, to increase fish populations by changing regulations on fish harvest size, length of season, gears used and other management strategies.

“Some scenarios looked at proportions of the harvest allocated to the recreational and commercial sectors then continued those proportions,” Dumas explained. “Then we varied it to see if it would make a difference and how it would affect the economic impact.”

For each species of fish and management scenario — sometimes as many as 14 per fishery — the numbers were projected out 30 years.

After Nesslage completed the biological population forecasting, she gave

those numbers to Dumas for the economic modeling. For the commercial industry, Dumas took average recent prices and looked back 20-30 years to see if the amount landed affected the price, which was true in some species but not in others.

After calculating gross sales, he subtracted out costs such as crew pay, boat fuel and all the other supplies used by commercial fishermen. Using regular economic models, Dumas could figure the multiplier effect of increased revenue.

He even factored in the number of fish that would be sold to out-of-state buyers that would end the multiplier effect of those fish.

“We took all of that into account then calculated out 30 years for each species of fish,” he said. “Present value dollars in 20 years will have a different value than dollars today so we brought all the dollars back to 2015 levels to be equivalent.”

It’s a different calculation for the recreational anglers because they’re not selling fish caught, Dumas explained.

“They either eat it or release it but the recreational angler gets enjoyment out of fishing,” he said. “The value to the fisherman of the experience is called ‘consumer surplus’ and can be calculated the same way going on a hike, to a movie or a football game is measured.”

As with commercial fishermen, Du-

mas studied the money recreational anglers spend on gear, boats, motels, meals, travel and all the other multiplier effects. Then he added in the “recreational surplus” expressed in dollars worth of enjoyment. Each surplus was different for each fishery. As an example, he said compare the costs of fishing for a marlin to that of a flounder.

Totaling the management strategy that would yield the most fish for each species is how the \$4.2 billion figure in additional sales was calculated. Backing out all the costs plus labor yielded the \$829.7 million dollar representing net profit and recreational fishing value, Dumas said.

“The purpose of the study was to explore all the different options of how to bring back fish populations for three groups — people who care about conservation, the commercial industry and the recreational population,” he continued. “We didn’t get to dollar proportions for each group, but if the total fish population was higher, what would the economic impact be?”

With fish populations now so low, Dumas said nobody is benefiting.

“There are huge potential gains for everyone if you change the way fisheries are managed,” Dumas added. “If you bring back fish populations to previous levels, there will be more fish to catch forever. The numbers will be higher, a lot higher, than what’s harvested today.”

LAUGHRIDGE

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“If we hadn’t gone forward with the petition,” Laughridge explained, “the Southern Environmental Law Center would have filed for an injunction to close shrimping in the entire Pamlico Sound based on N.C. rules and regulations.”

North Carolina is the only state that allows basically unregulated trawling inshore.

“We’ve got severe issues in North Carolina,” Laughridge continued. “The odds of us being smarter than the rest of the coastal states are pretty damn small. We’re not that smart. You can prove that every day by looking at the DMF office on Arendell Street (in Morehead City) to see if there is a long line of other

states asking us how we do it in North Carolina. We’re just in a rut of status quo and in a situation that if we don’t manage differently, we won’t have any fish to manage,” he said.

“Nothing good comes from dragging trawl doors weighing 2,000 pounds each across the bottom of our sounds. It doesn’t work the way it does when a farmer tills his land,” the outspoken commissioner said.

Estimates of juvenile finfish destroyed by trawling range from 250 million to 1 billion, Laughridge said. Imagine what the fishing would be like if those fish weren’t killed in the Pamlico Sound, he added.

“We can’t continue to do things in an estuarine area that don’t belong there. It’s not so much about the by-catch but about not using any gear in a nursery area,” he said. “We need to let nurseries be nurser-

ies. We’ve got to make a stand now.”

CCA NC Chairman Bud Abbott praised Laughridge and the other members of the “shrimpy five” for their vote in favor of the petition.

“Chuck did a great job of standing up for the public resource in the face of a lot of bad information and we appreciate that,” Abbott said.

Dr. Chris Elkins, President of CCA NC and a retired UNC microbiologist, put the issue in perspective by comparing our practices to those in other states.

“North Carolina has the most liberal shrimping rules of all the states from N.C. to Texas,” Elkins said. “And they would still be the most liberal if this petition is adopted.”

Most states simply don’t allow shrimping in estuaries, or it’s very limited, he explained.

“Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana

allow shrimping inside but the trawls are very small — 50 feet of head rope. Compare that to 220 feet of head rope pulled by oceanic trawlers,” Elkins added. “No other state allows those 130-foot vessels in their estuaries to tear up the bottom.”

Ironically this heavy inshore trawling does not translate into a big harvest, he said.

“North Carolina’s brown and white shrimp catch is only three percent of the total harvest from N.C. to Texas,” he said. “Texas doesn’t allow any inshore shrimping, yet it’s harvest is 10 times ours.”

Pointing at Louisiana, Elkins said that state only permits a 50-foot head rope inshore but has a harvest 20 times the size of ours.

“All these states with tougher rules are doing just fine,” he said. “The argument that this petition will kill shrimping in North Carolina is just patently false.”

Biologist evaluates shrimping, DMF

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

A report by a University of Maryland environmental professor concludes that the shrimp trawl industry should be excluded from estuarine waters or restricted in size and scope if the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries wants to reduce finfish by-catch mortality of Atlantic croaker, spot and weakfish.

Dr. Geneviève Nesslage, an assistant research professor at the university's Center for Environmental Science, wrote that the shrimp industry at \$16.8 million is the second largest fishery in North Carolina, and over half its total harvest comes from the Pamlico Sound. About 80 percent of a trawler's catch are non-shrimp species where the mortality

rate is high, she said in the report.

"An additional concern is that most fishing activity in North Carolina is conducted in the estuaries of Pamlico Sound which contains critical nursery areas for many species of juvenile fish and shellfish," Nesslage continued.

The goal of her report is to outline the economic and ecological benefits of reducing shrimp trawl by-catch among the three species, although the "highly unselective" otter trawls also catch southern flounder, bluefish, kingfish, mackerel and occasionally endangered sturgeon or sea turtles.

Although the DMF has made efforts to reduce shrimp trawl by-catch through time, area and gear restrictions, it's difficult to assess the impact of trawling on non-target species without having good

information through an observer program, she said.

"Data collected from recent shrimp otter trawl observer studies indicate that Atlantic croaker and spot make up the vast majority of the total estuarine catch by both numbers and volume," she wrote. Shrimp averaged only 33 percent of the catch in numbers and 25 percent in weight between 2012 and 2015.

In stark contrast, a recreational shrimper using an otter trawl, skimmer or other gear, have a catch that is about 83 percent shrimp with low by-catch. Recreational shrimpers caught about 52,000 pounds for personal consumption in 2015.

Nesslage wrote that estimates of Atlantic croaker by-catch in the shrimp trawl fishery are highly uncertain, but certainly high, exceeding 20,000 metric

tons in some years. Spot is usually the second highest by-catch with weakfish always showing up in the top five.

The 2016 DMF stock assessment for Atlantic croaker highlighted increasing natural mortality, not by-catch, as the main cause of severe stock decline, noting that "failure of the stock to recover since the late 1990s cannot be attributed to high fishing mortality alone unless by-catch and under-reported catches were much greater than those estimated."

If this assessment is true, Nesslage continued, "Only a complete elimination of all fishing mortality (direct and indirect/by-catch) will result in stock recovery under current natural mortality conditions. Regardless, in light of such

See **BIOLOGIST**, 9

Stop shrimp trawling in Pamlico Sound to save finfish

Can we people in North Carolina today help save our finfish fishery, our oyster bottoms and the fish habitat in the Pamlico Sound estuary? How can we help fix a Pamlico Sound estuarine system and create a healthier fishery?

It's my responsibility as a commercial fisherman to help this system to survive for generations to come. I have a lot of experience and knowledge in fishing. I've got 30 years in commercial and 60 years in sport fishing. One hundred percent of my work income comes from the second largest nursery in the United States.

I and other commercial fishermen at one time depended on finfish for our living. The sport fishermen got plenty of experience fishing in the Pamlico Sound estuary. We all know this system is not as healthy today in many different marine species of finfish as it was several decades ago.

These shrimp trawl fishermen today are required to use two fish extruders in each net. One trawler can pull four 65-foot otter nets across the bottom in the Pamlico Sound and also crab nets. This equipment is considered to be the most destructive gear on our bottom's habitat. Even using these two fish extruders in their nets, these shrimp trawlers are still killing millions of pounds of our baby finfish and other marine species.

So why are they (N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries) allowing these gears to work in our nurseries? These same managers know these shrimp trawl fishermen are destroying million of our baby summer and South-

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ern flounder, and also gray trout, etc.

They've got some nerve telling you and me we can't keep one gray trout a day to stop this species from being overfished. My common sense tells me it is the trawl fishermen who need regulations, not the sport fishermen.

What can fisheries management do in 2016 to improve our finfish and oyster populations in the Pamlico Sound estuarine system? They need to make it a primary nursery area (closed to trawling). This will protect some of the most productive marine bottom habitat in the country. It will also protect thousands of acres of prime oyster bottom.

In 1991, a DMF oyster specialist told our Marine Fisheries Commission at a Kinston, N.C., meeting that oyster bottoms and fish habitat cannot survive when it comes to dragging shrimp and crab trawl nets over these bottoms. The MFC ignored this important information while paying attention to the demands of a few shrimp fishermen.

I don't know how much this study cost our taxpayers; I do know it didn't help our fishery at all. It will improve water quality because it will stop these trawl boats from dragging their heavy nets across the bottom and re-suspending bottom sediment back in the water

column.

This by-catch is a wasted resource. It's a resource we can no longer depend on for commercial or recreational fishing. My common sense tells me you cannot keep on killing all these baby fish year after year. This waste has significantly reduced numerous fish species in our fish populations. It's also causing many of our finfish species to be overfished.

We all know these juvenile fish are our future. They are not the future of shrimp fishermen because they don't depend on them for income. If they did, they would stop killing all these juvenile fish and protect their bottom habitats. There are more fishermen today in North Carolina who depend on these marine species that are being wasted by the shrimp trawl fishery than they do on shrimp being caught in our estuarine waters.

If our new politicians and the new Marine Fisheries Commission are going to help our baby finfish and baby oysters and their bottoms to survive for generations to come, they need to make the Pamlico Sound estuarine system a primary nursery area.

Dallas R. Ormond Sr.
Bath, N.C.

Editor's note: CCA NC received this letter from a concerned citizen in February 2016. It is just as relevant today as it was then.

Lobbying brings ‘best, worst of times’

Spending more time at the General Assembly this session, I am reminded of the classic line, “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” While the filing of House Bill 867 has once again pushed CCA NC to the front lines in the fight for improving our coastal fisheries, it also brings one face to face with the challenges of navigating a very partisan Legislature.

It is a very exciting time for CCA NC, working closely with our NC Sound Economy coalition partners, as we get back on the offensive in demanding better fisheries management for North Carolina instead of always being on the defensive, fighting back against legislation that would further the decline of our public trust resources.

If you follow the politics in Raleigh at all, then you can easily recognize the obstacles that face any group or organization that advocates for progressive reform. Still, in the face of the current political storm that seems to have stalled over Jones Street, we are very optimistic that we have the best opportunity in years to see some positive changes in our fisheries management statutes.



DAVID SNEED
Executive Director

We have support of the Republican leadership in the N.C. House, and we have a great team working to build the same consensus in the Senate. We have been present from the beginning as the NC Sound Coalition has grown from just an idea to be nurtured by the NC Wildlife Federation and CCA NC, to now include the support of the American Sportfishing Association, National Marine Manufacturers, Congressional Sportsman’s Foundation, N.C. Chamber, and a growing list of North Carolina’s leading outdoor businesses.

So how can you get involved and stay informed? As many of you already know, as the executive director of CCA NC, I have dedicated more time this year at the General Assembly as your legislative representative for coastal conservation and recreational fishing. While I have always considered this an important part of the executive director’s role, some critics questioned whether this crossed into lobbying, so to dispel any questions, I am registered as the lobbyist for CCA NC.

This means I am your eyes and ears inside the General Assembly, as well as the fulltime advocate for coastal conservation and recreational fishing in North

Carolina. Please call on me if you have questions or concerns of a political nature. Please don’t hesitate because you can be sure I will be calling on you when I need your help to reach your representatives.

You can also use the General Assembly website to find information about who represents you, the status of legislation, listen to the audio of House and Senate sessions, and follow daily calendars: www.ncleg.net.

Please also follow us on Facebook and on our website www.ccanc.org for legislative updates. You can certainly help us spread the call for coastal conservation by sharing this newspaper with your friends and colleagues, and by sharing our news alerts and Calls to Action on social media.

The rest of that line from Charles Dickens includes, “it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us.”

Friends, the past is the past and we have everything before us. Let others see the Legislature as the age of foolishness and the winter of despair. This is our season of light and our spring of hope!

State Chamber endorses NC Sound Economy legislation

The North Carolina Chamber announced on May 9 its support of NC Sound Economy and House Bill 867, the Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Economic Development Act.

The North Carolina Chamber is the state’s largest business advocacy organization.

NC Sound Economy is an expanding coalition of fishermen, business leaders and concerned citizens who seek to end the unproductive fights over a shrinking publicly owned economic resource. Both NC Sound Economy and the North Carolina Chamber believe that the state

must grow the resource and maximize its economic benefits, said David Sneed, executive director of CCA NC, one of several conservation groups supporting the initiative.

“We are very excited to have the support of the North Carolina Chamber,” said Allen Gant, chairman of the Board of Directors for NC Sound Economy. “Our broad coalition is seeking to reform our dated fishery management laws, streamline the regulatory process and grow the entire fishing economy. With the support of our state’s largest business advocacy group we will continue to

push for real solutions that provide sustainable economic growth for our entire fishing economy.”

Improving our coastal fishing economies will have positive impacts across our whole state,” said Lew Ebert, president and CEO of the North Carolina Chamber. “As the state’s largest business advocacy organization, our priority is to proactively drive positive change to ensure that North Carolina is a leading place in the world to do business. House Bill 867 and the research presented by NC Sound Economy clearly demonstrate the opportunity that our state has, to-

day, to improve our coastal fishing economies for future generations.”

Other national organizations that have endorsed the coalition and HB 967 include the American Sportfishing Association, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Caucus, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, Yamaha Marine, Grady-White Boats and Summit Hospitality Group.

Leading outdoor wholesaler Big Rock Sports has pledged its support along with well-known local retailers Neuse River Sport Shop in Kinston and Custom Marine Fabrication in New Bern.



Official cooler of CCA NC

ENGEL
Coolers and Freezers

BENEFITS

From Page 4

Twenty years ago, the legislature passed a major reform law meant to protect the fish populations and sustain the fishing economy. But year after year, our fish populations shrink and regulatory actions mandated by the law make the problem worse. After two decades of failure, it's time to fix the law.

Our fishery management laws must

focus on growing our fisheries as not only a resource but also a major economic staple to recreational and commercial fisherman. In contrast, these dated laws focus on maintaining fish populations to fill harvest production.

This approach prohibits growth of the resource and keeps alive only enough fish to divide up for the taking. With proper management, the entire fishing economy should thrive, and the state's top priority should be sustainable economic growth.

Hundreds of factors can quickly and

suddenly impact our fish populations. By prioritizing total resource growth and jobs, the state can more efficiently respond to sudden declines in the number of fish. The General Assembly shouldn't be in the business of managing fisheries. Instead, regulatory decision-making should be based on research, including peer reviewed fish population reports, the best economic models, and input from North Carolina scientists.

The state is clearly not getting the most possible economic benefit out of

its sounds. We now have solid research that shows that major economic opportunities are within reach. NC Sound Economy is urging legislators to act now to grow our fishing economy.

Allen Gant is founding member and chairman of the board of directors for NC Sound Economy, an expanding coalition of fishermen, business leaders, and concerned citizens who want to end the unproductive fights over a shrinking number of fish. House Bill 867 is this opportunity.

STRIPED BASS

From Page 3

this issue. Dr. Davis is not a fish biologist so he has to rely on DMF staff, and he's been misled." Davis will step down once his replacement is named by the new administration.

The problems are the same as they have been in recent years — very few of the stocked fish live long enough to spawn effectively because of commercial gill netting; fish native to the Tar/Pamlico, Neuse, Trent and Cape Fear have been nearly wiped out. In addition to the 25,000-pound commercial quota, an equal amount die as by-catch in other fisheries.

"Over 90 percent of the fish in the Neuse are stocked," Elkins said. "Obviously, the stock is in trouble, and we're fishing unsustainably on these stocks. Something really needs to be done immediately."

The goal of the striped bass Fisheries Management Plan adopted by the MFC years ago was to create a self-sustaining population, the former UNC microbiologist said. "Clearly, that's failed. The MFC gave proclamation authority to the DMF director to close the

fishery or change the rules if new data became available between fisheries management plans, and that is exactly what happened, Elkins explained, but nothing has been done other than move the plan up one year.

Benjamin R. Ricks, a WRC biologist who has been monitoring the Neuse River for years, seemed to agree with Elkins that commercial gill netting is stopping the striped bass population from recovering. "Through all three rivers (there is a harvest moratorium on the Cape Fear) there is a high, high mortality rate but a striped bass is supposed to live 20 years," Ricks said.

With a high mortality rate for so many years, eight years is now the average age of a striped bass, he said. If fish were allowed to live to 15 years, they would spawn two or three times, "and we'd have a population that's growing. But when you have a population of 5-year-old fish, they don't have as big an egg drop as older females," Ricks explained.

"All three rivers are hatchery supported put/grow/take fisheries except the Cape Fear where there's no harvest." An egg and larval summary last year showed

a viability rate of 56 percent, in line with other populations, he explained.

Ricks estimated 43 million eggs were produced but half were lost. In somewhat of a comparison, the self-sustaining Roanoke River produces about 500 million eggs.

"That means the Neuse fish are going through the motions but not enough eggs are being produced on the spawning ground."

So what's going to happen? Ricks said the timetable for a Fisheries Management Plan for the CSMA has been moved forward a year and the stock assessment will start now, Ricks said.

"To turn it around, we obviously need substantial reductions in mortality to allow these fish to reach the age and size where they can contribute a lot more than they do now," Ricks said.

A 100 percent harvest moratorium would not yield a gain without attacking the sources of discard mortality, he added. If recovery doesn't happen after reducing those sources of mortality, the WRC could quit the stocking program and all the fish would be gone in four years.

"I'm not in favor of that," Ricks said. "At one point the Neuse was the second most prolific striped bass fishery in the state. It looked a lot like the Roanoke River does now. The potential is there."



ELKINS



GRADY-WHITE



The official vodka of CCA NC



BIOLOGIST

From Page 6

drastic declines, eliminating all sources of known fishing mortality in order to reduce total mortality is warranted, even if fisheries are not the ultimate cause of the problem.”

Without a long-term observer program, the effects of by-catch on finfish stocks will be hard to determine, she said.

“Both scientists’ and stakeholders’ concerns regarding the magnitude and composition of weakfish by-catch in shrimp trawls and other gears could be alleviated by better data collection,” she said.

Restricting the shrimp trawl fishery to ocean waters as is done in neighboring states could benefit non-target stocks by reducing juvenile mortality and protecting nursery habitats, she wrote. But before such management changes are enacted, thought should be given to increased ocean by-catch of larger, older finfish that make up the spawning stock.

Her report seems to support the North Carolina Wildlife Federation’s shrimp trawl petition that was adopted by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commis-



A shrimp trawler works the ocean between Cape Lookout and Beaufort Inlet.

sion in March. A strong observer program combined with trawler gear size, more efficient by-catch reduction devices and towing restrictions would reduce mortality while providing better data for management decisions.

She also took the opportunity to both praise and criticize DMF’s stock assessment program.

“North Carolina fisheries have long benefited from several strong, academic fisheries science programs located in the region. Continued collaboration and

communication with these academic resources will be critical for helping reduce scientific uncertainty in stock assessments and fisheries management decisions,” Nesslage began.

DMF should be thoroughly commended for conducting external peer reviews of its stock assessments. DMF typically solicits written (“desk”) reviews from three reviewers for each state-specific assessment, she continued. “For the stocks most valuable to N.C. and its stakeholders, holding in-person inde-

pendent peer review workshops may be a worthwhile investment.”

There should be greater transparency in assessments, peer reviews and materials, she noted. And DMF salary ranges should be increased to attract and retain qualified stock assessment staff. Experienced stock assessment scientists earn around \$80,000 compared to the DMF’s maximum recruitment figure of \$44,509.

To get better numbers for analysis, she recommended:

- Transition commercial dealers to electronic reporting as soon as possible.

- Support permanent and adequate funding of DMF’s Observer Program.

- Establish a permanent and comprehensive shrimp trawl observer program covering all seasons, regions and gears.

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of state and regional stock assessment needs relative to existing survey goals and designs.

- Prioritize data and assessment development for stocks without quantitative assessments or whose stock status is unknown, including blue crab, shellfish, sheepshead, shads and bivalve stocks.

AGENDA

From Page 4

You can also make plans to join us again for the Annual Sportsman’s Conservation Legacy Shootout on Saturday, Aug. 26 at Drake Landing near Apex.

In addition to the friendly competition that has developed over the years, this event has become a very popular late summer social gathering for CCA NC members and a great time to celebrate the conservation legacy of our Life Members.

The Sportsman’s Shootout continues to be scheduled strategically on the last Saturday in August before dove season opens in North Carolina on Labor Day weekend offering shooters a great chance to tune-up their skills before the real birds start flying. It has also been a great way to introduce new sportsmen and women to the conservation ideals of CCA NC.

With the expansion of the Building

Conservation Trust (BCT), CCA’s national habitat program, this is also a very exciting time for conservation habitat projects. During 2016, we collaborated with Dr. Joel Fodrie at the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences on the construction of 32 new reefs in Back Sound, made possible by a very generous \$100,000 contribution from BCT.

Sixteen of the 32 reefs were constructed using cultch oyster shell donated by Penderwatch, via a partnership with CCA NC.

Additionally, Dr. Fodrie’s team used an emerging, novel technology to construct 16 “oystermids” in Back Sound. Oystermids are 3D structures that likely support high rates of oyster settlement/growth/survival.

The project also included installation of hydrophones in the Back Sound region to track the movement of two reef-associated fish (juvenile gag grouper and gulf flounder) simultaneously to our reef construction.

The team selected juvenile gag grouper and juvenile gulf flounder because they are common in local estuaries, are

recreationally prized, and we currently don’t know what habitats they specifically use regularly as nursery habitat.

This portion of the study also included the tagging of a total of 20 bonnetheads in Back Sound, using VEMCO tags.

To date, we have received nearly 30,000 bonnethead shark detections from the broad array of hydrophones deployed in-and-around Back Sound.

We hope the success of Dr. Fodrie’s oyster restoration project is just the beginning of habitat conservation efforts for CCA NC.

We are currently discussing plans on a partnership with the N.C. Wildlife Habitat Foundation on the “oyster mile” project in the New River, and how we can partner with the Eastern Carolina Artificial Reef Association on sinking new shipwrecks for the enjoyment of SCUBA Divers and Sports Fisherman along the Crystal Coast of North Carolina.

CCA NC is committed to improving our coastal marine habitat and increasing recreational fishing opportunities.

Our Crystal Coast and Onslow Bay

Chapters continue their work with Project Healing Waters to host wounded veterans for a healing day fishing the beautiful waters around Swansboro.

The Onslow Bay Chapter has expanded its efforts to include decorated active-duty military personnel from Camp Lejeune.

If the weather will cooperate, local members have plans to host both a spring and a fall fishing weekend through volunteer efforts to accommodate as many veterans and service men as possible.

As fishermen, we recognize the healing power of being out on the water and want to use our experience to help bring some comfort to individuals who have made great sacrifices in defense of our freedoms. Our local members who volunteer their time, talents and boats will tell you how rewarding the experience can be.

So, when you get out on the water this spring, please enjoy being both a sportsman and a conservationist, and please consider all the exciting ways you can get more involved with CCA NC this year.

Jordan honored for years of work with CCA

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

The Crystal Coast Chapter (Morehead City area) of CCA NC took the unprecedented step of recognizing Capt. Jake Jordan, a Life Member in three states, for 50 years of dedicated service to fishery conservation and CCA.

Jake, whose 75th birthday coincided with the March 18 banquet, has been involved in just about every aspect of fly fishing from building boats and owning a fly shop to manufacturing fly reels and guiding all over the world.

“A fiction writer couldn’t create a more colorful life,” said Dr. Callie Freeman, a member of the chapter’s banquet committee and now Eastern Regional Director of CCA NC. In 1965, Jake built a house on Summerland Key, FL, and two years later launched his guiding career in a flats boat he constructed himself, Freeman began.

Jake got into other ventures like rebuilding antique wooden boats in Ft. Lauderdale and manufacturing STH fly reels in Argentina for Orvis, Cortland, G. Loomis and other retailers.

Through it all Jake considered himself foremost a Florida Keys tarpon guide, she continued. “This is where his passion for conservation flourished.” He started the first catch-and-release tarpon tournament then worked with Dr. William Kruger from the Woods Hole Institute tagging 4,600 tarpon over the years to help understand their biology.

Capt. Jordan began his connection with CCA in the late 1970s when he took a Texas oil man named Walter Fondren fishing. A close friendship developed while Fondren was putting together a group called the Gulf Coast Conservation Association, the predecessor to the Coastal Conservation Association. Jake donated trips for fundraisers to help get the fledgling organization running and even ended up becoming a seminal “Lifetime” sponsor in support of this group, Freeman said.

Several years later Jake joined a group of guides who were concerned with the disappearance of pilchards and mullet from runaway netting. This group called itself the Florida Conservation Association. They along with Florida Sportsmen Magazine started the SOS petition or “Save Our Sea” Life that resulted in a state-wide vote and ban on gillnetting in Florida. This group later became known as the Florida Coastal Conservation Association and Jake Jordan also became a Life Member in that state.

In 2005, Jake made his way into North Carolina fly fishing in the fall for false albacore with Capt. Sarah Gardner. After Hurricane Wilma damaged the Keys, Jake decided to make Havelock, N.C., his permanent home.



Above left, Dr. Callie Freeman, chairwoman of the Crystal Coast Chapter banquet, admires the bronze sculpture of a red fish presented to Capt. Jake Jordan for a lifetime of support to CCA. At left, Jordan, left, enjoys a laugh with his good friend, Rick Pope, founder of TFO Rods.

CCA NC realignment targets local chapters

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

CCA NC has reorganized its small staff creating two regional directors who will be responsible for membership growth, chapter colonization and banquet fundraising across North Carolina, explained David Sneed, executive director of the conservation organization.

Todd Shamel, currently assistant director for CCA NC, will become the regional director responsible for the area of the state from Raleigh westward. Dr. Callie Freeman, a member of CCA NC's state executive board and management committee, will be the regional director for Eastern North Carolina.

"We are very fortunate that Callie's interest in a full-time position with CCA NC came up early in our discussions and we are very excited to have some-

one with her professional background join our team," Sneed said. Callie has distinguished herself as a volunteer and a board member, and her interest in a staff position made the decision to move forward with adding a new regional director much easier, he added.

Sneed said Freeman will team with Shamel to drive membership growth and chapter development across the state.

"Callie will focus on working with the chapters and members in the eastern half of the state where she will continue to live and work, while Todd will remain an important part of our organization in Raleigh concentrating on growing our current chapters in the western half of the state, and adding new ones. We



FREEMAN

are excited about what the addition of a second strong regional director can do to help grow and strengthen our state-wide organization."

Freeman, a native of Lexington, KY, graduated from the University of Kentucky in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in biology. That was followed by a master's degree and a move to Raleigh in 2005. She earned a doctorate from N.C. State in entomology, focusing on developing a statewide management plan for white grubs impacting North Carolina's sod industry.

Callie became an avid angler and bird hunter at a young age, crediting her father for instilling in her a deep passion for conservation. Freeman spoke of a key moment in the early 1980s when



SHAMEL

her father, while fishing for sailfish, insisted on releasing each catch despite the objections of their captain.

"That is when it really clicked for me even as a small child," she recalled. "My Dad was standing up for the resource. It wasn't popular at the time but it was the right thing to do, and I was able to witness a client from Kentucky contribute to the pressure that led to change. That was a proud moment."

She joined the CCA NC Executive Board of Directors in 2015 where she was co-secretary and communications committee member. Since then, Callie has led the Crystal Coast Chapter banquet and co-chaired the Fishing for the Future youth tournament.

CCA NC also added three new board members this year. Wendi Oliver from Beaufort, Ron McKoy of Hampstead and Will Moose, the new Charlotte chapter president, all joined the executive board.

JORDAN

From Page 10

Of course, Jake began donating trips to the local Crystal Coast CCA chapter and found himself part of a push to enroll life members. And again Capt. Jordan became a Life Member for CCA in his third state. Freeman said Jordan has also helped his friend, Gary Loomis, start a CCA predecessor group in Washington that worked hard to rebuild

salmon stocks in the Lewis River.

"His giving nature is another reason we decided to honor Jake," she explained. "It's representative of the Crystal Coast Chapter and Cape Lookout Fly Fishers. I met Jake over a buffet line two years ago at the club's annual banquet. I knew who he was, he didn't know me but immediately offered to take my husband and me fishing to teach us how it's done."

In his presentation remarks to the banquet crowd, CCA NC Executive Director David Sneed said, "Jake you ex-

emplify the unique spirit of the Crystal Coast Chapter, and that is why I am honored to present this Outstanding Service Award for exceptional contributions to conserving marine resources and sustained dedication to CCA throughout your career."

To top off the evening, Freeman surprised Jake with video remarks from other legends of fly fishing and conservation including Lefty Kreh, Flip Palot, Bob Clouser, Ed Jaworoski, Wanda Taylor, Blane Cholett, Bob Popovics,

Gary Loomis, Gary Dubiel and Larry Dahlberg.

The full toasts and roasts video can be found on CCANC.org.

Chuck Laughridge, one of Jake's fishing pals from Harker's Island and former CCA NC board member, had the best line of the night when he said, "There's no way he could cram in all those things he's done in 75 years; he's probably 106. This comes straight from the heart: When I grow up I want to be Jake Jordan."

Official sunglasses
of the CCA NC



Kids fishing tourney set for August

By Callie Freeman
CCA NC Writer

CCA NC and the popular coastal apparel company Hook And Bones are excited to announce they are teaming up once again for the 2nd Annual "Fishing for the Future" Youth Tournament.

This free catch and release tournament will be held in conjunction with the Hook and Bones Redfish Open on Aug. 12 in beautiful, historic Swansboro.

Kids will compete in separate age groups (12 and under and 13 to 17) for multiple prize categories including: First Fish of the Day, Most Fish Caught, Most Unusual Fish, Top Lady Angler, Longest Redfish, Longest Flounder and many more.

Last year, every child who participated received a free tournament t-shirt, rod and reel combo, ready to fish tackle box and captain's bag filled with gifts from tournament sponsors. This year, as an added bonus, the first 50 participants to register will have their name placed into a special drawing for a Fathom Prize Pack that will include Fathom apparel, a 4-foot cast net and additional rewards.

Kids are not only in for a fun day of fishing on Aug. 12, they also will be treated to a Conservation Expo in the Swansboro Town Square prior to the awards ceremony. Kids will enjoy up close encounters with marine life as exhibitors from the local wildlife and conservation community will have touch tanks, marine animals, wildlife and games. The day will conclude with an awards ceremony that takes place on the big stage alongside the Redfish Open's anglers allowing kids to experience the same thrilling show that is characteristic of a professional tournament.

Hook and Bones founder and President John Moore said, "The Fishing for the Future youth tournament has proven to be a great platform to allow these kids to enjoy an event where a

dedicated awards ceremony showcases their efforts. The smiles and sense of accomplishment these kids have when recognized for participating in a fishing tournament is priceless," he said.

Shelley Smith, tournament chair and CCA NC Board Member, was moved by donors' kindness.

"This year's generous contributions have quickly eclipsed the previous year's ensuring we will be able to accommodate as many kids as we can reach," she said. "I am still amazed at the ripple effect this giving can have.

"For example, last year one young boy stated he wasn't in need of a free rod and reel but asked if he might give it to a friend who couldn't afford one. To me, this is the character we are hoping to foster and instill in our youth anglers

as they become the stewards of our natural resources."

Sponsorships are still available for interested parties with all donations going directly towards costs associated with the tournament.

"There is an unfortunate disconnect between today's youth and the outdoors leaving the future conservation of our wild spaces at risk," said Dr. Chris Elkins, CCA NC President. "Fishing, for a myriad of reasons, is a constructive alternative for our youth and taught early on will help ensure the enhancement of our natural resource in perpetuity; more tackle box and less Xbox."

For more information and to register please visit the tournament website <http://www.ccancfishingforthefuture.com>.

Raffle to help NCSE efforts; winning ticket worth up to \$40,000

By David Sneed
CCA NC Executive Director

Tired of going to the coast to fish and getting skunked? Tired of the increasingly ugly battles between recreational and commercial fishermen and their political allies over an ever-shrinking coastal fisheries resource? Tired of talking about the way fishing was "in the good old days" and getting blank stares from folks who have grown up with a decimated resource and have no real clue what a healthy resource looks like?

Aren't we all, said Bud Abbott, chairman of CCA NC.

The question is, "what can each of us, individually, do about it?"

The North Carolina Sound Economy coalition (read more about the coalition here: <http://www.ncsoundeconomy.com/>

learn_more) was formed last year to find a way to change North Carolina's failed fisheries management policies and restore our coastal fish stocks. HB 867 is that change, he continued. It would replace our current fisheries management model of shortsighted maximum harvest for a very few with a model based on long-term, sustainable harvest for all citizens. Doing so would move North Carolina from the very bottom of the list of coastal states that responsibly manage their public trust fisheries resources to the top of the list, and make our state the leader in good coastal fisheries management.

NC Sound Economy needs our financial support to push HB867 through the General Assembly this year, Abbott explained. Please join with CCA NC in support of the NC Sound Economy coalition by donating today, he continued.

"No contribution is too small. To help promote donations, for every \$100 contributed through CCA NC's website, CCA NC will enter the donor into a special 'Support NC Sound Economy Raffle' with a chance to win up to \$40,000," Abbott said.

CCA NC's goal is to sell 1,000 raffle tickets at \$100 each then hold a drawing once sales are complete to select a single winning ticket holder, and to award that winner a cash prize up to \$40,000, he said. "The entire remaining \$60,000 in contributions will be donated to the NC Sound Economy coalition for its multi-media campaign to build public support for the passage of HB 867," Abbott added.

NC Sound Economy is an expanding coalition of fishermen and other conservationists, businesses and concerned citizens with a goal of passing HB 867 into

law to achieve resource conservation, economic growth and ending the unproductive fights over shrinking fish stocks.

HB 867 would fix significant problems with the now 20-year-old Fisheries Reform Act of 1997, which has led directly to a continued shrinking of our coastal fish stocks, Abbott said.

"Fisheries management under current law has led us to the point where only five out of 22 state-managed coastal finfish and shellfish stocks are considered viable," he noted.

Restoring our fish stocks to historic levels would allow our state's fishing economy to grow to a \$4.2 billion annual economic impact.

"Please join us in support of NC Sound Economy and the passage of HB 867," he said, "and you might win up to \$40,000." Visit www.ccanc.org/donate to contribute.