



April 2009

Hanging up Their Nets

Commercial net buyout bill succeeding in Alabama

One-third of Alabama's commercial gill net fishermen opted to hang up their nets in the recent buyout offer from the state's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division. Over the past two years, CCA Alabama worked with the Department of Conservation and the state legislature to pass a bill offering a buyout for commercial netters who were willing to surrender their licenses in return for a one-time payment. Additional provisions in the bill include elimination of all out-of-state net licenses and a provision that the netter's license be terminated if it is not renewed every year. The license may not be transferred to any other individual.

CCA Alabama State Chairman Grey Cane congratulated Edwin Lamberth, state Government Relations Committee chairman, for leading the effort to reduce the number of netters on the coast.

"Our Government Relations Committee did a masterful job of working to get this important legislation in place," said Cane. "We also owe a debt of gratitude to the Governor, the Conservation Commissioner, the Director of Marine Resources, and many others who helped make the buyout a success."

"We've gotten a lot done, and now we're focusing on regulation changes to further reduce the wasteful practice," added Lamberth.

CCA Gulf grouper study grabs attention

Study shows value of 100 percent recreational allocation.

A study on Gulf grouper conducted by Brad Gentner, who ran the recreational economics data collection program for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for eight years before starting his own company, Gentner Consulting Group, continues to be a hot topic of discussion in fishery management circle.

The study, [Allocation of the Gulf of Mexico Gag and Red Grouper Fisheries](#), used economics to analyze grouper allocations in the Gulf of Mexico. Among other findings, his analysis revealed that recreational gag grouper fishing generates \$107 million in value added, \$60.8 million in income and supports 1,513 jobs while red grouper fishing generates \$35.2 million in value added, \$20 million in income and



supports 501 jobs. Commercial gag grouper fishing generates \$16 million in valued added, \$7.7 million in income and supports 322 jobs while red grouper fishing generate \$49 million in valued added, \$23.7 million in income and supports 988 jobs. The majority of the economic impacts in the commercial sector in both fisheries occur in the retail and restaurant sectors, and Gentner concludes that those sectors would experience very few losses with a 100 percent recreational allocation.

Click here to see an editorial on the Gulf grouper study by Doug Olander in a recent issue of Sport Fishing Magazine entitled, [Re-Slicing the Pie](#).

Red Snapper Proposal Making Waves

Tag proposal for troubled red snapper fishery sparks healthy debate

An innovative proposal for managing the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery is making waves in the saltwater recreational angling community. The idea has been hailed by some as a fresh new approach to the federal red snapper management debacle in the Gulf, which has been a dismal failure for more than 30 years. It has been reviled by others who apparently don't understand that the primary intent of the proposal was to challenge and change a failed management paradigm, and to demonstrate that there are alternatives to the same broken strategies that threaten continued recreational angler participation in the snapper fishery.



The tag proposal, which can be viewed [HERE](#), is designed to spark debate on what to do with a fishery that has resisted improvement under every management regime since the mid-1980s. We face an unappealing landscape that spurred the need to move in a completely different direction on red snapper management. We need a system that allows recreational anglers to have fair and equal access to this fishery. And that won't come easy.

The tag proposal takes a completely fresh approach to management of red snapper, one that is based wholly on the free-market system rather than an outdated sector allocation system. It relieves the federal government from managing recreational anglers, something that it has never shown itself capable of doing.

In the end, as it says in the document itself, the proposal is a "discussion document" - a concept for debate. The document describes some of the downsides and problems in the concept, but it has strategic value and is clearly meeting the goal of stimulating fresh thought. The introduction of this document has opened a debate at the Gulf Council for the first time ever on Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) programs that don't just give the resource to the commercial sector but could distribute it to everyone in an open-market forum.

This tag proposal may not be the final approach to red snapper management, but it is the only proposal yet aired that could level the playing field on IFQs and give recreational fishermen a chance to access the 51 percent commercial allocation. Whatever the final approach may be, it is certain that no other management measure adopted by the Council and NMFS has worked for recreational anglers.

Texas Outdoor Writers Recognize CCA/Valero Youth Program

*Program sponsored by Valero Energy Corp. seeks to bring
conservation into classroom*

The Texas Outdoor Writers Association (TOWA) selected the CCA/Valero Rising Tide youth program as the winner of its Special Projects/Conservation award at its 2009 annual convention. At a time when far more kids are texting than casting, the recognition by Texas outdoor writers emphasizes just how critical the need is to get students more involved in protecting the marine environment. CCA and Valero Energy Corp combined efforts to create this multi-media youth outreach and education program.



"Other than teachers, perhaps no one knows better than outdoor writers how difficult it is these days to get kids thinking about the world beyond their cell phones and video games," said Patrick Murray, CCA executive vice president. "We are honored that TOWA recognized how valuable this program is to getting the next generation ready to assume its role as stewards of our marine resources. The beautiful thing about this program is that it can be accessed so many ways. With the newsletter, website and conservation lesson plan, we are able to bring the message of marine conservation and education to a wide variety of children in an even wider variety of locations."

CCA and Valero Energy Corp. teamed up in 2007 to promote conservation education and ethics in young anglers through the Rising Tide program. Valero's generous support allowed CCA to devote more resources to the youth program than ever before, with particular attention given to the development of a newsletter, youth webpage and marine conservation lesson plan that has been made available to junior high school teachers, summer camps and home school programs. Through the lesson plan, students are tasked with identifying conservation problems in the marine environment, researching them, and most importantly, creating solutions to solve them.

"We wanted to build on the fact that kids are capable of doing amazing things right now and develop a program that would tap into that potential," said Murray. "Making students and others aware of the conservation challenges that face our bays and oceans and helping them be part of the solution lays the foundation for a lifetime of conservation. We are fortunate to have a partner in Valero that is committed to educating youth about conservation and coastal responsibility."

For more information about the Rising Tide program or a free copy of the Rising Tide newsletter or lesson plan, educators are encouraged to contact Patrick Murray at ccantl@joincca.org.

CCA Louisiana artificial reef program booming



With several successful artificial reefs already built and others awaiting construction, CCA Louisiana Habitat and Conservation Coordinator John Walther is working with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) on a

number of new reef projects across the Louisiana coast.

The second phase of the Lake Pontchartrain reefs project is underway, which could include building one or two additional reefs adjoining a 2,000-foot-long fishing pier in St. Tammany Parish. All of the reefs in both phases of the Lake Pontchartrain project would be built with concrete from the old I-10 Twin Spans, which will be demolished upon completion of new bridges, possibly in 2010. The state Department of Transportation and Development has approved St. Tammany Parish's proposal to convert 2,000 feet of one of the old Twin Spans into a massive fishing pier for use by the public.

The first phase involves building two reefs – one in St. Tammany close to the Highway 11 bridge and a second in Orleans Parish closer to the I-10 bridge. Those two projects have received the necessary permits and funding and are only awaiting completion of the new Twin Spans and demolition of the old bridges.

"We're ready to go, and just as soon as the demolition begins, Boh Brothers Construction can begin moving the materials to the reef areas," Walther explained. "We were hoping this could be in 2009, but it's looking more like next year before we can begin."

Other ongoing CCA Louisiana reef projects include enhancing and refurbishing two existing reefs in Lake Pelto and one in Bay Ronquille, which were damaged by hurricanes. CCA helped LDWF identify improvement of these reefs as priority projects and the \$600,000 worth of improvements should be made this summer. CCA is also working with LDWF to identify a site at Independence Island in Barataria Bay to build a new artificial reef.

Finally, Walther and others are studying the possibility of building an offshore artificial reef made of manufactured concrete blocks south of Lake Charles.

Maryland courts deliver a blow

Protection of marine resources in the Maryland court system may be taking a step for the better. A court case in St. Mary's County produced a significant victory for the enforcement of natural resources law. A commercial fisherman, who already had been cited for more than 40 violations, was sentenced to three months in jail and will not be able to renew his tidal fish or recreational licenses for three years – the toughest penalty enacted for violation of natural resources law in Maryland in recent memory.

The case involved taking under-sized oysters, not having proper safety equipment onboard, and not being able to produce a license. The commercial fisherman told the judge that he was in process of selling his boat and gear.

Often in the past, violators received a fine of only a few hundred dollars when caught and found guilty, a sum which they saw as a business cost. The sentence in this case delivers a clear message that breaking natural resources law is an offense that can receive significant punishment. Neither recreational nor commercial anglers should be able to violate these laws and steal valuable resources from the citizens of Maryland.

CCA Maryland members played an important role in this case, sending more than 200 emails to the state's attorney's office asking that the case be prosecuted aggressively and that the judge sentence the defendant to the full extent of the law if found guilty. Assistant State's Attorney Christina Taylor cited the significant "public outcry" in presenting her case.



CCA Texas funds "frontline" cabin for game wardens

In September of 2008, CCA Texas pledged \$32,000 to Texas Parks and Wildlife game wardens for the construction of a floating cabin in the Lower Laguna Madre. Construction on the cabin, a new front-line for wardens enforcing game and safety laws and providing for public safety along the desolate stretches of water in south Texas, is now complete.



"The Game Wardens in south Texas to be commended for doing such a fantastic job on this floating cabin. Using money donated by CCA Texas, they built this important facility by hand." said CCA Texas Executive Director, Robby Byers. "Their hard work on this project well as their unyielding drive to protect Texas' natural resources and the people that enjoy them show a dedication in which all CCA Texas members can take pride."

The cabin will be anchored just south of the Land Cut in Kennedy County and will provide a central location for wardens to patrol Willacy, Kleberg and Cameron counties where the Lower Laguna Madre is located.

"This cabin will allow wardens to patrol the Lower Laguna for extended periods of time, save money on fuel, and will increase the amount of time wardens will have to provide public awareness of their presence on these waters. They will also be able to react in a more quickly in case of emergencies." said Byers. "The Lower Laguna will be a safer place for all who enjoy it thanks to the presence of the wardens."

What's Good for the Geese...

It may be time for something completely different in federal fisheries management

By Ted Venker
CCA Communications Director

Industrial harvest of wildlife resources is a concept so foreign to Americans that a large percentage of the public would probably assume the practice no longer goes on anywhere in this country. Indeed, the very idea seems as much a part of history as grainy images of buffalo hunters in the Old West.

States began to eliminate the commercial exploitation of wild resources beginning early in the 19th century. The federal government stepped in to prevent the commercial harvest of ducks, geese and buffalo. The commercial take of deer, elk, quail, pheasant, wild turkeys, bass, sturgeon and trout was eliminated in favor of conservation and providing increased public access to public resources. As an unexpected but welcome bonus, governments quickly realized that doing so brought the highest economic return in the form of revenue and taxes.

Ultimately, the decision to outlaw the industrial harvest of wildlife was driven by a simple truth – commercial activity places a dollar value on a wild animal which all too

often drives harvest past sustainable levels. Fortunately, such commercial harvest was recognized as an unsustainable activity and relegated to a historical footnote in this country many decades ago.

With one glaring exception.

The lessons learned on land and in our nation's freshwaters so many years ago were somehow forgotten when it came to industrial harvest of marine resources. Governments that recognized the inevitable downward spiral associated with commercial harvest of ducks, bison or native trout were somehow unwilling or unable to recognize the same factors at work in the oceans.

The conservation movement championed by Teddy Roosevelt and embraced by millions of hunters and freshwater anglers was stopped at the ocean's edge, where a federal agency once officially labeled the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries was given sole authority to manage wild resources for the maximum benefit of commercial harvesters.

To be fair, it was once thought that the ocean's resources were limitless, that man was incapable of harming marine fisheries. That belief, widely held and often repeated by commercial advocates even in the late 20th century, was shattered by the collapse of stock after stock, including New England groundfish, billfish, striped bass and red drum.

There has been no policy at the state or federal level to perpetuate the commercial exploitation of freshwater fish or terrestrial game since the 1800s, yet saltwater anglers still find themselves grappling with federal policies intended to support economically marginal commercial fleets that use remarkably destructive gear to harvest increasingly stressed marine resources.

The incredible disparity between management of land-based wild resources and those in the marine environment was the reason for the creation of Coastal Conservation Association (CCA).

For more than 30 years, CCA has attempted to implement actions to improve the health of the nation's marine fisheries resources, much like duck hunters (be sure to read *The Pioneers of Wildlife Management* in the July/August issue of TIDE) and trout fishermen have done so successfully for their inland resources. In many cases, CCA has focused on state fisheries and targeted the elimination of harmful gear, including gillnets, fish traps and longlines. Our members have also successfully promoted conservation through the use of gamefish designations for a number of species in different states.

Such concentrated effort in state waters has resulted in a significant curtailment of commercial fisheries, an increase in abundance of the resources and significant economic benefits to the states.

It has been a different story in federal waters, where the government has historically encouraged the exploitation of marine resources, supporting existing commercial fisheries while encouraging the development of new ones. Millions of federal dollars have been spent to subsidize economically marginal fisheries that could not survive in the free market, even if the cost of such support exceeds the value of the product landed.

The management concepts that have worked so well on land and, to large extent, in state waters are strangely ignored by federal managers. Instead, managers turn to ploys such as individual fishing quotas (IFQs), bailouts in the guise of "disaster relief" for commercial fishermen and processors, partial buyouts of fisheries, cooperative research programs used to support commercial fisheries, static allocations based on outdated catch data, and a mulish insistence on exploiting the resource at maximum harvest levels.

Such efforts to sustain commercial fisheries have consistently failed, and offer little promise at a time when the U.S. population is moving to coastal areas in droves and significantly increasing its use of the oceans and marine resources. At a time when more people than ever are looking to the oceans for recreation, federal philosophy is to lock-in antiquated and inefficient allocations to the commercial sector.

CCA has traditionally pushed for policies that would enhance the management and the health of fisheries. In many cases we have accepted and even promoted stringent regulations in order to bring about the recovery of a species out of the belief that if the fish stocks are healthy, everyone will benefit. That philosophy works on a level playing field. However, it has become increasingly apparent that the playing field is not level. It has become increasingly apparent that recreational anglers need a new philosophy for wild resource management.

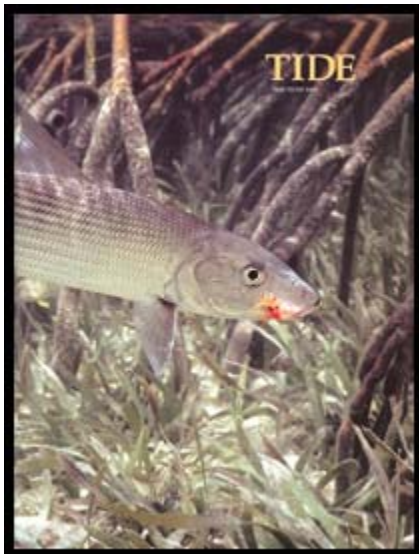
Saltwater anglers need to adopt the management concepts that were embraced on land more than a century ago. The sportsman's ethic that is so prevalent in terrestrial wildlife management should be fostered in federal marine fisheries management as well.

Anglers must engage in an extensive public education campaign, build effective coalitions, reduce the commercial fishery, expand our abilities to initiate research and science, and embrace the use of economics to determine the impact of various federal management decisions on recreational fisheries.

No change in federal policy is likely to result in the elimination of commercial fishing in the United States, nor eliminate the consumption of seafood by US consumers. However, fisheries managers must seek to utilize limited marine resources in a manner that provides the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people.

The current chaos of federal fisheries management is simply proof that it is time to bring the conservation ethic that has governed terrestrial resource management since the 19th century to marine resource management in the 21st century. The trail has already been blazed by men like Teddy Roosevelt, J. N. "Ding" Darling and Aldo Leopold. Federal managers just need to follow it.

***Look for the May/June issue of TIDE magazine,
in the mail now.***



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