

House group blocks fisheries reform

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Legislation to require conservation in the management of state marine resources was buried in committee despite promised support by the House Republican leadership who caved into a few coastal legislators' claims that the bill would destroy commercial fishing.

The Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Economic Development Act that

enjoyed bipartisan support in the House included Majority Leader Rep. John Bell among its four primary sponsors. It also had wide support outside the General Assembly from a broad coalition under the NC Sound Economy banner that included the Coastal Conservation Association NC, American Sportfishing Association, National Marine Manufacturers, N.C. Wildlife Federation, the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce and other organizations.

CCA NC gave the coalition effort more than \$100,000 to write and promote HB867. The coalition also funded the most comprehensive biological and economic study on state coastal fisheries ever commissioned, which will be very useful in the future to a variety of researchers.

Once the bill came up for discussion in the Republican caucus, where the future of most legislation is determined, the members ignored this biological and eco-

nomie study that showed the potential for a multi-billion dollar positive impact on North Carolina from the adoption of the conservation management principles in HB867, said David Sneed, executive director of CCA NC.

Although HB867 did not remotely target any commercial fishing quotas, it would have required the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to manage the

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Will anglers help save menhaden?

Editor's note: This article was originally published in Hatch Magazine (www.hatchmag.com) and has been reprinted with permission.

By Dominic Agostini

It's not every day you are greeted by the smell of bait at your doorstep and is rarer still to revel in such a fishy odor wafting through your neighborhood. But there I was, following my sense of smell from my house in Melbourne, FL, to the ocean, several blocks away. I climbed the boardwalk steps and just past the shore break was a mass of poggy, swimming south.

Finned, feathered, flippered and flip-flopped predators — like me — were there enjoying the spoils of conservation. The awe-inspiring sight of the poggy served as a reminder of how far we've come and just how high the stakes will be for "the most important fish in



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A big silver tarpon blasts a ball of menhaden off a Jacksonville, FL, beach.

Photo by Zoell Tokias

REFORM

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state's shellfish and marine resources for long-term growth rather than maximum harvest, as is the case now. This practice has led to only four of 22 currently managed species being listed as "viable" while the other species are in trouble.

Acting on behalf of the shrimping and commercial fishing industry, a small but vocal faction of pro-commercial legislators including Reps. Beverly Boswell, Michael Speciale and Larry Pittman disrupted the Republican caucus with their adamant opposition to the bill, although when quelled, no specific reasons were ever cited. Attempts to meet with the representatives to hear their concerns were rebuffed, Sneed said. The lobbyist for the commercial N.C. Fisheries Association came out with immediate opposition to the reform effort even while confessing he had not bothered to read the bill.

Reps. Larry Yarborough, Jay Adams and Ted Davis led Republican efforts to move HB867 forward, and Rep. Billy Richardson championed the Democratic side of the aisle to build bipartisan support, but as the session entered its final weeks, the expected support from House leadership never happened. There were enough votes on both sides of the aisle to pass in the House, and the Senate was ready for HB867 to come over. The vocal opposition behind closed doors by a handful of representatives in the Republican caucus was enough for House leadership to delay the bill.

Instead, late in the session a half-hearted "compromise bill" was floated that contained none of the progressive management principles from HB867. The compromise bill would have returned fisheries management to the disastrous level before the current Fisheries Reform Act of 1997 was enacted. "Nothing in the compromise bill would have done anything to help improve our coastal fish stocks or grow our total fishing economy," said CCA NC Chairman Bud Abbott of Harkers Island.

"So, in the end, the same old rhetoric regarding an attack on commercial fishing was accepted and the only objective facts in the debate were ignored," said Abbott, pointing to the current list of viable fish species. The legislators, who say they want more jobs, completely ignored the economic study conducted by a UNC-Wilmington professor that supported a \$4.2 billion positive economic impact to our fishing economy from a more conservative management approach, Abbott continued.

We were told House Speaker Tim Moore had charged Senior Policy Advisor Mitch Gillespie, and Reps. Larry Yarborough and Beverly Boswell, with "fixing" the problem within the caucus by coming up with a compromise on fisheries reform legislation," Sneed recalled.

Promises of stakeholder meetings never materialized and the only "compromise" that was ever put down on paper focused on reconstituting the Joint Legislative Committee on Seafood and Aquaculture to conduct yet another study. "And even worse, it proposed



Action was busy at the Legislative Building where dissent in the GOP Caucus stalled action on HB867.

Photo by Rip Woodlin

"So, in the end, the same old rhetoric regarding an attack on commercial fishing was accepted and the only objective facts in the debate were ignored."

Bud Abbott

CCANC chairman

changing the make-up of the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission by eliminating the two at-large seats and replacing them with another commercial industry and recreational fishing representative," Sneed continued.

The only thing from HB867 included in the "compromise" draft was a definition of "by-catch." Where HB867 took the definition a step further by proposing action to reduce by-catch waste, the "compromise bill" proposed no action at all that would help improve our fisheries, explained Sneed who served as the CCA NC lobbyist during the session.

"So, while CCA and its coalition partners were physically present at the General Assembly every day of the session to talk with legislators about the merits of HB867 and answer any questions or concerns with the bill, we were ultimately blamed for tabling the bill because we were unwilling to compromise," he said. "The reality is we were in daily contact with the bill sponsors and even attempted to schedule meetings with the most vocal opponents of the bill, Reps. Michael Spe-

cial, Larry Pittman and Chris Mills, yet they never took us up on our offer to hear their concerns."

As the last days of the General Assembly wound down and bills flew back and forth between chambers, pro-commercial fishing legislators successfully amended HB86 that would have made the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission powerless. The current nine-member, pro-resource board would have been cut to seven members with a five-vote supermajority required to pass any rule, Sneed explained.

The amendment, tacked into a vast environmental law bill, passed both chambers but was stricken during conference committee negotiations at the urging of CCA NC, he added.

Abbott believes had CCA NC and its coalition partners not been actively engaged during the legislative session, any number of attempts to weaken the already fragile Marine Fisheries Commission would have slid right through without any opposition. "Having CCA NC in Raleigh as the watchdog for the interests of recreational fishermen and conservationists is invaluable," the CCA NC chairman said.

"The way that House leadership recognized the damage these MFC reform efforts would have had on fisheries management is very positive. The House had no problem standing up to the bad provisions sent over from the Senate."

The most troubling takeaway from the session, however, was the way opponents of fisheries management reform dug in and refuse to engage in any meaningful dialogue as soon as you breathe the word "conservation," Sneed concluded. "Conservation does not mean an end to commercial fishing, it creates a better future for all fishermen."

Menhaden: ‘Most important fish in the sea’

During September and October, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) will hold public hearings on Amendment 3 to its Interstate Menhaden Fishery Management Plan. A final decision will come from a vote at its Nov. 13-14 meeting in Linthicum, MD.

Atlantic Menhaden, nicknamed “bunker” up north and “pogy” in the south, are called “the most important fish in the sea” — a statement coined from the exact title of a book written by H. Bruce Franklin. Atlantic menhaden are a basic food or forage fish for many sport and commercially important fish, along with dolphin, whales and osprey. They are the basic building block upon which all other ocean species of fish can thrive.

Menhaden, high in oil and fat, pack a big energy punch for the predators that eat them. If menhaden are not available, predator fish will pursue lower energy prey like crabs and bottom fish for food. Many predator fish that utilize menhaden as a food source (striped bass, cobia and king mackerel) are in decline so the need for greater menhaden stock is clear.

The story and the options for menhaden management are long and complex. Nearly all menhaden are harvested by a single large fishing corporation, Omega Protein, headquartered in Houston, Texas. The catch is processed in its mega-processing plant in Reedville, VA. Omega Protein has a near-monopoly on menhaden harvest in the Atlantic and Gulf.

Menhaden products go into numerous consumer items. The oil is used in things

like omega-3 health supplements, lip-stick and antitrust lubricants. The dry fish meal is used in animal, fish and poultry feed, and as a protein supplement within food in some poor countries. Until 2013, the fish were commercially netted with no quota or cap on the catch. There was and still is a harvest by small commercial fishing operations that supply bait for recreational fisherman and to commercial fishermen who trap lobsters or crabs.

By 2011, the estimated number of menhaden had fallen to as low as 8 percent of the historical population expected if no fishing occurred. The menhaden and many predator fish that depend on them as forage were in sharp decline.

In 2012 the ASMFC implemented a harvest reduction of 20 percent that began in 2013, with a commercial netting quota of 170,000 metric tons that has increased in the past five years to 200,000 metric tons. The 2018 quota is undetermined but expected to increase. Omega Protein is lobbying for more, much more.

The 20 percent reduction in harvest had notable effects within one year. In 2013 after being absent for decades, creatures like humpback whales showed up in New York city waters, feasting on menhaden. This has continued yearly during summer and fall to the delight of the new whale watching charter businesses in New Jersey and New York.

There are five options that will be considered by the ASMFC to manage



BOB LORENZ
ASMFC
Advisory panel

menhaden going forward. One is status quo, which will continue to increase the quota annually as the menhaden population appears to increase. Other options take a “single species management approach.” This approach treats the Atlantic menhaden as a stand-alone fishery and species where abundance is of no consequence except to its own population. Most marine fisheries are managed in this manner. It is the old way. Fishery managers maintain the fish to sustain a level population, yet allow for the maximum catch the species can bear without starting to decline.

The Atlantic menhaden fishery is of little direct commercial value to anyone but the near monopoly represented by Omega Protein.

To manage a fishery and species such as Atlantic menhaden, that is most valuable as a food or forage source for other species, requires a newer, modern insightful fishery management plan (FMP). A forage species must be managed for great abundance to be readily available for predators and to the general ecosystem, not for maximum take from a fishing operation.

EBMS has already been considered, developed, and in some cases, implemented within federal fisheries management on the West Coast, and in the Atlantic by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC). It is time the ASMFC adopt the practice for Atlantic menhaden management.

CCA and other conservation organi-

zations are advocating for Option E in Section 2.6 of Amendment 3 in the ASMFC’s Interstate Menhaden Fishery Management Plan. Option E will introduce what fishery managers call interim Ecological Reference Points (ERPs). Essentially, the ERPs stop the bleeding and allow for something to be done in the interim to further enhance the menhaden population and abundance.

Option E will target maintaining the menhaden population/biomass at 75 percent of the historical population that would be expected if no fishing occurred. A lower limit of 40 percent of the biomass expected in an historical unfished population will be implemented as a hard control. Should the menhaden population fall below the 40 percent limit, then fishing for the species will stop until the population rebuilds.

It is important to sport fishing interests that Option E is adopted and implemented. It is an interim measure, is based upon the 2017 stock assessment and proposed in the spirit of getting something done now to further expand menhaden abundance.

To fully develop final ERPs within an Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan could take until 2022 to reach full implementation. Another stock assessment will be completed in 2019. Read the draft document for the amendment on [asmfc.org website](http://asmfc.org/website).

So what can you do? Write the ASMFC and tell it you want menhaden management changed. The ASMFC will hold a vote on Amendment 3, and set the 2018 catch limit, at its meeting Nov. 13-14.

A day of fishing on the Outer Banks teaches a lesson in humility

By **Bill Mandulak**
CCA NC Writer

Arguably the best offshore fishing on the east coast is out of Hatteras Inlet. Of course, Hatteras Inlet can be a challenge with its winding channel. On our return from offshore that day, we had a choppy ride across the bar and were following the buoys toward the sound. However, I

missed a buoy and got into a foot of water very quickly.

After much maneuvering with the crew running bow to stern and rocking the boat, we managed to inch our way back to the channel after tilting the motors up and spewing lots of water, sand and mud high into the air. Fortunately, only one boat witnessed my embarrassingly poor piloting. We carefully made

our way back to the dock.

While cleaning up back at our cottage, we were surprised to see a fire truck with lights on and siren blaring, making its way to our more central cottage where we all ate. Apparently, our cook for the night had badly burned our dinner causing the fire alarm to go off. The alarm in the rental automatically summoned the fire department to check for fire and do

the required reset of the alarm.

Our cook apologized for his ineptitude and thanked the firemen for their help. One of the firemen replied, “That’s nothing, we saw this idiot put his 25-footer on the shoals at Hatteras Inlet today. He was damn lucky to get it off before low tide! Have a good day.” No one said a word.

It was just another day on the Outer Banks for our crew.

Legislators have misplaced priorities on fisheries

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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Check out our website at www.ccanc.org to join us in our fight to preserve recreational angling for future generations. Annual memberships are available starting at \$30.

As the fall fishing migration starts to ramp up, I think about the opportunities we have as coastal fishermen with mixed feelings.

The boat ramps are starting to fill up, pier fishermen have started to increase and we will soon see waders in their favorite trout and drum holes as well as kayak fishermen.

Some bring their friends to celebrate this annual fall fishing season while families teach their children the great enjoyment of our coastal fisheries. Tackle shops, marinas, motels, restaurants, retailers and many others benefit from expenditures of those involved in the fall fishing migration. But there is a downside to this happy exuberance. North Carolina's fall fishing migration is a far cry from what it was just two or three decades ago.

As fish stocks fall, the migration has declined so we have lost some piers, tackle shops, restaurants, stores and motels in this downward spiral. The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries stock status report for 2016 listed only four species of 22 managed fin and shellfish as viable, while in 1998 there were 10 of 22 viable.

Legislators Beverly Boswell, Michael Speciale, Chris Mills, Larry Pitman, Bob Steinburg, Bill Cook, Jerry Tillman and Norman Sanderson will not admit their loyal support for only commercial fishing interests has truly harmed their districts' businesses and citizens as our fall fishing migrations continue to decrease.

All economic studies have shown that recreational fishing provides many times the financial stimulus of commercial fishing year after year. The very legislators who should be working to restore our coastal fisheries to help their districts' businesses, citizens and commercial harvests are doing everything they can to help destroy what is left of our fish stocks. And in doing so, the waterman's way of life.

How are these legislators destroying our fish stocks? They re-

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



BUD ABBOTT
Chairman

I use to support any legislation that will improve the stocks, instead speaking loudly to kill the same proposals. They argue that it will close down the commercial fishing industry, when in fact these similar legislative actions have helped Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and other states restore their fisheries, increase their commercial harvests and bring back their recreational fishermen.

North Carolina's commercial harvest is ranked seventh of the nine southeastern states yet we have the most lenient commercial fishing regulations in the southeast.

Our state has the second largest estuarine waters in the southeast behind Louisiana, but our combined commercial and recreational fish harvests are less than 5 percent of that Gulf state. North Carolina's government and leaders are doing something terribly wrong.

What is wrong is the destructive commercial gears like otter trawls, oyster dredges and gill nets used in our estuarine waters that continue to kill over 500 million non-targeted species each year, which could restore our stocks so all citizens could enjoy the benefits of coastal fisheries.

CCA NC has been a vital part of the fisheries reform actions which have included House Bill 867, the Shrimp By-catch Reduction Petition, the upcoming Striped Bass Petition, stopping the Omega menhaden harvest off our coast, protecting the integrity of the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission and creating a coalition to make the voice for conserving our coastal resources stronger.

The reconstitution of the MFC that now has a pro-resource majority is going to be crucial in future fishery reform. CCA NC's leading goal in 2013 was to change the majority voting power of the

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Guide sees both sides of fight over resource

Being a native of Swan Quarter and Hyde County as well as a fishing guide, I am torn by the argument between commercial and recreational fishermen in this state.

As a fishing guide, I love to see the CCA lobby for rights of recreational fishermen as well as coastal conservation. I think what the CCA is doing is good for the future of our coastal waters. The ban of nets and inland shrimping would make our fishing in the sound and river systems surpass those of Flor-

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ida, Louisiana and Texas. This would bring more business to guides such as myself and others.

Although as a native of Hyde County, fishing and farming is what this county's economy is based on. If this county loses its commercial fishing industry, the county as a whole will be no more. The only thing that keeps Hyde County afloat in the win-

ter is the influx of hunters. Eating at local restaurants, staying at the motels, buying groceries, purchasing oysters, etc.

The sad thing is a lot of the recreational fishermen who venture east to this coastal paradise in the spring and summer to fish do not spend any money in the county. They come here, they fish for the day, and then they leave. From what locals

tell me, this is a major reason for the hostility towards recreational fishermen by commercial fishermen in this area.

What worries me more than anything is constant fighting going on between commercial fishermen and recreational anglers. If both sides could work together to increase the habitat in the Pamlico Sound, then both sides would be able to exist in North Carolina.

Capt. Greyson Davis
Swan Quarter, N.C.

Fisheries solutions might not be in Raleigh

There was high hope among CCA NC board members and staff when the 2017 General Assembly began its long session in January. A thoughtful, fair but still revolutionary bill to change the way state marine resources are managed was ready for introduction.

A coalition of sport fishing manufacturers and conservation organizations was behind the bill with both words and money. Best of all, the Republican House leadership promised support as well.

Then we waited. And waited. Platitudes and promises floated in the air but suddenly adjournment was two weeks away and nothing was happening. HB867 never even came up for a committee vote much less got to the floor where bipartisan support supposedly waited.

We were had. We learned the bill was going to split the Republican caucus, which approves most legislation, and the leadership didn't want that. Another rumor was someone very powerful called the Speaker. Pick your excuse, real or imagined.

Here are the truthful lessons learned from the 2017 General Assembly.

The coalition under the NC Sound Economy banner had good ideas, energy and a positive strategy. Dr. Louis Daniel, the former and longest serving Marine Fisheries director, said HB867 could be fully implemented despite what the administration believed. He gave the legislation his blessing as a logical step necessary to recover fish stocks.

CCA NC Executive Director David Speed started the session as a naive, rookie lobbyist but through tenacity and knowledge emerged as a respected pro-

OUR VIEW



Photo by Rip Woodlin

False albacore gorging on bait fish.

False albacore gorging on bait fish. Professional who will help CCA NC tremendously in the years ahead.

On the larger negative side, the solution to our mismanaged fisheries will not come from Raleigh in the foreseeable future. The leadership in both political parties is extremely weak. Both parties. That includes the Governor's Office too.

You can't take anything at face value that you're told behind the scenes from the leadership in ei-

With apologies to Clint Eastwood, I saw the bad, the ugly and the good this past summer as a rookie lobbyist for CCA NC during the General Assembly's 2017 "long session" in Raleigh.

The "bad" snuck up on me when the Republican House leadership, despite promises to the contrary, allowed a handful of legislators to block our fisheries reform act known as House Bill 867. Ostensibly the leadership, including one of the bill's main sponsors, didn't want to cause dissension in the GOP Caucus. Go figure.

The "ugly" was right on the heels of the "bad." Those stalwart backers of the commercial fishing industry never read the bill to see what it contained and refused to meet with me to explain their concerns. The job of a lobbyist is to listen and inform. I never got that chance.

Now the "good," which came in the closing days of the session, gave me hope that saner minds sometimes prevail. Several coastal senators, acting on behalf of the commercial industry, inserted an amendment into an

omnibus environmental bill that would have gutted the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission, reducing the number of commissioners and requiring a supermajority of five of seven votes to enact any regulation.

That would have brought management of the state's marine resources to a halt since three pro-resource or three pro-harvest votes could block any action. After passing both legislative chambers, the House leadership wisely deleted the amendment in the conference committee. Faith somewhat restored.

Now back to the beginning. With scant dollars to spare, the leadership of CCA NC decided not to hire a fulltime lobbyist, instead sending a passionate neophyte into the lion's den on Jones Street (location of the

ther party. Ignorance continues to be bliss on Jones Street. They don't understand the issues, nor do they want to.

Unfortunately, the whole issue of fisheries management still is cast as combat between recreational and commercial fishermen for allocation of limited fish. And the legislators view CCA NC as a front for recreational anglers rather than a conservation organization as it is seen in 16 other states.

With the level of dysfunction in the legislature where the tail often wags the dog, if HB867 had gotten to the floor it might have been defeated by some Democrats because it came out of the Republican Party, yet it is legislation that Democrats would normally support.

There is also plenty of blame to lie on the Governor's doorstep. Although Gov. Roy Cooper pays lip service to fisheries issues, the administration passively if not openly opposed it. Nobody from the administration understands or cares about fisheries. Nor does anyone on Jones Street where facts don't matter. That shows by the disregard of our economic study and the scary stock status reports coming out of the DMF.

Conservation organizations don't have any stalwarts who will fight to the end for our causes while commercial fishing interests have a number of backers. And finally, the vast public is uninformed and apathetic on the issue. While that's our fault, educating literally millions of North Carolinians about the public trust resource that belongs to them is a mountainous task.

Rookie lobbyist reflects on frustrating 'long session'



DAVID SNEED
Executive Director

legislative building). Just walking into the N.C. Legislative Building can be confusing for most first-time visitors, but trying to navigate the political hallways while lobbying for a worthy cause is a whole different voyage on unfamiliar waters. For starters, I must have walked miles around the Legislative Building during the first weeks of this year's long session just trying to understand the numbering pattern of the offices.

They tell me you just need to look at the quads like a baseball field. Home plate is the lobby on Jones Street and then travel right around the bases. But then what about all those rooms in the middle, and just try to find the stairs down to the basement for the cafeteria hidden in the middle of these quads? Sounds simple but going down the wrong set of stairs will only drop you in the middle of the underground parking lot.

Once you get comfortable with your surroundings,

MENHADEN

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the sea” and for anglers this Nov. 14.

That’s when the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is scheduled to vote on a plan that could transform the management of Atlantic menhaden from a narrow single species approach — which ignores the value of recreational fishing — to a big picture approach that will protect menhaden and its role in the ecosystem and our fisheries.

It’s hard to imagine a fish that means more to the east coast than Atlantic menhaden. Virtually every region has its own term of endearment to describe these oily forage fish. Call them pogey, fat-back, bunker, bughead, or by the Native American vernacular (and mouthful) “mumawhatteaug,” but please don’t underestimate menhaden’s keystone role in east coast fisheries and marine ecosystems.

Menhaden are small, short-lived, a key food source for a myriad of predators from table fare to massive marine mammals and are historically abundant from Maine to Florida. Striped bass, tarpon, bluefin tuna, humpback whales and osprey are just a few notable members of the Menhaden Diners Club. And when the smelly menhaden dinner bell rings, the feeding frenzy is an incredible sight to behold.

Such gatherings are profitable too. Schools of menhaden and other forage fish lure and concentrate predators for people to catch. Fishermen, whale-watching tours, restaurants and more reap the spoils in the form of booked trips, photos and fresh local seafood. And if my friends’ social media feeds are any indication, this year has been a very good one for many guides in the northeast.

Menhaden schools like the one I snifted out are a good sign for a species that once endured decades of overfishing by commercial fishing fleets. To this day menhaden are incorporated into a multitude of products from live-stock and pet feed, to omega-3 capsules, to cosmetics.

The menhaden fishery quickly became the biggest on the U.S. east coast lacking an annual science-based catch limit and accountability measures, which are norms for other popular species. A total of 25 menhaden processing plants sprouted up and down the Atlantic, including one in Jacksonville, FL. This unbridled expansion depleted menhaden at the cost of both predators and local economies. Today, just one processing



plant remains, based at the heart of the menhaden’s range — the Chesapeake Bay — where the bulk of the remaining population grow up.

A turning point for conservation of this important species came in 2012, when a coalition of recreational and commercial fishermen, conservation organizations, coastal business owners and more aligned their efforts in support of the first ever coast-wide catch cap for Atlantic menhaden. The coalition’s might, coupled with the bravery of representatives from Florida and other Atlantic State Marine Fishery Commission (ASMFC) states, helped pass Amendment 2, which resulted in a 20 percent reduction in coast-wide catch. In terms of numbers of fish, Amendment 2 meant that each year, three hundred million more menhaden would remain in the water to enrich our fisheries.

Since that historic day, menhaden have been on the road to recovery. A 2015 stock assessment indicates that the menhaden population has been growing and its range increasing and hopes are that the 2017 stock assessment, due out this summer, will show continued progress toward rebuilding.

The commercial menhaden fishing industry has used this ongoing population rebound to argue for a reversal of course, advocating for large quota increases of 20 to 40 percent. Pushback from anglers, conservationists and scientists has slowed their progress, but after several years the commercial fleet’s quota is again nearing 2011 levels. This seemingly untoppable erosion of past conservation gains is proof positive that the ASMFC’s antiquated, single species approach to managing menhaden, which ignores impacts to predators and other fisheries, is by far the industry’s greatest asset and the recreational angler’s greatest foe.

This tiresome struggle is likely to continue until we come up with a new way to manage menhaden that accounts for their worth in landings as well as when left in the sea, enabling the population to fully recover and return to its historic range.

A path forward for menhaden

The ASMFC is currently working on new rulemaking, known as Amendment 3, which would finally establish the ground rules necessary to manage menhaden to meet the needs of both commercial fishermen and the menhaden’s many predators. Amendment 3 would set the bar for menhaden recovery based on how much menhaden are needed to keep striped bass, tarpon, osprey and other species healthy. If the menhaden population were to drop below a level thought to jeopardize its ability to recover and support healthy predator populations, then the commercial menhaden fishery’s quota would be reduced until the menhaden population could recover.

This option means the ASMFC will manage menhaden for their role as prey based on widely-applicable guidelines supported by numerous peer-reviewed studies. And, long-term, this option supports the development of Ecological Reference Points specific to Atlantic menhaden, which are expected to take at least several more years for the ASMFC’s Working Group to develop. Such ecosystem-based management would finally mean that menhaden are given the respect that they deserve. But, just like in 2012, none of this is going to happen without strong public support. And no community has more invested, more to gain or lose, and more to say than recreational fishermen.

Take the pledge; heed the call

The ASMFC met Aug. 1-3 to approve draft Amendment 3 for public comment. And it’s this input that will weigh heavy on the ASMFC come Nov. 14, when the commission meets near Baltimore, MD, to finalize Amendment 3 and set the course for the future of menhaden.

Anglers like us who care about game fish from striped bass to tarpon should raise a battle cry in support of menhaden-specific ERPs with interim use of 75 percent target, 40 percent threshold. We should pledge to share our message and others like it far and wide, speak up at our local public hearings and submit written comments on the record this fall.

Pogey are knocking. Will you heed the call?

**BROWN DOG
HOSIERY CO.**



ENCORE
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Official cooler of CCA NC

Kids' tourney quadruples in second year

By Rip Woodlin
CCA NC Editor

The kids showed the pros at the current Hook & Bones Redfish Open in Swansboro, N.C., how to catch big fish during the second annual CCA NC Fishing for the Future youth contest.

Ryder Hearn caught a monstrous 32 1/2-inch redfish to win the "Under 12" category while Scarlett Futrell hauled in the "Lady Angler" (perhaps more appropriately named the Little Girl) title with a 22 1/4-inch redfish.

These were just two of 119 young fishers who competed in the half-day tournament, said CCA NC Board Member Shelley Smith and co-chair of the tournament. This year's turnout nearly quadrupled the 34 entrants in the inaugural year of the tournament, which testifies to its popularity, she added.

"We had a great turnout and I'm happy so many kids participated in this free event," Smith said. "We are incredibly excited about getting kids outdoors and 'hooked' on America's premier heritage sport. As recreational anglers, we understand fishing teaches our children patience, builds self-esteem and provides quality time with family."

CCA NC Chairman Bud Abbott added, "The annual tournament provides an opportunity to show the coastal communities, its citizens, the participating children and their families that CCA NC is first a conservation group leading the effort to restore our fisheries for future generations and curtailing the use of destructive gears that most states have already banned."

One father liked the whole experience for his sons so much that he asked about next year's date so he could plan the annual family beach vacation around the event. "This was a wonderful statement about the tournament," Smith said.

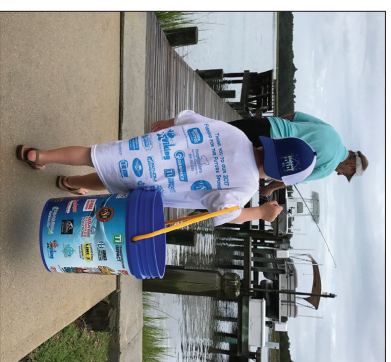
Besides being free to all children under 18, the tournament was completely "catch and release," Smith explained. Kids were given cell phone numbers to text in their pictures alongside a ruler. "One young angler caught 38 fish with seven different species represented, she added.

The tournament could not have been held without the amazing support of



many local and state sponsors, she said. "With the generous donations in both cash and goods, we were able to provide all the kids who registered with a swag bucket. These five-gallon buckets were professionally wrapped with the tournament logo and the major sponsors' logos." And a large bucket was needed to hold all the donated gear.

"In each bucket was a hat, t-shirt, fishing pole, fish grips, stickers for local tackle and clothing companies, dip nets, small toys, circlehook brochures, a free New Tide youth CCA membership, a bag of plastic bait, DMF tackle boxes with tackle, and other small items," Smith explained.



Above left, Seth Morgan shows off his redfish, good enough for second place at the CCA NC Fishing for the Future youth contest. Above, kids learn about various marine critters on display from Dr. Joel Fodrie's UNC Institute of Marine Science. Left, Beasley Sewell (3) headed out to fish with his grandfather.

LOBBYIST

From Page 5

you next have to understand the ever-changing scheduling process. You get to know the legislative assistants very well as you move around trying to catch even a few minutes with the “elephants.” Meetings set with legislators are often canceled as committee meetings pop onto the schedule without warning or party leaders call for unscheduled caucus gatherings.

Attending committee meetings often means packing a room with other lobbyists who seem to outnumber legislators 10-1. (I think the number is really closer to 6-1.) Sitting in one of these meetings, you witness just how dominant the majority party really is during the public lawmaking process. Opposition to bills favored by the party in power is futile. Powerful committee chairs readily dismiss or ignore Democrat opposition. It’s very clear that the outcome for proposed bills has most often already been decided behind the closed doors of the Republican caucus.

Lobbying legislators for their support of coastal fisheries issues is in itself a pretty challenging task. You have to first understand that legislators get swamped by hundreds of proposed bills during a long session and they have multitudes of people competing for their time to support each cause.

I learned early on that most legislators come to Raleigh with a pretty narrow bandwidth and coastal fishing is generally not at the top of most lists. When I was fortunate enough to grab a few minutes with a legislator who had not been



The House prepares for a light day on the calendar.

prejudiced against conservation, he or she was almost always sympathetic to our cause but reluctant to get actively involved. It seems that coming to Raleigh as a newbie legislator must carry with it the universal warning – “Do not get involved in the coastal fisheries debate!”

I assumed the General Assembly would be filled with confident, type-A personalities, not afraid to mix it up on controversial issues. I found the opposite to be true, however. The overwhelming majority of legislators, probably 90 percent or more, do not want to get involved with anything that could be potentially confrontational and dangerous to their reelection.

My experience this year confirmed that legislative support for fisheries reform faces two fairly large challenges. One is the sheer volume of issues that our part-time legislators try to deal with each session.

Time is their biggest challenge. To

handle all of the issues in an educated manner is difficult when most legislators come to Raleigh on a Tuesday and leave on Thursday, and want the long session completed before the July Fourth holiday.

Experienced legislators must form confidences with lobbyists and other representatives so they can share knowledge on the many issues that require their favor or disapproval.

This leads into the second, and perhaps biggest challenge we face in bringing about fisheries reform — most legislators with any seniority have been bombarded by the commercial fishing lobby for decades.

The Koel-Aid has been passed around the General Assembly for so long, most just do not want to deal with it anymore. And certain coastal legislators have been unduly influenced to support whatever position the commercial fishing industry tells them to.

The House Wildlife Resources Committee hearing on HB867 was a particularly colorful example of this allegiance. First, the committee room was overrun by House members not even on the committee who piled in to make a case against HB867. Rep. Beverly Boswell made a tearful appeal to the committee to reject HB867 claiming it would put commercial fishermen in her district on welfare.

Pressed for specific provisions in the bill that would adversely affect commercial fishermen, she could cite none. Same for Reps. Speciale and Pittman who also opposed the bill for no specific reason other than the commercial fishing lobbyist told them to. And that same lobbyist addressed the committee to oppose the legislation but he too was unable to cite any specific provisions primarily because, as he admitted, he had not read the bill.

So, my impressions as a first-year lobbyist boil down to this: It’s hot in Raleigh in the summer time. You grab five minutes with legislators when and where you can. This means you better have your elevator speech down pat. You depend on your friendly legislators to spread support to their friends in the GA.

Legislators will generally listen to their constituents who make the trip to Raleigh to talk with them. Others, however, are so dogmatic that they will never move on a position. Legislators do not read most emails, although legislative aides sometimes scan them. There are a lot of professional lobbyists in Raleigh; few represent a single interest.

Your cause will go nowhere without support of the majority party leadership and even then it’s not certain. Partisan politics are alive and flourishing in North Carolina.

COVINGTON

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GRADY-WHITE



AMERICAN FISHING TACKLE CO.

Hutchinson quits retirement for CCA cause

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Clark Hutchinson always has had a cause, a challenge, in his life. Something more potent than coffee to get him going in the morning.

After nearly a year of retirement, he has both a real cause and certainly a challenge as the new Eastern Regional Director of CCA NC. "I've always had a cause," the Pine Knoll Shores resident explained. "When I was working for the government, my cause was doing the best job I could so the guys at the pointy end of the spear had what they needed to do their job."

Clark worked 35 years for the Naval Air Systems Command at MCAS Cherry Point as a program manager on various aspects of Naval and Marine Corps aviation programs. After leaving the government job in 2006, he moved to a private company, Precise Systems, Inc., doing aviation support work.

"The job I enjoyed most was being

the C/ KC-130 program manager," he recalled. He managed the logistical, engineering and modification programs for the full inventory of 79 C-130 transport planes used by the Navy and Marine Corps.

After spending 10 years with a private contractor, Hutchinson retired last October.

"I took 11 months off to enjoy not working for the first time in 50 years," he said. "But I wanted and needed a cause. I'd wake up and ask how am I connected to the larger world?"

When Dr. Callie Freeman left the CCA NC job because of family needs, Hutchinson saw an opportunity. "I've always had a passion for recreational fishing," the former licensed captain explained. "I started talking to cohorts when the job came open, then I struck up my hand."

Switching from maintaining airplanes to conserving fisheries, might seem a



HUTCHINSON

major career change except for Clark's other passion, shooting sporting clays.

As a master class shooter in national competitions, Hutchinson and a friend created the N.C. Sporting Clays Association in the early 2000s so he has experience with starting and building a non-profit organization from the ground up.

His job as CCA NC's regional director will be building programs and growing membership, just what he did as president of N.C. Sporting Clays.

His top priority will be "to bolster current chapters as best I can, work with all the viable networks in place and provide outreach to areas where we're under represented."

Hutchinson wants to energize the typical recreational fisherman who knows little about CCA NC or the declining numbers of the state's shellfish and marine resources. "All the average fisherman wants to know is where the fish are. We have to convince them that without their support, there might not be something to

catch in the future," he said.

Hutchinson can be reached via email at clark@ccanc.org.

CCA NC Executive Director David Sneed said he was very pleased to find someone with Hutchinson's credentials. "His management background combined with his passion for saltwater fishing and experience growing a non-profit organization will contribute greatly to spreading CCA NC's message of conserving our marine resources for everyone's use, including future generations."

Hutchinson's eastern region includes all the area east of I-95. "We hated to lose Callie Freeman because she did a terrific job on rejuvenating the Crystal Coast banquet and starting a hugely successful kids' fishing tournament in Swansboro," Sneed continued. "But I know Clark will continue the growth she started."

Todd Shamel remains the western regional director of CCA NC covering all the state from Raleigh westward including Charlotte.

Burlington sock company joins marine conservation partnership

Brown Dog Hosiery in Burlington has joined CCA NC in promoting solutions to fisheries management that will guarantee marine resources will be available for future generations to enjoy, CCA NC Chairman Bud Abbott announced.

The thrill of catching that elusive fish or watching your dog retrieve your first duck of the season is only one of the rewards of fishing and hunting, said Callum Brown, president of Brown Dog Hosiery. "Time spent with family and friends, strengthening bonds as you experience the outdoors together, is the best reward," he added. "Making sure those opportunities are available for generations to come is one of our common goals."

"The work of CCA NC in promoting policies that will help create long-term, sustainable fisheries and resources in our state is vital to the future of recreational fishing," Brown believes. "Brown Dog Hosiery is committed to the work of CCA NC."

Abbott said he was especially pleased to have a young, start-up entrepreneur



like Callum Brown join CCA as a sponsor. "Not only is his product different, but it's great to see our values exhibited by the next generation of businessmen in the state."

As a CCA NC sponsor, Brown's company has provided unique socks for many association events. Participants in the recent 3rd Annual CCA NC Sportsman's Conservation Legacy Shootout received Brown Dog socks. Socks were also donated to silent auctions at the organization's annual fundraising banquets and fishing tournament.

"Our company was started around the idea that you don't have to forget your great weekend fishing trip when Monday morning rolls around. You love your job, but you live for outdoor adventures," Brown said. "Brown Dog Hosiery creates socks that allow you to wear your passions."

The dress socks produced by Brown Dog Hosiery feature fish, fishing flies, ducks, shotgun shells, and of course, hunting dogs.

Brown started Brown Dog Hosiery in early 2017 after seeing a need for unique dress-casual socks that outdoorsmen could wear to work or other events. He has 13 years of experience in the sock industry and is a co-owner of ProFeet, a company that produces socks for a wide range of sports as well as for the law enforcement industry.

The new company was named for Brown's Boykin spaniel puppy. Brown Dog's socks offer a quality and comfort level above the average dress sock, he said.



Callum Brown, with his Boykin spaniel puppy, joined as a conservation partner with CCA NC.

Shooters have a blast at annual fundraiser



Photo by David Sneed

Above, a shooter takes aim a sporting clay rapidly fleeing into the distance during third annual Sportsman's Conservation Legacy Shootout held in August at Drake Landing. Above right, David Sneed, left, congratulates the winning team of Ozza Tysor, Buck Tysor, Dickie Jones and Clyde Burke. Grady-White Boats of Greenville, a perennially top-three team, took second place. Individual winners included Clark Hutchinson and top Lady Shooter, Coley Cordero.

Shotgun blasts echoed in the woods at Drake Landing near Apex in late August when CCA NC staged its third annual Sportsman's Conservation Legacy Shootout won by Team Tysor.

New Life Member Ozza Tysor led his four-man team to first place with a combined score of 159. Besides Tysor, the team included Buck Tysor, Dickie Jones and Clyde Burke.

Grady-White Boats of Greenville, a perennially top-three team, took second place led by sharpshooting captain Joey Weller and Steve Camp who also tied for high individual honors with a total of 45. Other Grady-White shooters were Jim Hardin and Dale Brantley.

Third place went to Greenville's Byrd Hunters team led by Clark Hutchinson who tied with Steve Camp for the individual honors and took the overall championship in a shootout with Camp. The Byrd Hunters team has also placed in the top three all three years of the Shootout and included top shooters Dick Brame, Chuck Laughridge, Clark Hutchinson and Smoot Carter.

This year saw the first all-youth team of four young men all 18 years old or younger. The team of Quentin Cain, Reed Wheelless, Rolie Tillman IV and Will Rogers gave the old guys a run for their money with a respectable score of



Photo by Todd Shamel

112. All of our youth shooters were recognized with prizes at the end of the day.

Coley Cordero took Lady Shooter honors.

Smoot Carter took the top Side-by-Side Shooter honors with a score of 35.

This year's shootout featured the use of the Lewis and Clark Scoring System to provide more shooters the opportunity to participate in the shoot off finale and to award more prizes. The first flight featured a shoot-off between the top two individual shooters, Clark Hutchinson and Steve Camp, with Hutchinson winning the shoot-off.

The second flight shoot-off saw Clyde Burke win over Mike Pittard. Joe Forehand defeated David Mason in the third flight finale. In the

fourth flight, Jim Hardin outshot Kendall Mayo and Rob Hughes claimed the fifth flight title over Will Rogers. And Robert Hughes took the sixth flight by outgunning Perry Bullard.

CCA NC thanks Presenting Sponsors Regulator Marine and Tarheel Boatworks, and Gold Level Sponsor Grady-White Boats. Beer was provided by Sweetwater Brewing Company.

The American Fishing Tackle Company and Simms Fishing Products furnished gifts for new Life Members who joined at the Shootout.

Special thanks to Brown Dog Hosiery of Burlington for giving samples of its line of men's outdoor sporting themed dress socks to all of this year's participants.

MISPLACED

From Page 4

MFC from commercial to pro-resource; we have been very successful.

We will continue working to improve

the pro-resource actions of the MFC with suggestions for stronger conservation efforts while supporting the pro-resource commissioners.

We need every reader to support CCA NC with your voice and a membership. The more voices and members we have, the better our results will be in restoring

our fisheries.

My leadership roles as president, 2014-2015, and chairman, 2016-2017, are quickly coming to an end. I want to personally thank every one of our directors, officers, members, Life Members, sponsors, donors and readers for your support over the last four years.

You have helped CCA NC grow to new heights and fight new battles to restore our fish stocks for future generations of citizens in North Carolina. Please continue to support our efforts and challenge the incoming leadership to do more to conserve our coastal resources.

Master's candidate earns scholarship

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

CCA NC gave it annual \$2,000 scholarship to Olivia Caretti of Maryland, a second year master's candidate at N.C. State University, board member and scholarship chairman Bill Mandulak announced in August.

Caretti said she will use the grant to buy a computer that will analyze the value of the state's oyster planting program on fisheries. She's studying substrate material used to construct the reefs and how it attracts then grows fish. A question is whether limestone marl or old oyster shells are the best materials for the manmade reefs. She wants to test whether the planted oyster cultures create more fish during the two to three years it takes them to mature.

Caretti is also experimenting with an underwater microphone to record various fish sounds that will enable her to identify the fish that are using the reefs. Without the microphone, the only way to know is to harvest the fish with gill nets or traps, she said.

The eight study sites are near Swan Quarter in the southwest area of the Pamlico Sound.



Scholarship Chairman Bill Mandulak left, congratulates N.C. State student Olivia Caretti for winning CCA NC's \$2,000 award.

CCA NC event schedule

Sep. 28: Onslow Bay Chapter Banquet, Swansboro Rotary Club Civic Center, 1104 Main St. Ext., Swansboro, 919-781-3474.

Oct. 5: Charlotte Chapter Banquet, Alchemy at C3 Lab, 2525 Distribution Street, Charlotte, 919-781-3474

Nov. 9: Triad Chapter Banquet, High Point Country Club, 800 Country Club Drive, High Point

Nov. 15-16: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission meeting, Hilton Garden Inn, 5353 N. Virginia Dare Trail, Kitty Hawk

Dec. 4-8: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Double Tree by Hilton, 2717 W. Fort Macon Rd., Atlantic Beach

Dec. 7: Cape Fear Chapter Oyster Roast, Wigginsville Beach Brewery, 24 Greenville Ave. Wilmington, 803-546-8113

Win big with raffle

The CCA NC board of directors has decided to extend the opportunity to purchase a \$100 raffle ticket through the fall banquets if necessary to sell all 1,000 raffle tickets.

If all 1,000 tickets are sold, a ticket holder could have a one in 1,000 chance to win \$40,000. The remaining \$60,000 will go to support coastal conservation and habitat enhancement here in North Carolina.

'Oyster highway' considered

Jacksonville wants to build an oyster highway in the New River.

The city already has a few oyster reefs in the New River, but there is a 20-mile stretch that doesn't have any. It runs from Southwest Creek to Stone Bay. The city's Storm Water Manager, Pat Donovan-Potts, said the oyster highway would help certain marine life survive in the river. She said that the reef would also help filter the water in the river.

"You've got clean water," Donovan-Potts said. "We've got habitat for small fish and

shrimp and crabs, which are in our estuaries. It's just a win-win situation and with none there (right now), we just want to build it back. We need to restore the river back to part of its original state."

The city is working with the Coastal Conservation Association and the North Carolina Wildlife Habitat Foundation to raise the money for the project. It is expected to cost between \$600,000-\$700,000. Both organizations are meeting with state legislators and other state agencies to raise the money.

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BIG ROCK
SPORTS

Good spring, summer fishing bodes well for great fall season

By Rip Woodlin
CCA NC Editor

The 2017 fishing season has been outstanding and is only going to get better with an epic trout bite as the fall season rapidly approaches, say three veteran fishing guides from Swan Quarter south to Snead's Ferry.

Capt. Greyson Davis of Swan Quarter started off the spring catching rockfish (striped bass) in the Albemarle Sound and Lower Roanoke River mostly targeting stump fields with stick baits as well as cut bait fishing the mouth of the Roanoke. "I switched gears in early April, missing the best time to be on the Roanoke, to come back to Swan Quarter and target the incoming schools of trophy red drum in the sound as well as in Hatteras and Ocracoke Inlets."

Rolling into May, the red drum bite picked up in the Pamlico Sound along with a few chopper blues, some 10-15 pounds, he said. "Also, towards the end of the month, this was the time of year to start targeting incoming schools of female roe trout."

"We usually see the flounder show up the middle of July and they will stay in the sound and the river system till early October. We target these fish on deep marsh points that have a sand bottom off the ledge using soft plastic on an eighth-to quarter-ounce jig head."

The big drum fishing also gets cranked up as these fish make their annual run up the river systems to spawn. Davis said, "Fresh cut mullet or spot on the bottom, targeting breaks and ledges is the key to catching trophy red drum," he said.

As for the fall, "I am predicting a trout bite for the ages. Without a freeze in the past three or four years, these fish have been able to grow and reproduce. We will start targeting these fish up the creeks right after the first frost using MR 17s or other assorted twitch

FISHING REPORT



Guide Brian Horsley hunts false albacore with clients near Cape Lookout.

baits," Capt. Davis concluded.

Morehead City Capt. Tom Roller said, "2017 has been one of the best all-around inshore fishing seasons I have experienced in my lifetime. While nothing in particular is outstanding, we have, for the first time in a decade, three good year classes of red drum present, excellent speckled trout fishing, excellent estuarine striped bass and what can be described as respectable inshore flounder fishing."

Several things have come together to make this season, he explained. A mild winter allowed for good speckled trout survival; several good spawns of red drum leading to decent numbers of 3-year-old old upper slot fish; lots of 2-year-old lower to mid slots and a rising year class of 1-year-old "rat" reds that could lead to a pretty epic 2018.

Being able to keep several flounder this summer was a far cry from the last few years in which keeper southern flounder were virtually non-existent for hook and line anglers, Roller said. There's a very simple answer to this and this leads me into reason three – some of the new regulations enacted by the

2016 flounder supplement have had a significant effect. While a judge threw out much of the supplement, what remains is the commercial 15-inch size limit and a minimum gill net mesh of 6 inches, he said.

"A huge percentage of flounder gill netters caught were under 15 inches, and many used much smaller gill net mesh. These new rules have forced many commercials out of the gill net game since a lot of fishermen simply don't want to make new nets to catch less flounder," Roller said. The 6-inch mesh also clearly allows a lot of smaller drum, trout and striped bass to escape that would otherwise be killed at much smaller sizes.

While natural environmental conditions will always play a major component in our fishery, he acknowledged, "This year shows it doesn't take much to improve the quality of our fishing. If a 30-40 percent reduction in gill net effort can make this big of an improvement, imagine how good it could be if we removed 100 percent of estuarine flounder gill nets."

Further down the coast in Snead's Ferry, Capt. Allen Jernigan said it's hard to

believe the summer is almost gone. "We spent most of our time targeting speckled trout and redfish on the flats with top water plugs, Flats Intruder Spoons and Saltwater Assassin plastics. While it was not a record breaking summer in this area on speckled trout, we have caught fish and the two biggest of the summer were approaching eight pounds."

Capt. Jernigan laid some blame on inshore gill netting for the decline in trout around Snead's Ferry. "Gill net pressure in the bays and creeks has a direct impact on the summertime trout bite in a small river system like the New River," he said. While many creeks are classified as inland creeks, but with little to no enforcement of this rule, it only looks good on paper. Resident speckled trout only move a few miles from where they were born tagging studies have shown.

"My favorite baits for those summertime trout are Zara Super Spook Jr's, MirrOlure She Pups, Storm Shrimp and Mirrolure MR 17s," Jernigan said.

He said a bright note of the summer was the availability of black drum on the flats. "It seems the regulations put on black drum a couple years ago may be paying off. We had several nice schools of 3-9 pound black drum that hung around a couple months before they were targeted by strike netters."

He likes to target flounder on hook and line with soft plastics from time to time inshore and most days this summer it was a size game. "It seemed the keeper ratio was 1:8 with lots of fish in that 12-14 inch range. I saw that a lot while gillnetting also. There were always lots of small fish; why does it seem they never grow up in N.C.?"

Capt. Jernigan is also looking forward to the fall run of speckled trout, reds and flounder. "One of my favorite months of the year inshore is November. As the water cools, you want to be fishing drop offs, ledges, potholes and of course near the inlets as the specks move in.