

JCAA NEWSPAPER JULY 2020

Official Newspaper of the *JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION*

(Published on June 23rd, 2020)

Monthly Meeting Via Zoom Meeting Until Further Notice "WORKING FOR MARINE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS"

JCAA REGULAR MEETING:

June 30th via Zoom Meeting

Starting at 7:30 PM

385 Herbertsville Rd, Brick

NEXT JCAA BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, July 9th, 2020

Via Zoom Meeting

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOC.

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This publication is printed and mailed one week prior to each regular monthly meeting of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association. One of the prime goals of JCAA is to get accurate information into public hands as soon as possible.

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**JCAA General Membership Meetings are for club representatives and invited guests only. These meetings are not open to the general public. If you would like to attend as a guest, call the President at 908-913-0551 or Tom Fote at (732) 270-9102 before the meeting date to ask permission.**

### **2019 OFFICERS**

|                            |                  |              |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>President</b>           | <b>John Toth</b> | 732-656-0139 |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> V.P.</b> | Mark Taylor      | 732-656-0139 |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> V.P.</b> | Bill Browne      | 732-504-9344 |
| <b>Treasurer</b>           | Doug Tegeder     | 732-575-2661 |
| <b>Rec. Sec.</b>           |                  |              |
| <b>Cors. Sec.</b>          | Paul Turi        | 609-709-9215 |
| <b>Mem. Sec.</b>           | Paul Eidman      | 732-614-3373 |
| <b>Tournament Dir.</b>     | Paul Turi        | 609-709-9215 |

**Committee and Chairpersons listed on last page**

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

**June 30<sup>th</sup>** JCAA Zoom General Meeting

**June 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>** MAFMC & ASMFC Joint Meeting

**July 9<sup>th</sup>** JCAA Zoom Board Meeting

**August 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>** ASMFC Summer Meeting

**August 13<sup>th</sup>** JCAA Zoom Board Meeting

**September 12<sup>th</sup>** JCAA Fluke Tournament (*new date*)

**September 18<sup>th</sup>** JCAA Tournament Award Ceremony

**October 25<sup>th</sup>** Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament

### **JCAA High Roller Raffle 2020**

**\$3000 Plus in Prizes!**

*By Don Marantz*

The Jersey Coast Anglers Association is a charitable non-profit 501(c)3 organization that was formed in 1981. The original objective of the JCAA, that continues today, was to combine a group of marine sportfishing clubs in order to form and promote a united consensus on issues relevant to saltwater anglers in New Jersey. JCAA works to protect the rights of New Jersey's recreational fishermen by seeking fair and equitable fisheries management. It fosters conservation and education while seeking to do what is best for our fisheries to ensure they will be sustainable for future generations. JCAA also strives to create increased angling opportunities and better public access. Further, it is involved with issues concerning our marine environment, such as fighting for better fisheries habitat, keeping our waters clean, and protecting our forage species while supporting an ecosystem-based management approach. JCAA works in concert with New Jersey's legislature, many major local, state and national organizations, congress and federal agencies to advance its objectives.

JCAA has evolved into one of the most powerful and unified organizations of its kind. JCAA's strength comes from its volunteer members

and donations. If you or your fishing club is interested in becoming a member or making a tax-deductible donation, please call (732) 506-6565 or visit [www.jcaa.org](http://www.jcaa.org).

Another way you can help support us is to buy some of our raffle tickets. They will be mailed along with the Express Entry form for the fluke tournament in the near future. *Due to the Corona Virus, the drawing date for prizes has been changed and will be held on August 13 at 7:30 pm at our office.* Tickets are just **\$2 each, 3 for \$5 or 7 for \$10**. Thank you for your anticipated support!

### List of Prizes (retail values)

1. Jersey Nutz Six Man Charter (6 hour, 6 man inshore weekday charter) – **\$850**, Donated by Captains Robert and Cody Melton
2. ODM 11' NXF1102 Spinning Rod/Canyon Salt 7500 Reel – **\$639**, Donated by Canyon reels and JCAA
3. \$500 gift Certificate from Fisherman's Headquarters – **\$500**, Donated by Fisherman's Headquarters
4. Shimano 6'6" Teramar TMC-E66MH Conv. Rod/Shimano HG14 Reel – **\$380**, Donated by Grumpys Tackle and Shimano
5. Quantum 7' QSW5701H Spinning Rod/Quantum Boca BSP60 Reel – **\$260**, Donated by JCAA
6. Costa Blackfin Sunglasses – **\$259**, Donated by Costa
7. Tica 7' WIGA70MHJ2S Spinning Rod/Tica CS4000 Reel – **\$147**

## President's Report

By John Toth

Unfortunately, we are still in the COVID-19 mode that is affecting the way we live and the businesses of our country, especially our recreational fishing industry. The for-hire fleet has to practice social distancing and that has reduced the number of anglers on their boats causing boat captains to raise their fares to turn a profit. Raising fares to go fishing does not put more anglers on boats with so many people unemployed. Most likely the biggest problem

the for-hire fleet is facing is the fear that anglers have of catching COVID-19! I receive reports from a number of fishing boats and they need a lot more anglers to go fishing for the next day's trip. This tells me that some of the for-hire fleet is having a tough time in getting enough anglers on their boats because of increased fares and COVID-19. I have written more on this issue in my column "Fishing Report – The Good & the Bad" that is in another section of this newsletter.

On a more positive note, I wrote a letter to Governor Murphy on behalf of the JCAA in May 2018 requesting him to appoint Pat Donnelly to the New Jersey's Marine Fisheries Council. We have recently received the good news that Pat has been appointed to this council! Pat is very qualified for this position since he has a lot of experience with recreational fishing issues and has served on this council as a blackfish advisor. This is very welcome news since Pat is well aware of the fishing challenges we face with punitive regulations and can represent our interests well on this council. **Congratulations Pat!** (The JCAA letter to Governor Murphy requesting Pat's nomination to this council is in another section of this newsletter.)

George Browne handles access issues for the JCAA and has been relentless in trying to resolve access issues in a number of municipalities, including the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. In a recent telephone conversation including George, Tom Fote and myself with Regina Rettig, Manager of this National Wildlife Refuge, we had a very productive conversation with her and she was so receptive to the many recommendations offered by both George and Tom! This does not usually happen and at the end of this conference call, Tom said something like he wished he had more of this type of call in handling other problems facing the JCAA. More on this Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge is in another section of this newsletter.

One of the main concerns with windmills is the noise they will make when they are in operation and their effect on the movements and migration patterns of whales and fish. Dr. Eleanor Bochenek from Rutgers is submitting a proposal to the Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM), a federal agency, to study this important issue and requested the JCAA to offer her support for BOEM to approve it. This study would involve tagging black sea bass from a chartered boat and creating a windfarm-type noise to study the effect it has on the movement of these fish. This study

is a very worthwhile endeavor and it certainly needs to be done! I wrote a letter of support for Eleanor on JCAA letterhead and it follows:

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May 19, 2020

Dear Dr. Bochenek,

The Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA) fully supports your proposal entitled “In Situ Fish Response to Sounds Originating from Wind Turbine Installation and Operation in the Mid-Atlantic Bight” being submitted to the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), Environmental Studies Program.

Many offshore windfarms are planned off the coasts of Massachusetts to North Carolina and their impacts to fish species are not known. Black sea bass support an important recreational and commercial fishery in New Jersey and the Mid-Atlantic and occupies the areas of proposed windfarms during early summer through fall. These fish are known to spawn in these regions as well. This project will collect critical information on the impacts of windfarm noise during construction and maintenance on this important species.

Your proposal should improve the knowledge of whether noise from windfarm construction and maintenance affects black sea bass behavior. This study is very timely and needed to assess potential windfarm noise on a key recreational and commercial fish species in our region.

Sincerely,

John Toth  
President, Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA)

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Finally, during July & August there are no JCAA meetings that we are doing by ZOOM because of COVID-19. Enjoy your summer and have good fishing!

During our September 29th meeting, we will be taking nominations for the JCAA Sportsperson of the Year. So, start thinking of who you would like to nominate!

Stay Safe & Well!

## **Fisheries Management & Legislative Report**

*By Tom Fote*

### **Regulations just for the sake of Regulations**

When I say this I mean that we are now putting in regulations that cut back quotas and access for commercial fishermen and anglers for no valid reason. Sometimes I feel like a history professor, constantly reminding people about the reasons for the plans and how fisheries were managed using common sense. Below are articles that deal with what we did in the 90's for bluefish and scup. Commissioners and Council members were allowed to act as fisheries managers and not just as the “fall guys” for the National Marine Fisheries Service. There were two major events that had an impact on how we manage fisheries today. In the late 90's the National Marine Fisheries Service was constantly sued by NGOs with huge budgets to support their suits. In addition, since NMFS did not appeal some of the decisions when they lost, NMFS was also paying for the lawsuits. The NGOs and their lawyers became the “ambulance chasers” of the fisheries. They won their battles on technicalities and not on management decisions. Were some lawsuits justified? I would have to say yes. But there were others that were just money-making opportunities for the organizations and their attorneys. The other major event in 2006 was the passage of the Magnusson Stevens Act which was implemented in 2007. That took away fisheries management from the Councils and gave it to number crunchers. Yes, there were mistakes made in the 70's and 80's and we needed a set of standards to hold managers accountable. The Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council was doing things other Councils were not, implementing ACLs that put quotas in place to deal with targets and actually accomplish something. Other Councils were not doing this. But the National Marine Fisheries Service, through their interpretation of the Magnusson Stevens Act and to avoid lawsuits, put too much emphasis on models and charts and deleted the common sense. Below I will talk about two examples, bluefish and scup. I am also putting in articles that appeared in the JCAA Newspaper in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

## Bluefish

The week of June 16 I attended the Joint Meeting of ASMFC and the MAFMC via Zoom. I noticed the sparse attendance of the recreational fishing sectors, both party and charter boats and anglers. The meetings are usually held when it is very difficult for the party and charter boat owners to attend because this is their busy season. The recreational anglers are finally able to fish and they have also lost all confidence that the system will listen to them. I listened to an extended presentation of how we are overfished for bluefish because of the new recreational fishing numbers. There were many charts and tables to show us how we could stop overfishing from three to ten years with the recommended changes in the recreational and commercial catches. I asked the same question I have asked before, "Since bluefish have good recruitment and is not depending on spawning stock biomass to increase the number of fish, can you really predict what will happen if we implement these changes?" I pointed out the history which is covered in the articles below. The bluefish fishery is dependent on the availability of forage species which are dependent on a range of environmental factors. How many bluefish we catch has no actual impact on the size of the bluefish biomass. The presenters actually agreed that there was no certainty that anything they suggested will have an impact on the stocks. Many Council and Commission members actually chimed in with the same concerns. We are putting regulations on bluefish so NMFS can say they are doing something to rebuild the stocks and stop overfishing, not because they actually believe this will be accomplished. Like weakfish and winter flounder, the bluefish stocks are more dependent on cyclical and environmental factors and the availability of a food source.

## Scup

The historical record on scup was a 30/70 split, recreational/commercial. The articles below demonstrate how we went from a 30% to a 22% quota on scup in the recreational sector. The Council and Commission basically took 8% of the recreational quota over a period of two meetings and gave it to the commercial sector to get them to do something about by catch. The recreational community in 1995 did not believe there would ever be regulations on the scup catch and some of the recreational members of the Council actually supported the 8% giveaway. NMFS

again is trying to force us to cut back our catch without having any impact on the stocks. The scup stocks are in good shape and the commercial community is not even catching their quota. The small part the recreational community plays will have no impact on the stocks but the impact on the recreational community will be huge.

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*Next month I will be talking about concerns about sector separation in the recreational community. I am justify my opposition to it since I ran out of room this month*

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## Bluefish and Scup Articles from Past Newsletters

### Bluefish Outrage!!! 3 Bluefish a day Allowed in 1996?

By Tom Fote

*(reprinted from JCAA Newsletter August 1995)*

On July 28, 1995, there was a meeting of the Bluefish Monitoring Committee in Essington, PA. There's nothing unique about that, except that from July 25 through 27, there was a meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission held at the Double Tree Hotel in downtown Philadelphia, a 15 minute drive from Essington. The Commission meeting was attended by many of the members of the Bluefish Monitoring Committee and other commissioners who expressed an interest in the Monitoring Committee's findings that were to be presented on the 28th.

The poorly scheduled Monitoring Committee meeting ended up not being attended by many participants who should have been there, even though it was only 10 miles away. That was because it added another day's travel expenses for many commission members and would have kept them from their jobs in their home states for a fifth consecutive day, since the Commission meetings began early on Tuesday morning requiring most members to fly in on Monday. For that reason, the Bluefish Monitoring Committee, which was holding an extremely important meeting, was attended by only a handful of people and only four voting members. The ironic part of this scenario was the full committee meeting in

Philly was over at noon on the 27th and the Bluefish Monitoring Committee meeting could have been held on that afternoon in the same hotel where most of the committee members were already staying. The meeting room had already been paid for by the government for the remainder of the day.

It would have saved time, expense money, the cost of an additional meeting room and lodging at a totally different hotel, in addition to making it possible for the greatest number of commissioners and committee members to attend. Instead, the meeting was a wasteful expenditure of scarce tax dollars that prevented participation by many of the people who wanted to attend.

Added to the scheduling nightmare was the Bluefish Board's meeting, held the following Tuesday in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in Wilmington, Delaware. This meeting, where some very important decisions were made, was only three days after the Monitoring Committee Meeting, which meant that the public received no notice of the findings of the Monitoring Committee prior to the Board pushing these issues to a premature, yet final vote. In fact, I don't know of one Governor's or Legislative Appointee from any of the member states that was notified of the findings of the Monitoring Committee or were notified that the Bluefish Board was even meeting. Only voting members of the Bluefish Board received notice. Keep in mind that the Governor's and Legislative Appointees presently make up 2/3s of the ASMFC. Even worse, the public, including representatives of the recreational and commercial fishing industries, were denied the opportunity to comment on these critically important regulatory decisions because they did not know the meeting was being held.

The ASMFC, the Councils and NMFS better get their act together. These three entities are supposed to be working in a spirit of cooperation in the best interests of the marine fisheries of the United States. The more the Councils and the Commission send mixed messages to the fishermen they are attempting to regulate, the weaker the trust in the data and the system becomes. And if anyone thinks that these fishermen don't know just how weak the enforcement capabilities behind these regulations are, they better stop kidding themselves. We depend heavily on voluntary compliance to the regulations we impose and when the fishing public says "to hell with you and

your rules," our ability to regulate fisheries will evaporate.

As a Commissioner from New Jersey, I am already kept busy trying to explain to fishermen why they are allowed to keep eight fluke when caught in state waters, but only six when caught in Federal waters. That imaginary line found three miles off our beaches is becoming very blurred by this confusion. Now I have to try and explain the discrepancy between the Mid-Atlantic Council and ASMFC in the regulation of bluefish. The Bluefish Board pushed through a three fish bag limit in state waters, while the Council, after listening to the very same monitoring committee report and the same rhetoric from a small group of state directors or their designates, realized several important things. They understood that there had not been a reasonable level of public notice and public comment and that Amendment 1 was the way to answer the problems in this fishery. They voted to make no changes in the present management regime in the EEZ. That's right, they kept the bag limit at ten fish in Federal waters.

The ASMFC, under the new Atlantic States Conservation Act, is supposed to keep the management process open to public input and participation at all levels of plan development and implementation. It looks great on paper, but apparently, that is not the way it is being played out by the Commission. If the ASMFC cared even a little bit about the impact its decision to reduce the recreational bag limit by 70% would have on fishermen and members of the sport fishing industry, they would have encouraged the full participation of the Bluefish Advisory Panel. That Panel was already assembled and in place for just that reason, but again, that was not the case. By coincidence, the chairman of the Bluefish Advisory Panel, Bob Rhodes, was in attendance because he had just been appointed to a seat on the Council. He was amazed at what the Bluefish Board was doing. He didn't even know such a vote was in the offing and commented on the record after the vote was taken, that it was inappropriate without conferring with the Advisory Panel and without adequate public input into the process. It was certainly not in compliance with the tenants of the Atlantic Coast Conservation Act.

After counting the number of votes that decided the 70% reduction in the bag limit, it became obvious that not only wasn't the public involved in the process, but

neither were the voting members of the ASMFC Bluefish Management Board. The vote count reported to me showed that only seven vote were cast in favor of the reduction. The Bluefish Management Board consists of 19 members. That means that 12 members either abstained from voting, voted no, or simply were not present due to scheduling conflicts. It was not like this vote was an emergency matter, since the reduction was not to go into effect until 1996 and Amendment 1 is supposedly on a "fast track." Public input could have been garnered and a vote on these changes could have been taken at a later ASMFC meeting.

In my opinion, the ASMFC really stubbed its toe badly on this vote. Most of the anglers on the East Coast were unhappy with decisions made by the Commission, even when those decisions were made with a high level of public participation. Witness the resentment and distrust generated when the Commission unilaterally decided to increase the commercial harvest of striped bass from 20% TO 70% in the final version of Amendment 5, against overwhelming advice from the public and its own Striped Bass Advisory Panel. Can you imagine how they are going to feel when they see that the ASMFC is now making decisions that will negatively impact the major contingent of the fishing public and industry with total disregard for public input altogether. What the ASMFC must do immediately is call for a meeting of the Bluefish Advisory Panel to allow them to review the decisions made by the Board. It should promptly hold public hearings in those states that will be dramatically impacted by this 70% reduction in the bag limit, because to not do so would be extremely detrimental to the entire management process.

With regard to the Bluefish Management Plan, a plan that has been recognized as being flawed from its inception and that some have called, "the worst management plan ever devised," there should be no major changes in the present management regime under framework procedures like this bag limit reduction, and the entire plan should be reviewed and corrected in the Amendment 1 process. Let me point out just one of the really glaring inequities in this plan. The commercial quota is based on the "total recreational catch." Most uninformed fishermen would assume that "total recreational catch" means all the sport caught fish retained. That is not what it means at all. In this plan, "total recreational catch" represents all those fish caught, included the hundreds of thousands of fish that are released alive by sport

fishermen. Let's look a little closer at this way the commercial harvest is determined using plain numbers.

For sake of argument, let's say that the total recreational catch was 500,000-lbs., but because of bag limits, size limits and those fish released voluntarily by anglers because of their ingrained conservation ethic, they only kept 100,000-lbs. of those fish and the rest were release alive. When this plan calculates the commercial quota, it is based on 20% of the 500,000-lbs. of bluefish recreational anglers caught, including released fish, and not on just the fish they harvested. Not surprisingly, 20% of 500,000-lbs. is 100,000-lbs., or the same number of fish that sport fishermen killed. Through the use of fancy accounting methods, the commercial sector is harvesting far in excess of 20% of even the "total recreational catch," but they are not held accountable for any discards in the commercial fishery because commercial discard was never even considered in this plan. We all know that commercial discards and bluefish bycatch in other fisheries is excessive, yet there is no effort to account for this large quantity of dead bluefish on the commercial side of the equation. Some feel it is far in excess of even the most liberal estimates.

Ladies and gentlemen, Please let the ASMFC know in no uncertain terms how you feel about this or you will have a three bluefish bag limit imposed on your fishing or your sport fishing dependent business as sure as the sun rises. Incredibly, less than one week after this controversial vote, the ASMFC upped and moved its offices and changed its phone numbers. But don't despair, I will give you the new address and phone number so the staff and commissioners cannot hide from the public any longer. Please write or call ASMFC.

## **Bluefish**

By Tom Fote

*(reprinted from JCAA Newsletter April 1997)*

At the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting in February, the Council approved draft Amendment 1 to the Bluefish FMP. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will be voting on Amendment 1 on March 19th. There are questions that have not been answered in the Bluefish Fisheries Management Plan

that must be considered before this plan can be approved. First, what are the normal stock levels? Second, how much spawning stock biomass needs protection so that if conditions are right the population will increase? And third, what is the spawning stock biomass below which we would severely inhibit reproductive potential and a stock recovery?

In order to answer any of these questions we must think about what has happened. The number of bluefish available in the 70's and 80's were the highest that anyone ever remembers. Their range expanded dramatically further to both the north and south.

Unfortunately, the stock information being provided to the Council and Commission for review purposes only goes back to 1981, a time when the stock levels were at their highest. Consequently, the stock assessment today appears drastically low, by comparison.

The available stocks of bluefish decreased in the late 80's. This downward trend has continued into the 90's. Unlike other species, there was no dramatic increase in either the commercial or recreational fisheries. Actually, there were no bag limits in the 70's or 80's, as bag limits were first imposed in 1990 with no effect on slowing the stock decrease. Bluefish is not a species that takes a long time to become sexually mature. Not one scientist can point with any certainty to the reason why the stocks have decreased. When you look at the charts and at the fifty year average, the 1990 catches are still above the fifty year average. Before we implement the draconian measures that have been proposed for 1998, we must answer these questions. It is not fair to the recreational community and the industry to impose measures that will have a drastic effect on the industry without actually meeting its goals of conserving the stocks. The question I continually ask is, if we stopped all bluefishing tomorrow for three years, could you tell me if that would have a significant impact in increasing bluefish stocks to the historic high levels of the 80s. Not one scientist has been willing to answer that question on the record. Most of us started our saltwater fishing on snappers.

One of the management tools that is likely to be implemented is a 12 inch size limit for both recreational and commercial fishermen. This could be a big mistake economically for the future of recreational fishing and the industry. My father first introduced me to fishing by taking me down to

Sheepshead Bay to fish for snapper blues. We never wasted any, bringing ever fish we caught and kept was brought home to eat. That is how I have introduced my nieces and nephews to saltwater fishing, taking them down to a dock on Barnegat Bay to fish for snappers. If I must stop teaching children to fish on snappers, at least guarantee me that the sacrifice will have a truly beneficial impact on overall stocks. Unfortunately, as it appears right now, it looks more like a 12 inch size limit is going to be imposed just so managers can look like they are doing something, not because it is the correct scientifically determined thing to do. Right now, the fisheries management community is unable to provide any encouragement that a size limit is the answer. In fact, they are still struggling with the simple question, why are bluefish stocks declining in our waters. I have a sneaky suspicion that the main reason bluefish stocks are down in the mid-Atlantic and northeastern states is due to the overharvest of critical forage species like menhaden, herring, mackerel, squid and other species. To correct that problem would require some serious fisheries management and NMFS, the Council and Commission are very hesitant to open that can of worms.

## ASMFC 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Summary

By Tom Fote

*(reprinted from JCAA Newsletter November 1995)*

### Scup

The Scup Management Plan proves again that the recreational community takes it on the chin when it comes to the management process. The Mid-Atlantic Council and ASMFC went to public hearings with a document that stated that the quota on scup will be 70% commercial and 30% recreational based on landings. When the council and commission considered the bycatch issue, suddenly the quota was changed from a 70/30 split on landings, we got a 72/28 split on catch. It again proved the council and commission will not deal seriously with the bycatch issue and will continue to reward the people who cause the problem. This fishery was truly a subsistence fishery, providing a dietary supplement for low income families. Now we have taken that away from them by not addressing the bycatch issue.

These people fish from dock, piers and the shore. Unless we insure the abundance of this resource and not lose it through bycatch, they lose this harvest.

## **ASMFC Week March 11-14, 1996**

By Tom Fote

*(reprinted from JCAA Newsletter May 1996)*

### **Scup FMP**

The Scup Plan was passed by the ASMFC, again with the New Jersey delegation voting against it at the Policy Board and full commission. The reason was that the 22/78 split in quota allocation between recreational and commercial users was never presented as an option during any public hearing documents or brought before the advisors. It was an arbitrary figure arrived at during a Mid-Atlantic Council meeting with no input from the public.

When will the Commission and Council recognize that they cannot make major policy decisions like reducing the recreational portion of the quota from 30% to 22%, which reduces the recreational catch by almost a third, without care for public opinion or the impact it will have on recreational fishermen and the industry. This is not representative fisheries management as it circumvents the public hearing process and the advisors that we are supposed to rely on for industry input and to keep the process representative.

## **Bluefish Update: Bag Limits to Remain at 10 Fish for 1998**

By Gary Caputi

*(reprinted from JCAA Newsletter September 1997)*

The combined Bluefish Board of the ASMFC and Coastal Migratory Committee from the Mid-Atlantic Council gathered in Philadelphia last week to determine the annual specifications for bluefish commercial quotas and recreational bag limits for 1998 and to further discuss Amendment 1 to the Bluefish Management Plan.

The 1998 specifications were determined under the original plan and had nothing to do with what was

being considered for the upcoming plan amendment. I attended the Monitoring Committee meeting, which was held on Monday, August 11 and was pleased to see the committee and audience members seriously questioning the stock assessment results. While the assessment would lead one to believe bluefish were in a seriously depleted state and in need of major fishing mortality reductions, the vast amount of anecdotal data presented indicating the opposite was taken very seriously. The Monitoring Committee came to the conclusion that absent of any new management tools, they would fly in the face of the scientific data and recommend bag limits and commercial quotas stay status quo in 1998.

The ASMFC Bluefish Board and the Council met in joint session the next day and over a two hour period, going back and forth with the Regional Administrator, approved the Monitoring Committee's recommendations. The status quo vote was overwhelming, but not unanimous. The manner in which the final proposal was worded prevents NMFS and the RA from denying the proposal, so the bag limit remains at 10 fish for another year.

Next came continuing discussions on Amendment 1 to the plan. The problem with this amendment is not so much expanding the management options to include possible seasonal closures and size limits, as it is the manner in which the stock is being assessed and what it could drive the management process to do in future years. The stock assessments are horribly inaccurate. Stock assessment scientists readily agree that they do not properly assess the stock's health when the fish are ranging further offshore, as has been common in recent years. The scientists conceded that the MRFSS survey, which gauges recreational landings and harvest, is dominated by recreational trips that take place inside three miles of shore, while bluefish can range to over 100 miles offshore. Once bluefish move beyond 10 miles out, recreational trips targeting them plummet. They also recognize that recreational effort associated with bluefish has dropped dramatically in recent years, indicating a further "decline" in supposed bluefish stock size. The bottom trawl survey conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center is a poor way to judge stock size for bluefish, and this is also conceded to. But the bottom line is these stock assessment tools are being used to drive the management system and until the science is corrected to adequately gauge bluefish stock size, it could force the system to take draconian measures to improve a

stock that very well might not need any help, while hurting the recreational and commercial users who depend upon it.

Now, add to all this the base years being used to establish stock size includes the early and mid 1980s, when bluefish stocks were at all time historic size. We recognize that stocks have declined from those years, but with such a short time frame being used for comparison purposes in the plan, 1979 through the present, the decline seems far greater than it probably is when compared to historic stock sizes over the past 50 or 100 years. Which brings us to the question of just how large a stock are we aiming for in the plan? What constitutes a healthy bluefish biomass? These questions have not been answered, so we are left to wander around in the darkness of indecision and the current amendment provides very few answers in its present form. The future of the bluefish amendment is still at question and the variables driving management, especially the stock assessment component, is very much a Catch 22 scenario. We'll keep you posted on developments.

## **Fishing Report** **The Good News / Bad News**

*By John Toth*

As president of the Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County, I have many responsibilities including recruiting speakers for my club's monthly meetings. I try to have speakers to give presentations on various topics, but they all have some connection to salt water fishing.

Given that we are in the start of the summer flounder fluke season, I invited Dave Lilly to talk at my club's June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting to give a presentation on his best techniques to catch summer flounder. He has won many summer flounder tournaments and certainly knows how to catch these fish. Weather permitting, he is the type of angler that is on the water just about every day to catch whatever fish is in season. He is also a very good speaker and the proof of that is when he is speaking, club members are totally silent even when the room has almost 70 to 80 of them in it!

At our meeting, Dave first talked about last year's fluke season and said that it was the worst he experienced in memory. The fish were just not there

and he, like us, struggled to land a few keepers. Fish as low as 5 pounds were winning some fluke tournaments! What caused this collapse of fluke fishing, in his opinion, was a number of factors that could include sand mining, warming waters or some unknown factors. However, whatever the cause, the major result was the lack of baitfish in our waters. We all know that if there is no bait, there is no fish! Fishing for fluke during 2019 was a struggle, even for the "sharpiers".

However, the good news is that Dave is seeing all types of baitfish in our waters! The fluke he has been catching have been spitting up small porgies, crabs, small fluke and other baitfish. Schools of bunker are everywhere and they are prime forage for striped bass and bluefish. Dave indicated that fluke fishing has had a slow start because of the unusual cold spring we have just experienced. But given the abundance of baitfish, fluke fishing for 2020 looks very promising!

The bad news is the effect COVID-19 has had on the for-hire fleet. Dave reported that during his many fishing trips he has seen party and charter boats only partially filled. The social distancing requirement has not only reduced the number of anglers allowable on boats, but captains have had to raise their fares to compensate for the number of anglers they need to turn a profit. Increased fares to go fishing, especially at a time when so many citizens are unemployed, does not put more people on fishing boats. The fear of catching COVID-19 may be the biggest problem for the for-hire fleet and just about every business and organization in our country! For example, at my club's June 16th meeting only 35 members came to it when my club meetings normally have between 70 to 80 members in attendance. Since my club did not have club meetings in March, April and May and that we have been house bound for so long, I was convinced that we would have the normal turnout of members, but I was wrong. I also receive reports from a number of fishing boats and they petition anglers to come on board for even the next day's trip and that shows me that they are lacking anglers to fill their boats.

What was funny at my club's June meeting was the hairy look of our club members and a few were almost unrecognizable! It has been so long that any of us have seen a barber! I have grown a beard for the first time in my 75 years of existence! If I hardly go anywhere and are mostly housebound, why should I shave?

## Public Access Report

*By George Browne*

This month's column will be short. There is not much going on.

First, though, if you have a public access issue, you can email me at [publicaccess@jcaa.org](mailto:publicaccess@jcaa.org). I will need your name and a way to contact you. Please send me the access location and some details about what happened and whether you were denied access, or it was someone you know. We need facts and, if you live locally, information about contacting the town to hear what they have to say. If contacting the town does not help resolve the issue, I will help you file a public access complaint with DEP. We can also file a complaint for you. However, we cannot do it alone. We need you to be available to speak with DEP to give them firsthand details. Some public access complaints have come to me via Facebook and I have been able to follow up on a few of them. Posting to social media and having people comment with complaints is not going to fix the problem. Getting involved and acting on the issue can. And, unless you tell us about the issue, we know nothing about it and cannot get it resolved.

In the past month, we have seen the towns opening parking and fishing access, but it does not mean that there are no access issues. Some of the towns tried banning non-residents from parking. Others banned all on street parking and we saw Manasquan Inlet shut down on both sides of the inlet.

During those restrictions, calls were made, or emails were sent to the mayors or business administrators in towns where access was being denied. We had some successes. In other cases, emails and letters went to DEP as public access complaints. Often, we saw the towns drag their feet on re-opening fishing access or parking. It has been frustrating, but it is improving.

In addition to JCAA, there were several groups that worked on access including Surfrider Foundation COBRA, CRAB, the Berkeley Striper Club, and the American Littoral Society. It has been a good coalition and different groups have taken the lead for different locations.

The piping plovers are nesting, and their eggs are hatching. Once the chicks fledge, we should see beaches being opened again. I have some contacts at

NJ F&W who manage the endangered species program and I have been watching the plovers at Island Beach State Park. If you have another area that is closed for piping plovers and want to know when it will reopen, I can send an email and get an idea of what the target date is. However, that date is not written in stone, it all depends on the birds. If the nest is on federal property, the re-opening date is usually sometime in September.

## JCAA 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Fluke Tournament

*By Paul Turi, Fluke Tournament Director*

Due to the Coronavirus, JCAA has moved the date of its annual fluke tournament to Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> and the awards presentations to Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>

The good news for this year, among all of the bad news of the day, is that our Awards Presentations this year will be taking place at the Resorts Hotel Casino in Atlantic City. Hopefully, if all goes well with cornering this virus, we will be able to have the Awards Presentations as planned.

I would like to give a shout-out to Resorts Hotel Casino for giving us the opportunity to have our Awards Presentations in their hotel. They are excited to have us there and we are excited to be back there.

In addition to donating the use of their facility, Resorts will also be giving every attendee \$10 in slot play or \$20 in Match Play plus \$10 in food credits. There will also be a reduced room rate for those wishing to stay over. They will also be donating a package for each of our 7 regions. Each package will contain a free overnight stay in their hotel, show tickets and \$40 in food credits. In addition, they will also be taking an ad in our monthly newspaper.

Of course, all of this is dependent on whether or not the casinos can open and have large gatherings in September. I will keep everyone up to date and informed in future newspaper articles. In the meantime let's all be careful and abide by and practice social distancing.

# Youth Education Report

By Greg Kucharewski

## 2020 JCAA YOUTH EDUCATION AWARD

The JCAA Youth Education Committee is accepting nominations for the 2020 Youth Education Award. There are many NJ HOFNOD volunteers doing great work to bring successes to the fishing community but sometimes individuals and sport-fishing organizations go above and beyond to make the future of fishing better for our youngsters.

Youth Education Award Criteria: Promoting “Hooked On Fishing Not On Drugs (HOFNOD),” Certified HOFNOD instructors, number of fishing or aquatic education events, JCAA lending library usage, and creativity for promoting youth fishing events. Submit your nominations in writing and email to [gkucharews@jcaa.org](mailto:gkucharews@jcaa.org).

Please view the JCAA website for the next general membership meeting.

## WEEKEND FISHING RODEO LAKE JULIANNA

Mr. Vito Cardinale, CEO/President Cardinale Enterprises LLC, and Mr. Randy Johnson, Laurita Winery will host a Weekend Fishing Rodeo at Lake Julianna Ponderosa Estates Farm, Millstone Township, NJ 08535. The weekend will include a fishing fun day for children with disabilities and other special needs and honoring disabled veterans, along with active-duty military from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m., special needs youngsters will attend the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual “Kid’s Wish’n to go Fishing” fun day and Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m., Play HOOK-e “Take a Veteran Fishing Day” will honor disabled veterans, and active-duty military.

Organizers decided to combine the Kids Wish’n to go Fish’n Fun Day and Take a Veteran Fishing Day to commemorate the environmental improvements at Lake Julianna that include: Disabled access and bird-watching observation stand, catfish feeding station, planting of environmental grasses, duck pond, frog and rabbit cover habitat areas. Several volunteer groups in Monmouth and Ocean County assisted with the ecosystem restoration project to provide a healthy environment for fish and wildlife.

The goal of the Weekend Fishing Rodeo is to offer special needs children and disabled veterans a day to fish and feel the health benefits of getting in touch with nature while making good memories.

Attendees and their guest are invited to fish at Lake Julianna to catch and release big fish and then join Mr. Vito Cardinale and his staff of volunteers for a free BBQ that will provide soft drinks, pizza, hamburgers & hotdogs and other goodies. Registration is mandatory through EventBrite Play HOOK-e. New Jersey freshwater fishing license is **not required** because Lake Julianna is located on a private farm. Disabled Veterans and special needs children with mobility challenges will have use of 4x4 transportation around the lake, along with fishing assistance if needed. Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing Jersey Shore Chapter will assist with fly fishing instruction and their members will teach you how to catch some big fish on a fly rod. Boating Education and Rescue (B.E.A.R.) will bring their mobile education booth and “Hooked on Fishing not On Drugs” loaner rods and reels. Mike and Debbie Bennett B.E.A.R. and volunteers will teach youngsters casting techniques.

Don Marantz, Event Chairman stated: “We have plenty of door prizes, terminal tackle, bait, and other fishing equipment available to ensure that Lake Julianna, Weekend Fishing Rodeo participants have an enjoyable time.” “Come out and catch a smile.”

The event is sponsored by Cardinale Enterprises LCC, Laurita Winery, and supported by Vietnam Veterans of America Shore Area Chapter 12, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Boating Education and Rescue and the Jersey Coast Anglers Association. You can register for this free event at the [EventBrite Play HOOK-e registration page](#) or at [VVA Chapter 12](#).

## NJ HOFNOD

During 2020, think about becoming a HOFNOD instructor. NJ HOFNOD facilitator workshops are hosted by the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife and it was well worth the time to learn creative aquatic activities to teach youngsters the importance becoming environmental stewards. This workshop is a great learning experience. If you are interested in attending a NJ HOFNOD workshop, please phone or email Liz Jackson, NJ HOFNOD Coordinator Phone: 908-637-4125 x122 email: [liz.jackson@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:liz.jackson@dep.state.nj.us). Next training date is May 15-17, 2020.

The Hooked on Fishing-Not on Drugs Program's Youth Fishing Challenge statewide event will take place on the state's second Free Fishing Day, Saturday, October 17th, when no license is required to fish regardless of age. See the NJ HOFNOD website for more information.

### **HIGH SCHOOL FISHING TEAMS**

High school fishing students can sharpen their fishing skills over the summer and get ready for the largest surf fishing tournament along the Jersey Shore. New Jersey high school fishing teams will have the opportunity to sign-up for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament 2020. The tournament is rescheduled for Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.

We expect the following schools to join the GSFT tournament: Manasquan High School Fishing Club, Toms River HS North, Delaware Valley Regional HS, Lacey Township High School Fishing Club, Brick HS Fishing Club, Gateway Regional High School, Manahawkin High School, and Howell High School. The Governor's Cup committee would like to see more schools and organizations enter the tournament this year. Schools that would like more information about the GSFT can contact Karen Byrne at 609-748-4347 or e-mail [karen.byrne@dep.nj.gov](mailto:karen.byrne@dep.nj.gov).



*Over 25 new Tica rods and reels available  
for surf fishing instruction*

### **SURF FISHING CLINIC AT IBSP**

Many thanks to George Browne and other volunteers from New Jersey Beach Buggy Association that worked on outfitting the surf fishing cart with new equipment for fishing clinics and surf fishing instruction. The surf fishing cart is used to teach new anglers, students, and veterans the sport of surf casting and fishing. George Brown, NJBBA, Tom Sheehan, George Murnyak, Lou Fusco, Dan Weidmuller and Tim Burden will conduct fishing clinics at the park. A lot of work went into organizing the surf cart that holds seining nets, waders, surf bags, rod/reels, tables, terminal tackle, and maintenance equipment. Beach wheelchairs with balloon tires are available for disabled anglers to utilize. The surf cart is also used for NJ HOFNOD schools, veteran Play HOOK-e fishing programs and community-based programs.

Sign up for the next beginners surf fishing clinic on Friday, July 3rd, 8 am until 12 noon. Please phone IBSP for more information or [register here](#).

### **NJ SEA GRANT**

#### **KID'S SUMMER PROGRAM**

During the summer, join New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium for their new Virtual Marine Science Day Camp! This daily alternative to their annual in-person program utilizes fun, interactive 60-minute Zoom sessions. Children can participate with experienced NJSGC Education Staff focused on ocean sciences that are sure to excite children about aquatic education.

View their [website](#) to learn about this great learning experience.

**Fish Safe, Play Safe  
Stay Safe  
Keep Social Distance**