

Riding the Oyster Highway



At left, Morehead City commercial fisherman David 'Clammerhead' Cessna, left, dumps living oysters on to a manmade reef guided by Owen Mulvey-Mcferron, a graduate student at the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences in Morehead City. Pat Donovan-Brandenburg, above, Storm Water & Habitat Manger for Jacksonville, holds up her favorite sea creature, an oyster. Below, a volunteer hauls oysters down a pier in Jacksonville for transfer to a boat that will take them to the reef.

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

With a \$50,000 gift through CCA NC and more donations from the N.C. Wildlife Federation Foundation, a platoon of volunteers helped the City of Jacksonville plant 500,000 more oysters that will continue changing Wilson Bay in the New River Estuary from a polluted mess into a clean, recreational use area.

Marine biologist Pat Donovan-Brandenburg, Storm

Water & Habitat Manager for Jacksonville, explained that Wilson Bay was closed to all recreational and commercial use from 1980 until 2000 because the bacteria counts were 35,000-70,000 versus the 200 for recreational standards.

The pollution came from all the waste treatment effluent dumped in the water by the City of Jacksonville and the nearby U.S. Marine Corps base at Camp Lejeune, she said.

Both Jacksonville and Camp Lejeune built new waste treat-

ment plants in 1998 and 2001 respectively. That stopped the on-going pollution but the bacteria still needed to be removed from the water.

"This whole area was closed when we started the Wilson Bay initiative. We've put 8.6 million oysters in Wilson Bay over the last 20 years," Donovan-Brandenburg continued. "I'm telling you I know because I counted them. This is an extension of still trying to improve

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OYSTER

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the New River.”

The CCA NC contribution was made possible by the generous support of the Eddie and Jo Allison Smith Foundation, said David Sneed, Executive Director of CCA NC.

Eddie Smith, CEO of Grady-White Boats, and his family have been long-time supporters of coastal conservation. The foundation recognizes the important role oyster habitat plays in water quality and essential fish habitat for the benefit of future generations of North Carolina residents and visitors, Sneed said.

The City of Jacksonville already has a few oyster reefs in the New River, but there is a 20-mile stretch from Southwest Creek to Stone's Bay that doesn't have any.

Donovan-Brandenburg had the idea of building a series of reefs that would make up an “Oyster Highway” in the New River to expand the process.

A mature oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water daily. By putting oysters on AR-398, built in 2012, and more new reefs in the future, we're continuing to clean the watershed that was once polluted by the city and base's treatment facilities, she said.

The new reefs she is proposing as part of the Oyster Highway project have not been built because the city is waiting for permits from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“The reason why we're still waiting is because of that whole endangered species process they have to go through,” Donovan-Brandenburg said.

The project will occur in two phases. Of the six half-acre reefs in Phase I, one will be placed above AR-398, one across from it and four others below it, she said.

“So we're encompassing 398, and that's why we're putting



the adult oysters out today because when we get the permits, we'll build the six new reefs with younger oysters spawned from this brood stock,” she added.

Dr. Niels Lindquist at the UNC-CH Institute of Marine Science and Sandbar Oyster Company have developed a new product called “oyster patties,” Donovan-Brandenburg explained.

“They take a soil erosion control blanket — it looks like a burlap bag — lightly coat it in concrete then form it into a shape like a donut. It's round with a hole in the middle but it's three dimensional like a bird's nest,” she said.

The oysters they were planting earlier this year were taken from a Newport River lease and dumped by hand on the mounds of AR-398. The same process will be used with the doughnut shaped reefs. The success will depend on the ability of the oysters to spawn and have larvae settle on suitable hard substrate of calcium bicarbonate. If that happens, then the oyster colonies will grow on their own, Don-



Photos by Rip Woodin

At top, CCA NC volunteers from the Onslow Bay chapter, Lee Gray, left, and Rocky Carter, dump a cage of oysters on to the reef guided by Owen Mulvey-Mcferron. Bottom, volunteers transfer oysters from the pier to boats on Wilson Bay.

ovan-Brandenburg said.

Once the second phase gets approval, six additional half-acre reefs will be introduced from Phase I up to Wilson Bay. In total the project will create six

new acres of reefs on both ends of AR-398 spanning a 20-mile stretch or “highway.”

The city is working with CCA NC and the North Carolina Wildlife Habitat Foundation to

raise the money for the project that will cost between \$600,000-\$700,000.

Both organizations are meeting with state legislators and other state agencies to raise the money.

Besides cleaning the water, the new reefs will provide fish habitat and destination sites in the mid-estuary region for recreational fishing, noted David Sneed.

“Habitat restoration (including artificial reefs) and augmentation have become major tools in efforts to conserve coastal fishery resources, as well as improve water quality,” he said.

Dr. Joel Fodrie of the UNC-CH Institute of Marine Sciences will lead a team of researchers in monitoring fish utilization of the new reefs.

Dr. Fodrie's team has extensive experience researching oyster habitats of the NRE as well as red drum and black drum reef exploitation using advanced acoustic tracking methods.

Before and after surveys of fish and invertebrates will be conducted per site to quantify natural recruitment as well as studies to determine oyster survival and growth rates.

“You've got clean water,” Donovan-Brandenburg 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 now, we just want to build it back. We need to restore the river back to part of its original state.”

CCA NC Board Vice-President Rocky Carter has agreed to chair the first CCA NC Habitat Committee in 2018.

“As a resident of the coastal community this New River Oyster Highway will benefit, I could not be more excited to see this project get started. I look forward to building not just this New River Oyster Highway, but duplicating this success throughout coastal North Carolina through our 2018 Coastal Habitat Initiative,” he said.

CCA mobilizes to help in storm recovery

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

After the skies finally cleared from Hurricane Florence, CCA NC members from Raleigh and Wilmington to Morehead City and New Bern joined relief efforts throughout Eastern North Carolina before floodwaters receded.

When the gigantic hurricane blanketed the lower two-thirds of the North Carolina coast, its 75-90 mph winds classified it as a Category 1 storm, capable of ripping off roofs, blowing down power lines and knocking down trees.

The real damage, however, came from what the Weather Channel called a “Category 5 flooding event” the ponderous storm caused. Main highways were closed, houses had water in living rooms, business inventories were ruined and unmoored boats ended up in driveways.

CCA NC members used their connections to build a cache of water, food, cleaning supplies, diapers and even pet food that could be distributed to flood victims, explained David Sneed, CCA NC executive director.

Seth Vernon, a Wilmington guide who represents Free Fly Apparel, was contacted by the Charleston, S.C., company asking what it could do since their state largely escaped Florence’s devastation.

Sneed said the company offered to make a matching donation if people bought supplies on Amazon and had them shipped to CCA NC’s Raleigh office.

More than \$4,000 worth of supplies started arriving in Raleigh from generous people as far away as California, Oregon and Oklahoma.

Sneed filled a CCA NC trailer, driving it down to the Swansboro Rotary Club that agreed to receive the supplies and get them distributed.

A second load of supplies went to Wilmington and was distributed through the Port City Community Church.

Free Fly Apparel sent another \$4,000 to CCA NC that Sneed is using to buy



Above, Team Rubicon, a group of veteran volunteers from Charlotte, cheer as they prepare to distribute some of the 100 coolers donated by Yeti to CCA NC for the Hurricane Florence relief effort in New Bern. At left, cleaning supplies, food and other household goods raised by Free Fly Apparel in Charleston, S.C., pile up in CCA NC’s Raleigh office before distribution to hurricane victims.

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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.

Storm forces chapters to postpone banquets

As you all know, our coastal areas from Wilmington to Kinston and New Bern to Morehead City suffered such devastation by the storm that it will be many months before normalcy returns.

Several CCA NC chapters like Onslow Bay, Wayne County, Albemarle Bay and Cape Fear were scheduled to hold fall fundraising banquets.

Instead of working to produce a successful banquet, these fall events have been postponed and our members are helping their neighbors clean up and rebuild after the storm.

Rather than trying to go through a lengthy process of calculating refunds, all banquet tickets sold will simply roll over to the new 2019 dates in late winter or next spring.

While our immediate focus has been on helping our friends and neighbors recover and clean up, there is no doubt the postponement of these banquets will also put a financial strain on our ongoing conservation and advocacy efforts in North Carolina. With your help, there are still plenty of ways you can help us continue our core conservation mission and help with the ongoing recovery efforts.

If your annual CCA membership is normally renewed at one of these banquets, please renew now. And consider upgrading to the \$50 Coastal Caretaker membership level.



DAVID
SNEED
*Executive
Director*

You can also buy a \$100 ticket for our 60/40 Raffle. We draw monthly prize winners in addition to the big cash jackpot in early December.

Last year, Brett Murphy of Raleigh won \$17,600. We need to sell all 1,000 tickets this year. These raffle tickets can also be purchased through our website or by calling the CCA NC Office (919) 781-3474.

We also have VIP Hamilton tickets with a parking pass for the Dec. 1 matinee performance at the DPAC in Durham that we are willing to offer as a special raffle prize. Everyone who makes a minimum of a \$25 donation to CCA NC now through Nov. 2 will receive a raffle ticket for a chance to win a pair of Section 3, VIP tickets and parking pass for the popular, and soon to be sold out, Hamilton matinee performance on Saturday, Dec. 1.

Just make your donation through our

website and put "Hamilton" in the memo section, or call our office.

We will also hold a virtual banquet from Oct. 22 to Nov. 2 where you can bid on all the special trips and unique merchandise that would have been included at our canceled banquets.

Anyone will be able to bid using his or her smartphone or computer on the secure GiveSmart site.

Please consider supporting CCA NC by purchasing your next fishing trip, family vacation or Christmas gifts at this unique virtual auction.

As always, all of the money raised by CCA NC stays in North Carolina to benefit our coastal communities, marine resources and habitat. Your continued support will allow us to continue our conservation mission and help with recovery in our coastal communities.

In addition to the hands-on work of our members, we also actively worked on several relief efforts. Shortly after the storm, we partnered with Free Fly Apparel in Charleston, S.C., to collect a variety of supplies purchased through Amazon.

To date, we have received more than

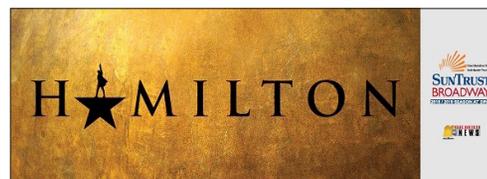
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Raffle winner gets *Hamilton* tickets

CCA NC is excited to offer two VIP Hamilton tickets with a parking pass for the Dec. 1 performance at the DPAC in Durham as our special fall raffle prize.

Raffle tickets are on sale now for only \$25 through Nov. 2 for a chance to win a pair of Section 3, VIP tickets and parking pass for the popular, and soon to be sold out, Hamilton matinee performance on Saturday, Dec. 1. Tickets can be purchased through CCANC.org website using the Donate tab and putting "Hamilton" in the memo section, or call the office at 919-781-3474 to pay by credit card.

Hamilton is the story of America's Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant from the West Indies who became George Washington's right-hand man during the Revolutionary War and



was the new nation's first Treasury Secretary. Featuring a score that blends hip-hop, jazz, blues, rap, R&B, and Broadway, Hamilton is the story of America then, told by America now.

In 2016, Hamilton received a record-setting 16 Tony nominations, winning 11, including Best Musical, and was also the recipient of the 2016 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album and the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

The prior Off-Broadway production of Hamilton won the 2015 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical as well as seven other Drama Desk Awards out of 14 total nominated categories.

Tickets in Section 3 already are going for up to \$1,500 each on the resale market. You can have a chance to win these VIP tickets for as little as \$25. The winning ticket will be drawn on Nov. 5, so act now.

As always, all of the money raised by CCA NC stays in North Carolina to benefit our coastal communities, marine resources and habitat.

Your continued support will allow us to continue our conservation mission and help with recovery in our coastal communities.

Fort Fisher sees new life as artificial reef

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

In the calm before the storm of Hurricane Florence, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries sank the 98-foot tug Fort Fisher off Pine Knoll Shores, nearly doubling the size of Artificial Reef 320.

The project was funded by a \$185,000 Coastal Recreational Fishing License grant to the Eastern Carolina Artificial Reef Association, explained Patricia Smith, a DMF spokesman.

"The vessel was cleaned of environmental pollutants and prepared in accordance with federal requirements," she said.

The project had been delayed while the agency awaited a Corps of Engineers blanket permit for a variety of reef projects.

Each year, DMF uses CRFL money to rebuild reefs along the whole coast. The location of all the reefs had to be verified using GPS coordinates and the Corps of Engineers had to address environmental impacts. With the blanket permit, DMF can give a 90-day notice then quickly make needed repairs to any reef.

Built in 1956 by the Bethlehem Steel Company of Staten Island, the tug was originally named the Cleveland and used by the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. of Philadelphia.

The Morehead City Towboat Co. bought the tug in 1971 and renamed it the Fort Fisher, a name retained through future ownership transactions.

The Division of Marine Fisheries has been involved with the construction, permitting and monitoring artificial reefs since the early 1970s, Smith said.

"It's one of the most active artificial reef programs in the country," she added.

Currently, the state has 43 ocean reefs, ranging from one-half to 38 miles from shore and 25 estuarine reefs, including 15 oyster sanctuaries.

Reef materials include concrete pipe, ships, barges and prefabricated structures, Smith said. AR-320 was started in 1986 when an old 144-foot menhaden fishery ship, the Novelty, was sunk. The following year concrete rubble and steel trusses from the demolished Atlantic Beach Bridge was added to the reef.

"Materials placed on the sea floor provide structure where there was previous-



Photo by DMF

The tugboat Fort Fisher settles low in the water as N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries staff members sink the 98-foot boat on AR-320.

ly none," Smith said.

Structure becomes encrusted and colonized by diverse marine organisms including corals that build more reef. Small baitfish seek refuge on the reef which

attracts larger predatory fish. Artificial reefs attract highly sought fish species such as flounder, black sea bass, grouper, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and dolphin, Smith said. Divers enjoy fishing,

Notable artificial reefs in N.C.

AR-160: Oregon Inlet - includes two liberty ships, the Zane Grey and the Dionysus.

AR-230: 4.2 nautical miles from Hatteras Inlet Sea Buoy - includes the 105-tug, Mr. J.C.

AR-302: 21.7 nautical miles from Cape Lookout Shoals Lighted Buoy 2 - includes the attack transport ship Yancey, which was used in landings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa during World War II.

AR-305: Carteret County Sportfishing Association Reef - includes the 439-Foot U.S. Navy Cable Layer Aeolus and the 183-Foot U.S. Coast Guard Buoy Tender Spar.

AR-315: Atlantic Beach Reef - includes the Liberty Ship Theodore Parker, the Navy Tug Boat Takos and two aircraft.

AR-345: 8.2 nautical miles from Bogue Inlet Sea Buoy - includes the 116-Foot Tug Boat Titan.

AR-364: Billy Murrell Reef - includes the 65-Foot Tug Boat Captain Jerry and three other ships.

AR-368: 18.3 nautical miles from Masonboro Inlet Sea Buoy - includes the 241-Foot Barge LC-16.

photographing and exploring old shipwrecks on artificial reefs.

AR-320 is located 7.8 statute miles southwest from Fort Macon jetty in Beaufort Inlet. The average depth is 50 feet.

Florence might be key to saving bass

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Hurricane Florence and a promise from N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries Director Steve Murphey might end up doing more to save native striped bass in the Central Southern Management Area than any previous action by the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission or the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

For unexplained reasons, there were two surprisingly large year classes of smaller striped bass in the Neuse and Tar/Pamlico Rivers late this summer, said CCA NC Executive Director David Sneed.

The sheer numbers and some DMF data indicate the fish are native, not stocked. Whether they were spawned in the Neuse or Tar/Pamlico River system or whether they are “spillover” from the Roanoke River is not known, nor is it scientifically possible to unequivocally determine their origin.

With so many fish, there would have been increased dead discards in the fall gill net flounder fishery, Sneed guessed. But then along came Hurricane Florence followed by Michael, which appear to have dispersed the fish in the rivers and shortened the fall gill net season, he continued.

At the mid-August meeting of the MFC, Dr. Chris Elkins, chairman of CCA NC’s fisheries committee, urged immediate action such as temporarily closing down the gill net season above the Bayview-Aurora and Minnesott ferry lines to give these fish a chance to jump start the recovery of striped bass in the CSMA.

Elkins noted another forceful study by WRC in August confirmed that the major mortality factor in the decline of stripers is by-catch in the large gill net fishery for flounder.

“Without immediate removal of nets from these areas, the current large year classes will result in unacceptable numbers of dead discards, prevent them from reaching sexual maturity and leading the way to recovery of central region striped bass,” Elkins said.



Photo by Rip Woodin

Two large year classes of juvenile striped bass could help restock the CSMA fishery. Guide Tom Roller, left, and Ted Vaden show off a striped bass pulled from the Roanoke River near Weldon.

The MFC, however, could not agree on a motion by Commissioner Cameron Boltes to ask Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Michael Regan for emergency measures through a supplement to the current CSMA Striped Bass Fisheries Management Plan to address concerns with discard mortality and insure the long-term viability of the fishery.

In discussions after the meeting, Murphey prom-

ised to ask Regan for a supplement that would give the MFC the opportunity to change the striped bass FMP. “Fortunately, Chief Deputy DEQ Secretary John Nicholson and Director Murphey recognize the importance of new reports which indicate we have two surprisingly good year classes of native striped bass in the central

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Official sunglasses
of the CCA NC



Study shows oyster reefs attract plenty of fish

Editor's Note: In August 2017, CCA NC gave N.C. State doctoral candidate Olivia Caretti of Maryland a \$2,000 scholarship to help her study fish that populate manmade oyster reefs.

By James Morrison
WUNC

A North Carolina State University researcher is using underwater microphones to help better understand the extensive array of animals living in the state's oyster reefs.

The state has been rebuilding oyster reefs along the coast for decades. Barges haul massive piles of spent oyster shells and other hard materials, like granite marl and concrete, to a reef site and use large water cannons to blow it all off the deck and into the coastal waters.

These artificial habitats provide hard structure for oyster larvae to attach to so they can grow and be harvested.

The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality's division of marine fisheries knows the reef program is good for the state's \$2.4 million oyster industry.

But it's still unclear what the larger impact of these reefs are in terms of increasing biodiversity.

"It's what we call data gaps," said Jason Peters, supervisor for the state's oyster sanctuary program.

N.C. State University Ph.D. student Olivia Caretti is hoping to fill some of those data gaps using a relatively new method for monitoring aquatic life with underwater microphones, known as hydrophones.

"It's like a little compact torpedo looking thing about the size of your hand," Caretti said.

Caretti is using these hydrophones to document which animals, beside oysters, use these reefs. And what she's found so far has been enlightening.

An unstructured muddy bottom in Pamlico Sound, with no oyster reef, is mostly low frequency audio.

"The only sounds you hear are either water movements or low frequency fish calls," Caretti said.

Life on an oyster reef sounds a lot different. It has plenty of low frequency fish calls, but it also has a lot of high frequency invertebrate activity.

"You can hear some grunts and knocking sounds," Caretti said. "There are certain type of fish calls and snaps from snapping fish especially."

Caretti has been recording for two years and has more audio than she could ever listen to. She does most of her analysis by using spectrograms, which are visual representations of the audio.

"The spectrograms are helpful," Caretti said, "because a lot of frequencies we record are inaudible to the human ear."

Caretti also uses traditional methods for monitoring oyster reefs, like trapping fish. But these techniques

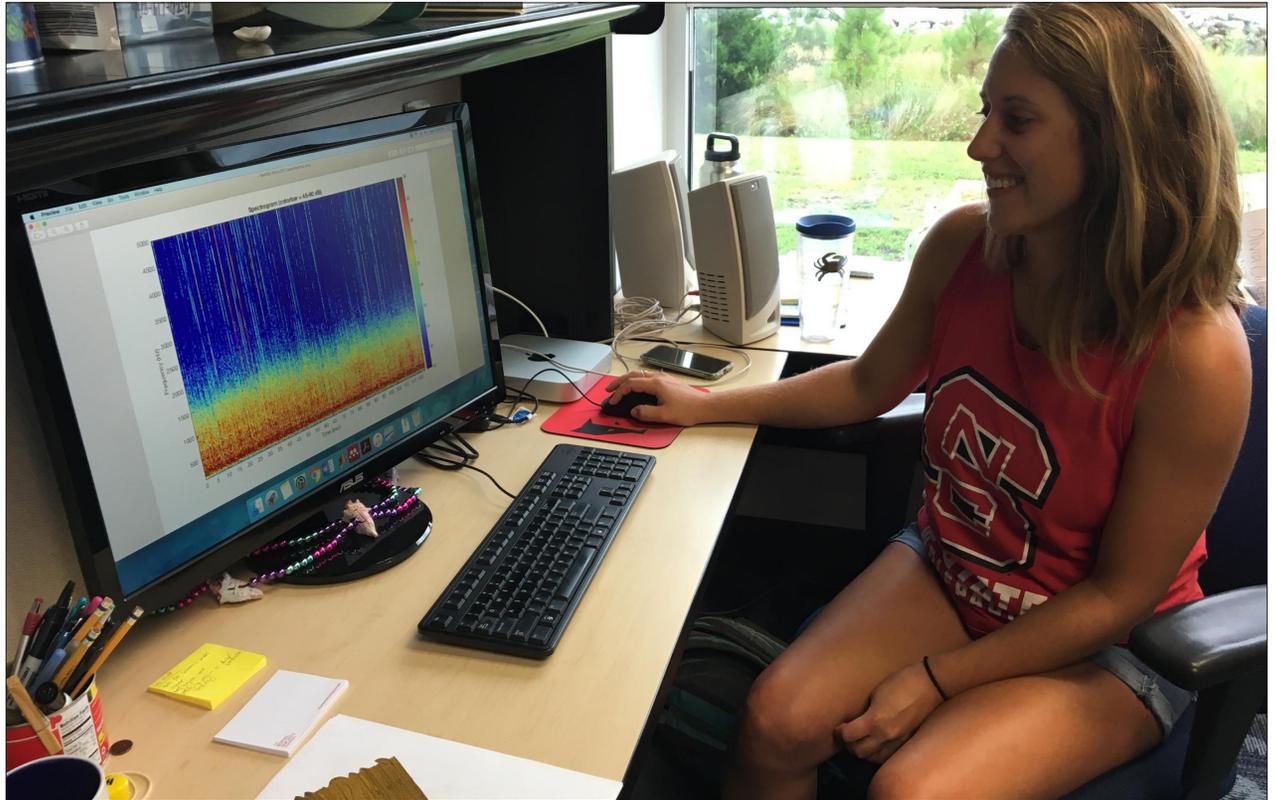


Photo by James Morrison



North Carolina State University Ph.D. student Olivia Caretti, above, is hoping to fill some data gaps by using a relatively new method for monitoring aquatic life with underwater microphones, known as hydrophones.

can be invasive and you only get brief snapshots of life on the reef.

By recording around the clock, Caretti can document what species of fish and invertebrates use these reefs

and why. For instance, she's learned oyster toadfish use the reef like a swinger at a singles bar hoping to

Reward offered in turtle death

CCA NC has joined two sea turtle rescue operations in offering a monetary reward for information on what appeared to be a deliberate effort to kill a loggerhead turtle found along southern Core Sound near Smyrna on Sunday, Aug. 26.

The animal was recovered alive and transported to the N.C. State University Veterinary Hospital, where internal images were taken to visualize the damage. Due to the severity of its head injury, the loggerhead was euthanized. Veterinary specialists suspect that the injury occurred between 24 to 48 hours before the animal was first found.

NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement is seeking information from anyone who might have information about this incident. Please call the NOAA Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964. Tips can be left anonymously.

CCA NC, the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue & Rehabilitation Center and the Wrightsville Beach Sea Turtle Project are offering a combined reward of \$2,000 for information leading to the successful identification or prosecution of the person responsible for maiming the



Photo by Matt Godfrey, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

This loggerhead sea turtle was found with a severe head injury in southern Core Sound and was later euthanized.

loggerhead. Include your name and contact information when calling enforcement to be eligible for the reward.

Under the Endangered Species Act and regulations that implement

the Act, it is illegal to harm, wound or kill any threatened species of sea turtle. Violations may be prosecuted civilly or criminally and are punishable by up to \$24,625 and up to six months in prison.

CCA NC holds new membership drive with prizes

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

Next Spring CCA NC will hold a statewide membership drive to spread awareness about our organization in an effort to grow our voice across the state through new membership, announced Western Regional Director Joe Neely.

This incentive-based program will reward current members with prizes growing in value based on the number of new members who are recruited.

Through this recruitment, current CCA NC members can become eligible for prizes like Yeti products, CCA gift cards, Engel coolers, Costa sunglasses and a grand prize of an all expenses paid offshore fishing trip.

"The larger our voice grows across North Carolina, the more successful CCA NC will be in its efforts to reform our fisheries management, continue to build new habitat, and bring out the true potential of what our state's coastal resources can, and should, be," Neely said.

Please join us this spring in support of our precious public trust resources, he added.

Specific details about the spring membership drive will be announced in early 2019.

BANQUETS

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\$4,000 in supplies ranging from dog and cat food to diapers and toilet paper, plus a \$4,000 matching cash contribution from Free Fly! We have been so blessed to receive donations from folks across the country, from "Rogerlynberg" in San Diego, CA, to Steve's Outdoor Adventure in Oregon, and Courtney and Kory Myers in Oklahoma.

We have been approached by a number of other sponsors who also want to help with hurricane recovery, including a large shipment of Yeti coolers for distribution to folks who can use them in their recovery efforts.

We are reaching out to relief organizations already on the ground in the hardest hit coastal communities and first responders to make sure our supplies and coolers get to the people that need them the most.

Please let us know of local heroes and groups in your area that could use supplies and coolers in their efforts. We are also encouraging other businesses and suppliers to contact us if they have goods they can contribute.

As we receive support in, we are committed to getting it back out in a way that helps our coastal communities get back on their feet as fast as possible.

One of the best ways we can help our coastal communities recover is to get fishermen back spending money during the fall fishing season. So much of the economy of these communities depends heavily on tourism and recreational fishing.

Plan a fall outing with coastal guide today. Red drum and false albacore are biting, according to Fisherman's Post, and the best part of speckled trout season is just weeks away.

Our concern continues to be with everyone in Florence's and Michael's paths of destruction. Please stay safe and stay strong, North Carolina. Working together, we will recover and we will rebuild.

STORM

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supplies, notably for the Wallace-Rose Hill football team whose players were largely flooded out.

At the same time, Yeti sent 50 coolers to CCA NC in Raleigh and another 50 to Custom Marine Fabrication in New Bern.

The coolers were given to relief agencies like the New Bern Fire Department Swift Water Rescue Team, the New Bern Humane Society and Team Rubicon, a group of veterans who move into a neighborhood and do free clean up work that's not covered by insurance.

All these groups need a way to store food and water, for both their crews and the victims they're assisting, Sneed said.

"Yeti really stepped in to help," he added. "Please think how you can help us from your location. You can also solicit more supplies pledging with confidence they will reach flood victims.

"Identify people in need of our help in your area."

Tip It Forward to help guides

CCA North Carolina would like to join North Carolina Backcountry Hunters & Anglers in supporting Tip It Forward Hurricane Florence Relief, a program to provide immediate aid to the state's fishing and hunting guides impacted by the storm, said CCA NC Executive Director David Sneed.

Tip It Forward is a person-to-person direct outreach platform to aid North Carolina guides with swift financial aid. To Tip It Forward, simply send a check for one day's tip (about 20 percent of the charter fee) to a hunting or fishing guide that's provided you with an awesome trip in the past or one you know of through friends and family, Sneed explained.

Sportsmen should have their guides' contact info, but if not, Google does.

"This is simple, quick, straightforward and desperately needed."

Then, if convenient, share a photo of your day as a post to @ncbha and @cca_nc on Instagram and hashtag the post as #tipitforward #ncguides #ncbha #ncbackcountry #ccanc #cca #ncbackwaters #northcarolina #hurricaneflorence.

This isn't necessary, but will help spread the word and send the #TIPITFORWARD campaign viral. The guides can use it for roofing nails, generator gas, diapers for their children, or any other pressing need, Sneed said.

The devastation of Hurricane Florence to the eastern North Carolina Coastal Plain needs little detailed description to anyone who has been watching the news. Hundreds, and likely thousands, of hunting and fishing guides have lost homes, boats, docks, and months' worth of future income.

"Water access in a third of the state is a shambles. It is an equal

opportunity disaster for North Carolina hunting and fishing guides," he continued.

The guy who runs speckled trout trips in the Outer Banks marshes from a 20-foot johnboat, and the captains and mates of 50-foot Gulf Stream sportfishermen are equally affected.

The epic massive flooding washed human sewage, the raw bodies and waste of most of the state's 12 million hogs, plus untold vehicles, homes, trash, you name it, into the beloved Southern Serengeti of the North Carolina Coastal Plain and its 2 million acres of public estuarine waters, Sneed said.

This is the description as of today, and this will be the description a month and two and three months from now, a time when hunting and fishing guides make much, and in many cases, most of their annual income, he concluded.

STUDY

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meet a mate.

"So they're communicating with each other and also with females of that species, too," she said while listening to scores of oyster toadfish honking in a cacophonous cho-

rus.

Caretti has been tracking the change in biodiversity on these habitats over time and has found reefs made with shell attract more aquatic life than reefs made out of materials like granite marl or concrete.

This could suggest it's more valuable to dump shells into the water rather than other materials.

Caretti's findings are still preliminary, but they come at a good time. The N.C. Coastal Federation announced in August that it wants to grow the state's oyster industry by more than 10 times by 2030, from \$2.4 million to \$30 million.

And while that might be music to the ears of fishermen, it'll sound a whole lot different when heard through a hydrophone.

CCA NC event schedule

Nov. 8 - Triad Banquet, High Point Country Club

Nov. 14-15 - N.C. MFC, Kitty Hawk

Nov. 15 - Wilson Banquet, County Line Bluegrass, Wilson

Nov. 28 - N.C. Southern Flounder Advisory Committee, Morehead City

Jan. 5, 2019 - George Povoromo Saltwater Fishing Seminar, Wilmington

Jan. 24, 2019 - WNC oyster roast and gathering, Highland Brewery, Asheville

Jan. 31, 2019 - Johnston County Banquet, The Farm, Selma

Feb. 16, 2019 - Onslow Bay Banquet, Jacksonville

Feb. 21, 2019 - East Carolina Banquet, Rock Springs Event Center, Greenville

March 7, 2019 - Neuse River Banquet, Bridgepointe Hotel & Marina, New Bern

March 23, 2019 - Crystal Coast Banquet, Crystal Coast Convention Center, Morehead City

May 2, 2019 - Piedmont Banquet, Burlington



Fishing, shootout events continue to grow

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

North Carolina hosted two favorite events in August, the Fishing For the Future youth tournament in Swansboro and the CCA Legacy Sportsman's Shootout at Drake Landing near Raleigh. Both events generated great publicity for CCA NC, said David Sneed, executive director.

"We had a huge interest," said tournament organizer and Executive Board member Shelley Smith.

The tournament has grown exponentially in each of its three years.

"We ended up with 178 kids registered compared to 34 the first year, so we had a great turnout," she said. "All participants registered prior to the July 31 deadline received a free 'Captain's Bag' with sponsor goodies including stickers, t-shirt, tackle, toys as well as a rod and reel.

This was all made possible by the donations of local companies and individuals.

The tournament had another great year of support from local businesses with Viking Turbines, Smith Custom Homes Inc., Transportation Impact, Dudley's Marina, and Image Builders being the biggest supporters.

"All financial support was from small local businesses and Academy Sports. Academy even sent out some employees and a corn hole game for fun in the park between fishing and awards presentation," she said.

A 48-inch redfish caught by Troy Bates was the largest redfish in the 12 and under age group and was definitely the talk of the afternoon. Chase Barnes, Troy's cousin, hooked the longest flounder for 12 and under.

"Even better, their grandfather was fishing in the adult Hook & Bones Redfish Open held simultaneously and placed second," Smith said.

On the girls' side of the competition, Scarlett Futrell retained her 12 and under Lady Angler title from last year by hauling in a 26-inch red drum.

The Legacy Sportsman's Shootout had 12 four-person teams entered that raised \$3,800, Sneed said. One new Life Member was also recruited at the event. Returning sponsors of the Shootout included Grady-White Boats, Tarheel Boatworks, Regulator Marine, Drake Landing and beer sponsor, Sweetwater Brewing Co., Sneed said.

The Fish Hippie team of John Griffin, John Ray, Phillip Williams, Tom Kidd took first place while Phillip Williams with 48 clays won the individual shooter award over Steve Spain who broke 47 targets. Check out CCANC.org for full results.



Above, a 48-inch redfish caught by Troy Bates was the largest redfish in the 12 and under age group and was definitely the talk of the Third Annual Fishing for the Future youth tournament. At left, the CCA NC annual Legacy Sportsman's Shootout at Drake Landing near Raleigh raised \$3,800 for the organization's conservation programs.

Marine conservation vital in western N.C.

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

The Coastal Conservation Association of North Carolina will hold an oyster roast and fundraising event on Thursday, Jan. 24, 2019 at Highland Brewery to acquaint Asheville sports men and women with the dire condition of the state's coastal marine fisheries.

"While the ocean is a long way from the Davidson River, preservation of our marine resources is just as important to a lot of Western North Carolina anglers as protecting beautiful trout and clean mountain streams," said Joe Neely, western regional director for CCA NC.

This inaugural Asheville chapter event is the result of passionate fishermen in the area who want to help preserve marine resources for future generations.

"We hope that all who are interested in learning about and supporting CCA NC will join us for a fun evening with great food, drinks, and plenty of raffle and auction items available to win," Neely said.

Preserving the natural resources in one part of the state should be of concern to everyone, not just the inhabitants of the coast, Piedmont or mountains, said Frank Smith of Asheville, who is not only the owner of Hunter Banks fly shop in Asheville but a Life Member of CCA and a fanatical saltwater fisherman.

"As citizens of North Carolina, we are blessed with beautiful and diverse natural resources that we all hold dear. From the estuaries along the coast and the rolling hills in the Piedmont to the trout streams in the west, North Carolina is one of the few places on earth



Photo by Rip Woodin

Fishermen on the Oceanana Pier at Atlantic Beach enjoy a fall light show as they await the evening bite. CCA NC works to preserve the state's estuarine and marine fisheries so future generations throughout the state can enjoy tranquility like this.

where all of these regions meet. It represents a haven for travelers, tourists and outdoor enthusiasts alike," Smith said.

When it comes to the outdoors, most people rely on access to public trust resources like parks, nature preserves and federal lands to pursue a variety of recreational activities, explained CCA NC Executive Director David Sneed.

"The range of public trust resources that we enjoy is one that is both unique and rare in the world," he said. "This is a beautiful thing that allows us to enjoy the natural beauty of the outdoors and

pass along an appreciation of it to future generations."

So what does this have to do with coastal conservation? Well, it is this mindset toward public trust resources that applies in the same way to our coastal fisheries as it does to public lands in the west.

North Carolina has rich resources on its coast and inshore estuarine waters that are breeding grounds for many species of finfish, shellfish, sea turtles and other marine life that have represented a longstanding recreational heritage to millions of residents across the

state.

Recreational anglers and outdoor enthusiasts in general are losing access to these resources because of destructive commercial fishing gear, poor state management and overfishing that has gone on for decades, Sneed continued.

"Our coastal fisheries are in jeopardy.

It is this underlying principal of access that connects the saltwater fisherman on the coast, the young hunter in Uwharrie National Forest and the fly fisherman in the west who all rely on access for outdoor recreation."

The issues surrounding coastal habitats and fisheries in North Carolina are unfortunately unknown to many people in the state. When made aware of the issues, most people are astounded by the exploitation that is allowed.

The number one problem is lack of public awareness. Since it was formed in 1989, CCA NC has unsurprisingly found most of its support in the eastern half of the state, with Charlotte being the westernmost chapter. This is changing as the health of our coastal resources becomes urgent, leading people all over the state to get involved.

It is important for recreational outdoors enthusiasts to have a united voice in all corners of the state so our representatives in Raleigh are aware that public trust resources belong to all of us and should be managed with our interests in mind, Frank Smith said.

Asheville is the perfect spot for people throughout the western part of the state who care about the outdoors to come together.

Please join us Jan. 24 for this important informational and fundraising event that will also be a lot of fun, he concluded.



Official cooler of CCA NC

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Coolers and Freezers

CCA NC to hold ‘virtual banquet auction’

By Rip Woodin
CCA NC Editor

CCA NC is holding a “virtual banquet auction” in an effort to help replace lost income from fall banquets canceled due to Hurricane Florence and Tropical Storm Michael, said Executive Director David Sneed.

“We wanted to give our members and supporters a chance to support CCA NC even if they experienced a canceled banquet in their area. We are also encouraging everyone who is beginning to look for Christmas shopping ideas or planning holiday trips to consider shopping with us this year through our Virtual Banquet,” he added.

The online auction site that is operational now until Nov. 5 lists exotic trips to luxury destinations and unique merchandise provided by many donors and

sponsors, Sneed said.

The digital bidding application GiveSmart has been used at a number of live banquets held earlier this year, Sneed continued.

“You can use your smart phone right now to text the key word, ccanc, to the number 24700, and you will receive a link to the bidding site by text,” he said. Another option is to go online to the website at: <https://ccanc.auction-bid.org/microsite/> to view the auction items and register to bid.

Once you begin bidding, you will receive text messages each time you are outbid, Sneed explained.

The bidding fun will continue until 5 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 5. At that time, a participant will be notified if he or she is the winning bidder on an item and, “You will have the opportunity to pay for your purchase right on your phone using the credit card you regis-

tered with, or you will have the options to make payment directly with CCA NC.”

Sneed said all trips must be booked within one year of the closing date of the auction unless otherwise noted. Merchandise delivery will only be guaranteed in the state of North Carolina. Delivery of any merchandise purchased by individuals living outside of North Carolina will be the responsibility of the buyer.

“I encourage you to call us at (919) 781-3474 if you have any questions about bidding or need more specifics on any of the auction items. We hope everyone will participate with us in our first Virtual Banquet and enjoy it in the spirit in which it is offered! Good luck and please have fun bidding,” Sneed concluded.

All funds raised will help CCA NC continue its work to preserve the state’s estuarine and marine resources for future generations.

FLORENCE

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region, and the concerns for the potential by-catch mortality in the fall gill net fisheries, are enough to push forward with cooperation from WRC on temporary management measures for consideration by the commission at its November meeting,” Sneed said.

“The attendance by Chief Deputy Secretary Nicholson at all MFC meetings is promising,” said Dr. Elkins. “It suggests DEQ recognizes the importance of fisheries management and a commitment to make meaningful changes to state managed fisheries.”

Although a supplement cannot be implemented in time to protect these young fish in the Tar/Pamlico and Neuse Rivers during the fall 2018 large mesh flounder season or the small mesh white perch season, but it could at least provide some relief before the targeted striped bass season next March, he added.

“Time is of the essence,” he said.

The declining number of native striped bass in the CSMA has been known for years but nothing has been done about it, Elkins said. Four years ago the WRC conducted genetic studies that showed 95 percent of the striped bass population was stocked.



Photo by Rip Woodin

The March commercial striped bass season has had a 25,000-pound quota that is worth about \$60,000 at the docks.

“Upon analysis there should have been a light bulb that went off at DMF and that kept striped bass biologists up at night,” he said. “This should have resulted in rushed meetings between WRC and DMF and immediate measures implemented.”

The lack of mature fish makes it unambiguously clear that the native population has almost been extirpated.

Elkins told the MFC in August, “Faced with the new additional data on gill net by-catch and the newly-found large year

classes, a compelling case for action by the MFC and the director exists. Since the fishery is jointly managed with the Wildlife Resources Commission, the MFC should adopt the new WRC recreational limit of one fish 26 inches or longer in inland waters.”

Elkins added that adoption of this new recreational limit, without removal of gill nets, will only increase the dead discards from recreational anglers and will not aid in the recovery of striped bass. Without the removal of gill nets, it is unlikely that some recreational fishermen and guides will support this new rule because it would effectively stop all recreational harvest. With fish in the 17- to 20-inch range, it could take them another two to three years to reach the 26-inch harvest threshold, he explained.

Current DMF regulations set by proclamation in October allow the harvest of two fish no smaller than 18 inches in the CSMA coastal waters. Furthermore, it is unlawful to possess striped bass between 22 and 27 total inches in joint waters of the Central Southern Management Area.

The March commercial striped bass season has had a 25,000-pound quota that is worth about \$60,000 at the docks. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service spends about \$750,000 a year stocking the three rivers in the CSMA for recreational fishermen, but commercial operations end up catching 75-80 percent of the harvested fish.