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Tuna Tournament - TBD

Tournament Rain Date - TBD

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In Memory of Randy Minix, Gibbstown, NJ
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JCAA NEWSPAPER FEBRUARY 2025

Official Newspaper of the *JERSEY COAST ANGLERS' ASSOCIATION*

(Published on January 25th, 2025)

"WORKING FOR MARINE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS"

JCAA REGULAR MEETING

February 25th, 2025, 7:30pm

Jersey Coast Shark Anglers Building
385 Herbertsville Rd, Brick, NJ 08724

or via Zoom, for link contact:

tothjohn@verizon.net or mtsport64@aol.com

NEXT JCAA BOARD MEETING

Thursday, February 13th

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOC.

PO Box 1191, Wall Branch Post Office
Wall, NJ 07719

Phone 732-506-6565 Fax 732-506-6975

Publisher Tom Fote, Editor Paul Turi

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.**  
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2024 OFFICERS

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| President | Mark Taylor | 732-245-9445 |
| 1st V.P. | Stephen Machalaba | 908-588-1426 |
| 2nd V.P. | Don Marantz | 908-347-1434 |
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| Mem. Sec. | John Toth | 732-656-0139 |

Committee and Chairpersons listed on last page

IMPORTANT DATES

January 28th JCAA General Meeting

February 13th JCAA Board Meeting

February 25th JCAA General Meeting

February 26th-March 2nd Atlantic City Boat Show

March 13th JCAA Board Meeting

March 14th-16th NJ Saltwater Fishing Expo

March 26th JCAA General Meeting

President's Report

By Mark Taylor

As the new year starts, JCAA The first JCAA General Membership Meeting of YR2025 is **January 28th**, at the Jersey Coast Shark Anglers (JCSA) / Riviera Beach Boat Club (RBBC) 385 Herbertsville Rd., Brick, NJ 08724. The meetings will start at 7:30pm and it is important that the member clubs have their representatives attend. This year is going to be very frustrating with all the changes with fishery management which would affect recreational fishing. Starting with the ASMFC – Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board Meeting, which was held back on December 16, 2024, to set the regulations for both Commercial and Recreational for 2025. I mentioned in the last newsletter that JCAA's Striped Bass Committee will be reviewing all the data from that ASMFC meeting as well as other sources that are available and will be meetings to discuss it. The JCAA committee will be meeting in early February. Representatives of member clubs that are interested in attending must contact chairperson Paul Haertel. If you are interested in being on the committee, contact Paul Haertel (732) 943-8201 or anglerpmh@aol.com.

On another extremely import topic for the recreational community. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission ASMFC is accepting public comment on the Recreational Measures Setting Process for Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass. This action considers changes to the process used by the Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to set recreational management

measures (bag, size and season limits) for bluefish, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass. There will be a public hearing (webinar only) for NJ and CT held on Tuesday, **January 28th**, 2025 (6 p.m. - 8 p.m.). To register for this meeting, [click here](#), and be sure to select January 28, 2025 from the drop down menu.

- Additional information is available in the [ASMFC news release](#), including how to submit written comments (due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on February 15, 2025).
- [Draft document for public comment](#)

If you have any additional questions, you can contact New Jersey's ASMFC Representatives: Joseph Cimino - joseph.cimino@dep.nj.gov, (609) 748-2020; Jeff Kaelin - jkaelin@lundsfish.com (207) 266-0440; Senator Vin Gopal - sengopal@njleg.org (732) 695-3371.

The NJDEP Fish and Wildlife had an advisory meeting on January 22, 2025, to "preview" of the Recreational Measures Setting Process for Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Black Seabass and Scup document. We all need to do our research (homework) because there is a lot of information to absorb and understand that will have major consequences to the recreational community. Everyone needs to get involved and participate in the process. If you do not, there is no one else you cannot blame yourself when things are passed with which you do not agree.

At the January 28th JCAA general membership meeting it is important to have a club representative attend. We have elections of officers of this Association which will lead us throughout the year of 2025. These Officers will be the ones that need your help to make this association stronger and more efficient.

Introductory Fisheries Science for Stakeholders (IFISSH) Course for 2025:

It is not too late to register for the Introductory Fisheries Science for Stakeholders (IFISSH) course for 2025. The course starts February, for many of you that do not know, there are diverse ways you can educate yourself with topics that pertain to the marine environment. One fantastic way is the zoom online seminar course program that is ran by Douglas Zemeckis, Ph.D. who is the County Agent II (Associate Professor) of Marine Extension Agent for Ocean, Atlantic, and Monmouth Counties, County Extension Department Head (CEDH) - Ocean County. This program ran through the Cooperative Extension of Ocean County

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station - Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The course is called Introductory Fisheries Science for Stakeholders (IFISSH) course for 2025. It is on Tuesday evenings (6:30 - 9:00 PM) from February 4 – April 8. Each night has a different remarkably interesting topic. They are Course Introduction and Fisheries Biology, Fisheries Biology, Fisheries Oceanography and Atmospheric Science, Climate Change Impacts on Fish and Fisheries, Fisheries-Independent Data, Fisheries-Dependent Data, Social and Economic Issues in Fisheries, Introduction to Stock Assessments, Fisheries Management and Offshore Wind Energy and Fisheries. There is a minimum cost of \$40, but the wealth of information from scientists is well worth it. If you have any questions, then please contact me via email or phone (732) 349-1152, or contact Dina Baudo (Administrative Assistant, RCE of Ocean County: dbaudo@co.ocean.nj.us or call (732) 349-1152).

Show Season:

JCAA will have done our first event of 2025 on January 25th at Resorts Hotel and Casino, Atlantic City, NJ. This event is the most informative seminar worth every penny to attend, which is the **Saltwater Sportsman National Seminar Series**. The next will be the **Atlantic City Boat Show** February 26th – March 2nd (Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, NJ) **Saltwater Fishing Expo** March 14th – 16th (New Jersey Convention and Exposition Center, Edison, NJ). We need volunteers to work at the booths. I am asking the clubs to ask their membership if anyone would volunteer their time. I am looking for individuals to volunteer 4-hour shifts for JCAA at the booth promoting JCAA which is your Association. I will be emailing the show schedules with time slots that need to be filled. By volunteering a shift, JCAA pays for your entry into the show for that day. These shows are important to be at, talk to individuals that fish in our waters and keep them informed. For anyone that can volunteer, please contact me at (732) 245-9445. I would like to get the list of volunteers done early. The volunteers will be selling 2025 JCAA High Roller Raffle Tickets at each of the shows. If you cannot volunteer at one of the shows you can support JCAA by purchasing a book or two.

Get Involved, unite as a community so the future of recreational fishing as we know it will not be gone.

JCAA is always looking for more individuals to get more involved with JCAA at all diverse levels. Let me know if you are interested at (732) 245-9445.

Important Information: The Next General Membership Meeting is scheduled for **February 25th** at 7:30pm, held in person at 385 Herbertsville Rd., Brick, NJ 08724 with a zoom meeting invite (Hybrid Meeting).

Fisheries Management & Legislative Report

By Tom Fote

Striped Bass and What Happens Next

Last month's issue covered the ongoing issue of Striped Bass and trying to work together and getting rid of nastiness discourse that takes place on the internet. Someone sent me an article by John McMurray about the ongoing proposed closures and what is happening with the striped bass stocks. I've known John since he was a partner with an acquaintance of mine and he started chartering in Raritan Bay. John and I have worked together on striped bass. We have known one another for about 35 years. We have worked together, sometimes in agreement, sometimes disagreeing. But both of us have looked for the protection of striped bass. I read this article, and I realized that John and I are in agreement about a majority of the issues impacting striped bass. We both realize that the problem has nothing to do with the size of the striped bass biomass. We both understand that there are issues in the Chesapeake Bay including environmental issues, issues with invasive species and climate change.

I am directly quoting the last paragraph of John's article because that represents the key agreement that we must all share. *"In the meantime, if we want a striper fishery at all, we must figure out a path together, one that ensures there are plenty of fish in the water for us to target and that we have reasonable, sustainable access to them. Without sport fishing, we lose the people who care most about the resource. And, at that point, it's real trouble for striped bass."* Please read the whole article. There is much there we should be discussing.

I would suggest a path forward. We need to work together to get the new President and Congress to

appropriate the necessary funds to look at the real issues around poor recruitment of striped bass. That will take time and money. I have been talking about hatcheries as a shorter-term solution. Read the past two issues of the JCAA newspaper for more information about the history with hatcheries and striped bass. This would only confront the immediate problems of lack of recruitment. Because you raise the fish to 2 inches in the hatcheries, there is a better chance of survival in the wild. In my opinion, the males will not be suffering the same problems we see in other species because they are raised in a sterile environment without exposure to endocrine disruptors, PCBs and other chemicals during the crucial early development. It also prevents the blue catfish from gorging themselves on striped bass eggs and fry. The hatcheries control the water temperature and water quality during this early development. That is what I am suggesting. I am open to other suggestions as a path forward to deal with the recruitment issues. I would like for us to get together, share all the ideas we have and come to a consensus before we have another 5 years of poor recruitment. If you are interested in being part of a group looking for solutions and working together in a congenial manner, respecting all opinions and looking beyond the traditional approaches, contact me. I will be contacting people I have worked with in the past, but we certainly need new people as well.

A Bit of Striped Bass Management History

While I was writing this article, I was thinking of the meeting that forced us to begin to work together. In the early years it was easy since all of us were working together to rebuild the striped bass stocks. As I pointed out in the last few issues of the JCAA newspaper from the mid-80's until 1996 the striped bass fishermen along the coast who were working on rebuilding the stocks were working and meeting together face to face. This was a time that ASMFC was not holding all the board meetings in DC. We were often in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York to mention a few. When the striped bass board meetings were held striped bass advocates from ups and down the coast with has our own meetings at the board meetings. I worked with ASA and the Fisherman Magazine to help organize these meetings. People behave differently when they meet face to face. Much was accomplished. Most of the time the majority of us were in agreement about what to do about striped bass. We had seen the crash and we were hoping to bring the stocks back. Because we worked together, we were able to force the Federal Government to fund the hatcheries and the necessary

research to make the 90's a time when progress was seen. I can remember being at a striped bass board meeting on the day they actually talked about opening up the fishery. At that point the public or even the ASMFC Commissioners sitting in the audience weren't allowed to ask questions or make a statement. The meeting dragged on for hours and at about 9:00 Phil Coates who was the chairman of the committee said he would allow the public comment. They had been discussing opening the fishery at 34 inches along the coast and 24 in the bay. Al Goetz (ASMFC Governor's appointee from Maryland and MAMFC Member at that time) made me the spokesman since I was the kid. I said it is late at night. Please let us speak before you vote on this proposal. The next day the meeting opened up and a proposal was on the table for a 28-inch size limit on the coast and an 18-inch size limit in the bay. The motion was made and the vote was taken within 20 minutes. Three hours later, Phil Coates said do you want to say something now. I responded, "What is the point. You didn't want to listen to us before you voted so we need to go to Congress to correct this problem." Thankfully that is not the process now. We have public hearings, we have advisors, we have scoping hearings, final hearings for the public and then we vote in an open process when all the commissioners can make a comment. That is why I fight for the process. It took a long time to get to this process and I don't want to lose the access.

ASMFC and MAFMC Scoping Hearings on Sector Separation

Below is an article about the joint hearings on part of the recreational reform initiative. JCAA has long been against sector separation. Historically the NJ charter boats have also opposed this initiative. You might ask why? When you properly set up sector separation between charter boats, party boats, private boats and surf fishermen, it creates all kinds of problems and requires much better recreational catch information than is already available coastwide. In order to do this properly you need to know what each sector is catching since you are going to set quotas for each sector based on historical catch. Then you need a mechanism to keep each sector with their own quotas. This sounds good on paper but let's look at this realistically. Because this is usually set up when stocks are depressed, party and charter boats get a small percentage of the catch. They are targeting species their customers can catch rather than just relying on the species in the sector separation. When the stocks grow,

if they do come back, the party and charter boats will be stuck remaining with the small percentage of quota. Then the competition begins. We will be pitting one sector against another for the available amount of fish. There is also a law enforcement issue if any group begins to hide their actual catch. There is also the possibility that state directors will use this information to stop management measures they don't like. That is what happened with efforts to make striped bass a gamefish along the coast. We need to keep the recreational community together working to rebuild the stocks and not pitting one sector against another. In this present atmosphere, that would be toxic.

No-Targeting Closures a Real Threat for Striped Bass Fishermen

by Capt. John McMurray, January 15, 2025

Link: OnTheWater.com

While there has been a lot going on with striped bass management over the last few years, I've only been tangentially involved. I no longer have a seat at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) table, and I'm no longer associated with any fisheries advocacy group.

For the most part, that's intentional. The politics, the failure to communicate nuance, and the level of hate that occurs on both sides of the aisle is uncomfortable. But the biggest reason I'm no longer directly involved with managing striped bass is that I'm spending all my time catching them rather than talking about them. Because the fishing has been really good. This fall was arguably the best I've ever seen on the South Shore of Long Island. I said that last year and the year before, too. It just keeps getting better.

Does that mean all is well in the world of striped bass? No, it doesn't. Not at all. However, the reality of the striped bass fishery is complicated.

Striped Bass are Overfished but Rebuilding

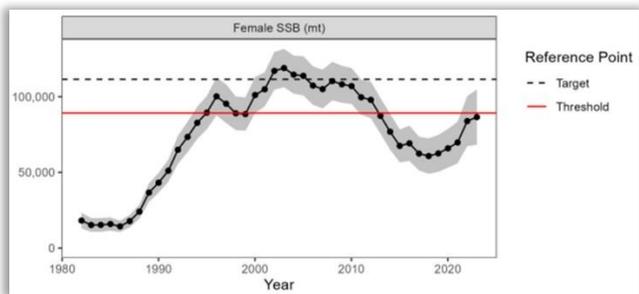
Striped bass aren't endangered. No reputable scientist would say they are. Are they in trouble, given recent consecutive years of poor recruitment (the number of juvenile fish entering the population)? Unfortunately, yes. Yet there are a lot of fish in some regions during certain times of the year. The fishing isn't so hot in some places—the Chesapeake being the glaring example—but, overall, it's hard to ignore that there are more striped bass around than we've seen in quite some time.

There are at least five good year-classes moving along the coast right now (2003, 2011, 2014, 2015, and 2018), and even a few 2000/2001s still around. A constraining slot limit (28" to less than 31") is limiting recreational harvest. Fishing mortality, a measure of the fish removed from the population by fishing activity, is estimated to be at a 30-year low.

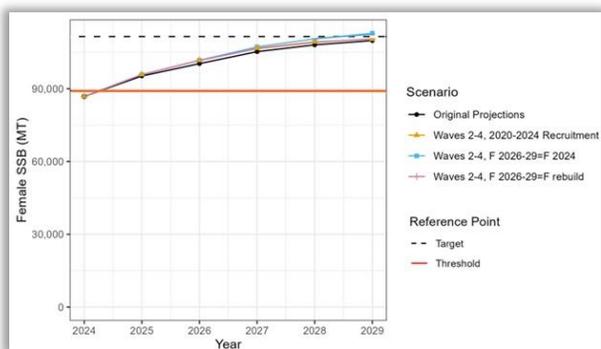
The striped stock is increasing and rebuilding. Projections show that in 2025, the spawning stock biomass (the total weight of all female striped bass mature enough to reproduce) will reach the rebuilt level of 1995. In other words, we're close to the same spawning stock biomass of 1995, which was when striped bass were previously declared rebuilt after the stock declined in the 1980s.

However, the management plan defines the spawning stock biomass target as 25% higher than that level and requires that we reach the target by 2029. So, managers are under the gun to get striped bass spawning stock biomass to that level by 2029—a level that we've seen in only four years out of the past 40.

It's reasonable to believe that the target may be too high. After all, it is an empirical reference point based on achieving 125% of the 1995 level. But, right now, 125% of the 1995 spawning stock biomass is the target, and the ASMFC remains committed to achieving that goal.



Striped bass female spawning stock biomass estimates through 2023 plotted with the respective target and threshold reference points. The shaded area indicates 95% confidence intervals of the estimates.



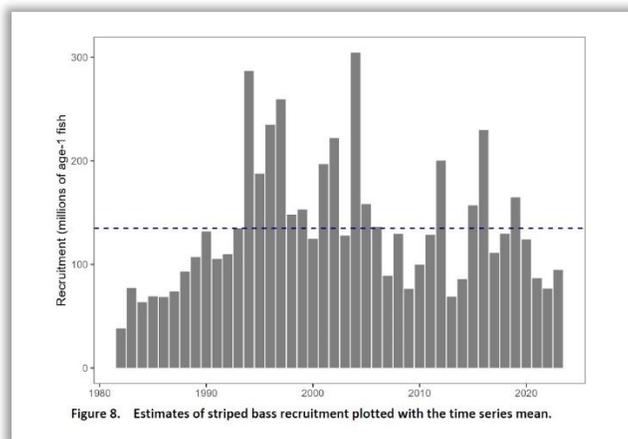
Female spawning stock biomass rebuilding projection scenarios from 2024 to 2029 (rebuilding deadline) under different future assumptions about fishing mortality and low recruitment.

Chesapeake Bay Recruitment Failure is a Concern

Around 80% of coastal striped bass come from the massive Chesapeake Bay watershed. There are smaller producer areas (i.e., the Hudson and Delaware) that can add to the Chesapeake, but they can't replace it.

The last six years of recruitment in the Chesapeake were bad. In fact, we haven't seen that sort of recruitment failure since the 80s. Today, when spawning stock biomass is far higher than it was in the 80s, Mother Nature has returned some of the worst recruitment.

The science is clear that unfavorable environmental conditions are the cause of poor recruitment. While it makes sense to preserve spawning-age fish for when we are blessed with more favorable environmental conditions, we should also understand that significantly lower levels of spawning stock biomass have resulted in strong year-classes. In other words, a higher abundance of spawning females will not fix the recruitment problems in the Chesapeake.



Six of the last seven year-classes since 2015 have been below average, although generally not as low as the levels seen in the 1980s; the 2018 year-class was above average (Figure 8). The below-average 2022 and 2023 recruits will start contributing to female SSB in 2029 and 2030 as those fish approach full maturity.

Recreational Fishermen Account for 90% of Total Removals

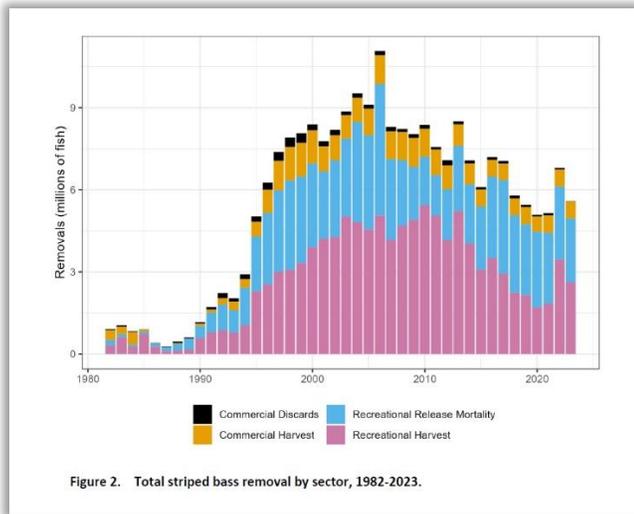
With continued poor recruitment and a biomass target to reach, we are likely facing seasonal closures in the future, which has led to finger pointing.

Some anglers point at commercial fishing. However, commercial striped bass landings make up about 10% of total removals, and commercial fishermen are tightly managed with quotas, timely reporting, and penalties for overages.

Some people seem intent on pointing the finger at the charter/party-boat fleet. According to the data, they account for even less landings than the commercial fishery.

Who contributes the most to striped bass fishing mortality? It's the recreational fishery, and it isn't only people who keep fish. In fact, about 45% of total removals comes from recreational harvest, while another 45% results from catch-and-release fishing. (It's estimated that 9% of released striped bass do not survive, and when you multiply that across recreational fishing effort, it adds up.)

The problem is that while harvest can be controlled by size and bag limits, there are no good management tools to regulate catch-and-release mortality other than telling people they cannot fish for striped bass. These "no-targeting closures" would clearly be bad for anglers and businesses that depend on striped bass fishing.



From 2022 to 2023, recreational release mortality made up 40% of total removals, with recreational harvest making up 49%, commercial harvest making up 10%, and commercial discards making up 0.5% of the total.

Commissioners are Shifting Focus to Release Mortality

From a practical perspective, no-targeting closures should be a non-starter because they are unenforceable. People can simply claim that they're targeting a different species. Guides and charter captains will be hurt the most because we must comply. Even if I chose to be non-compliant, I couldn't advertise striper fishing trips or promote good fishing on social media to drive business.

Yet, no-targeting closures are gaining momentum as a management tool. The argument about unenforceability does not seem to be gaining traction,

especially since some states have no-targeting closures in place within spring spawning areas, and the entire ocean beyond 3 nautical miles is a striped bass no-targeting closure.

Furthermore, if catch-and-release mortality is tallying up approximately 45% of all dead fish, is it fair to ask only those who harvest fish to take on the burden of constraining regulations through a reduced bag limit, narrow slot, and no-harvest closures? While I hate to admit it, it isn't.

So, I understand why some commissioners are pushing no-targeting closures and why others seem to agree with them. And, frankly, that's scary.

Closures Gained Traction at Recent Striped Bass Board Meeting

In December 2024, the Striped Bass Board met to review updated stock projections and decide whether to change regulations for 2025 since more than one projection suggested that the probability of achieving the spawning stock biomass target by 2029 was below 50%. (Note: there was also a projection that indicated the probability was above 50%.)

However, to achieve a reduction in fishing mortality that might bring us to a 50% probability under most of the projections, commissioners were looking at severe options to constrain the fishery, including no-targeting closures.

The meeting made it clear that seasonal closures, particularly no-targeting closures, are a big decision point. Most commissioners seemed to believe it was a decision that should be vetted through a thorough addendum process rather than rushed under Board action for 2025.

By going through an addendum process, commissioners would have complete 2024 catch data and better information to make decisions that carry such gravity for all stakeholders. Still, there were a lot of folks who said it was just another excuse to delay action and "kick the can."

I don't see it that way. For the time being, there isn't a catastrophic threat to the stock. Is no action in 2025 taking on more risk and perhaps jeopardizing meeting the rebuilding target by 2029? Maybe, but the alternative we were looking at may have been untenable.

I think striper fishermen dodged a bullet. Should no-targeting closures get traction, and they certainly had some at that meeting, it'll be awfully hard to stop the momentum.

The Addendum Process is an Opportunity to Move Forward

Fishery managers/commissioners are smart, competent people trying to navigate incredibly difficult and complex decisions. To imply they're just a bunch of hacks or accuse them of being spineless and caving to industry shows a lack of understanding about who these people are and what they do.

Currently, the ASMFC is proceeding with caution on striped bass, as they should. As this addendum develops, there will be more contentious debate. My advice is to get your information from more than one source, do as much research as you can, and take the time to understand the tradeoffs related to each decision.

The striper stock is a public resource, and no single stakeholder has a greater right to it than another. It's clear the ASMFC intends to balance the needs of all user groups. So, be careful what you wish for. Rather than no-targeting closures, I'd prefer a slightly lower, science-based target, but that isn't even an option until the peer-reviewed benchmark stock assessment is conducted in 2027.

In the meantime, if we want a striper fishery at all, we must figure out a path together, one that ensures there are plenty of fish in the water for us to target and that we have reasonable, sustainable access to them.

Without sport fishing, we lose the people who care most about the resource. And, at that point, it's real trouble for striped bass.

Capt. McMurray is the owner of One More Cast Charters in Oceanside, NY and former president of the American Saltwater Guides Association. He served three terms on the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council and six years as NY's legislative proxy at ASMFC.

Scoping Hearings Begin on Sector Separation under part of the Ongoing Recreational Reform Initiative

ASA Release, Mike Waine

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission begins scoping a recreational sector separation and catch accounting amendment this winter. This issue is part of the ongoing [recreational reform initiative](#) in the region.

The sector separation amendment will consider options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from other recreational fishing modes (referred to as sector separation).

Options will likely include separate bag, size and/or season limits for the for hire and shore modes. There is also the possibility for separate ACLs and allocations, but that is not currently preferred given ongoing limitations of the recreational catch data across all modes.

The Amendment will also look at options related to recreational catch accounting, such as private angler reporting and enhanced vessel trip report requirements.

ASA will stay involved and engaged as this amendment develops. It is currently in the scoping phase with planned development throughout 2025.

ASMFC Releases Recreational Measures Setting Process Draft Addenda for Public Comment

Tuesday, January 28

Webinar Hearing

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection and Connecticut Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection. The webinar registration link is [available here](#), and additional webinar instructions are below. Joseph Cimino (NJ) 609.748.2020 Matthew Gates (CT) 860.876.4393

Link: [News Release](#)

ASMFC Preliminary Agenda 2025 Winter Meeting

February 4-5, 2025

The agenda is subject to change. Bulleted items represent the anticipated major issues to be discussed or acted upon at the meeting. The final agenda will include additional items and may revise the bulleted items provided below. The agenda reflects the current estimate of time required for scheduled Board meetings. The Commission may adjust this agenda in accordance with the actual duration of Board meetings. Interested parties should anticipate Boards starting earlier or later than indicated herein.

Tuesday, February 4

9 – 10:30 a.m. American Lobster Management Board

- Progress Update on American Lobster Benchmark Stock Assessment
- Jonah Crab Data update
- Lobster Conservation Management Team Reports for Areas 2 and 3 (respond if necessary)

10:45 a.m. – Noon Spiny Dogfish Management Board

- Consider Draft Addendum VII to Reduce Sturgeon Bycatch for Final Approval
- Set 2025/2026 Specifications

Noon – 1 p.m. Lunch Break

1 – 2:30 p.m. Horseshoe Crab Management Board

- Consider for Public Comment Draft Addendum IX on Multi-year Specifications for Male Only Harvest of Delaware Bay-origin Horseshoe Crabs
- Review Adaptive Resource Management Subcommittee Recommendations Regarding Input on Changes to Reward/Utility Functions
- Review and Populate Advisory Panel Membership
- Elect Vice-Chair

2:45 – 4:45 p.m. Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board

- Discuss Stock Assessment Schedule
- Review Timing of 2027 Benchmark Stock Assessment and Board Discussion on Whether to Conduct 2026 Assessment Update
- Board Guidance on Scope of Draft Addendum III for 2026 Measures

Wednesday, February 5

8 – 10 a.m. Executive Committee

- Review White Paper on Board Voting and Virtual Meeting Standard Operating Practices and Procedures
- Future Annual Meetings

President Biden's Ban on Oil and Gas Drilling is 'Victory' for NJ, says Environmentalist

by Amanda Oglesby, Asbury Park Press, 1/7/25

An order in the final weeks of Joe Biden's presidency has indefinitely banned oil and gas drilling along the coast of New Jersey, as well as much of the coastal United States.

New Jersey environmentalists and politicians praised the move on Monday, hours after Biden issued a Presidential Memorandum that prohibits future drilling across millions of acres of ocean floor along the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The memorandum also blocks drilling in parts of the Gulf Coast and Alaska within the outer continental shelf.

"My decision reflects what coastal communities, businesses, and beachgoers have known for a long time: that drilling off these coasts could cause irreversible damage to places we hold dear and is unnecessary to meet our nation's energy needs," Biden said in a statement released by the White House on Monday. "It is not worth the risks."

Along the Atlantic Coast, the memorandum places restrictions across 334 million acres, from the Canadian border to Florida.

It marked a "monumental victory" for New Jersey's coastal environment, said Cindy Zipf, executive director of Clean Ocean Action, an environmental organization based in Long Branch.

"For over 40 years, Clean Ocean Action led New Jerseyans from all walks of life to call for an end to offshore drilling and today, with a stroke of President Biden's pen, it is done!" she wrote in a statement. "This marks the day we can finally retire all of those heartbreaking posters highlighting the horrific impacts from offshore drilling!"

But the ban may already be under threat, as President-elect Donald Trump promised to undo Biden's executive orders on Monday, calling them "costly and ridiculous." However, it's a promise that will not be easy to realize, says one congressman.

Prohibiting offshore drilling off New Jersey's coast has historically united New Jersey's Republicans and Democrats. Rep. Jeff Van Drew and Rep. Chris Smith, both Republicans who represent central and southern New Jersey, have in the past opposed efforts to explore and produce gas and oil off the Jersey Shore.

Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., a Democrat who represents portions of Monmouth and Middlesex counties, said his first bill when he entered Congress in the late 80s was one that banned oil and gas drilling along the Atlantic Coast, including off New Jersey.

"I think I was elected because people saw me as the defender of protecting the ocean," Pallone said during a news conference Monday, where he celebrated Biden's drilling ban.

"If you live along the Atlantic Coast or the other areas where this new protection will be in effect, you realize that your economy, your very well-being, could be seriously damaged by an oil spill," Pallone said. "There's no reason for anyone to believe that another spill like what happened with the BP (Deepwater Horizon) could not occur again if we had drilling in these waters off the Atlantic."

The explosion of the BP Deepwater Horizon rig in 2010 killed 11 workers and the resulting environmental disaster spilled millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The spill killed or sickened wildlife in its path and disrupted important Gulf Coast industries, like fishing and tourism.

A study by Virginia Tech in 2017 found the BP spill caused more than \$17 billion worth of damages to the region's natural resources.

Trump vows to reverse ban

But some in New Jersey's business sector see the federal drilling ban as harmful to the state's commercial interests and energy consumers.

"This action is a clear slap in the face to rate and taxpayers who made their voices heard in 2024 – they want more affordable domestic energy options, period," said Michael Makarski, spokesman for Affordable Energy for New Jersey, an organization that promotes inclusion of methane and natural gas into the state's pool of energy sources.

Makarski said Biden's memorandum amounted to "nothing more than political virtue signaling to ban something that isn't actually happening off the East Coast."

On Monday, President-elect Donald Trump said he would reverse the ban.

"Fear not," he wrote on his social media website TruthSocial.com. "These 'Orders' will all be terminated shortly, and we will become a Nation of Common Sense and Strength."

During his first term as president, Trump issued an executive order to expand oil and gas drilling within the outer continental shelf.

Trump will have a difficult time undoing Biden's drilling ban, said Pallone, noting a move by Trump during his first presidency to undo a measure by former President Barack Obama that banned oil and gas drilling in Alaska proved unsuccessful.

Pallone said Trump could urge Congress to abolish the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, which includes Biden's memorandum. However, the congressman did not believe the president-elect would find widespread support for the initiative.

Why is the outer continental shelf important?

New Jersey's coastline and outer continental shelf are "invaluable" natural resources and critical habitat for various marine and bird species, said Anjuli Ramos-Busot, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club, an environmental organization. The areas are also integral for New Jersey's coastal tourism businesses and fishing industry, she said.

"The Sierra Club has fought offshore drilling for decades for its harmful pollution to our water and air quality, and threats to coastal communities and economies," Ramos-Busot said in a statement. "Today's federal protections from the Biden Administration secure a safe, fossil-free future for our oceans and for next generations to enjoy."

In 2018, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bipartisan law that banned offshore oil and gas exploration and production in the state's coastal waters, which extend 3 nautical miles from shore. Federal waters extend farther into the ocean, or about 200 nautical miles from shore for economic activity.

The new Biden Administration ban on drilling will limit American's energy options, drive up prices and leave the nation more vulnerable, said Ray Cantor, deputy chief of government affairs for the New Jersey Business & Industry Association.

"The U.S. needs an all-of-the-above energy approach," Cantor said in a statement. "Without a mixed portfolio of energy sources, costs rise for customers and feasibility fails."

Amanda Oglesby is an Ocean County native who covers education and the environment. She has worked for the Press for more than 16 years. Reach her at @OglesbyAPP, aoglesby@gannettnj.com or 732-557-5701.

Silence is Acquiescence

By George Browne

The DEP has a proposal that will impose additional restrictions on public access to tidal waters for the protection of endangered species. The proposal can be read or downloaded from [this link](#).

You can also google: *Access Restriction to Tidal Waters for Endangered Species Protection Proposed New Rules: N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A*. Then click on the site titled - *NJDEP| Rules and Regulations / 20241216a - NJ.gov*.

A group of fishing clubs (JCAA included) is preparing comments to respond to the proposal. Comments are due to DEP by February 13th.

As this proposal is written, there are two areas that concern us. First, is the term, critical habitat area. That term is not found in the federal guidelines for managing endangered species and NJ does not have an official definition. That leaves critical habit area open to interpretation. Second is the term, anticipated use. Just as it reads, there is an expectation the area will be used by endangered species, but it does not require the species to be there, only that, based on past history, the species might show up. The DEP is proposing annual closures based on those two terms. Annual closures mean that regardless of the presence of endangered birds, there will be specific calendar dates for closures (i.e., April 1 to September 30).

These proposed closures will not only affect vehicular access but will close the beach to all access. No pedestrian access (you can't walk along the beach for any reason) and water access to the critical habitat area will be restricted as well.

The water access closure would include prohibiting access to the area between the beach's mean low tide line out into the water for 300 meters (almost 1,000 feet). That places many mudflats and shallow bay waters off limits anywhere the state determines (with no official definition) there is a critical habitat area. No wading, boating, clamming, or fishing in those areas and it will affect recreational clammers, crabbers and anglers.

In addition to affecting recreational anglers, the water access restriction would have a dramatic effect on the commercial fisheries in the bays. If it was anticipated endangered birds would use a critical habitat area on the bay, commercial anglers would be

prohibited from fishing, clamming, or crabbing within 300 meters of the mean low-water mark.

The State wants to see closures imposed if the birds are breeding, resting, and/or foraging. Yes, resting.

We oppose closures based on calendar dates as prescriptive dates do not serve all beach stakeholders' needs (including us).

We do support the current program that is performance based. The current program uses the following criteria for managing closures:

- The endangered species is present at the beach or tidal marsh,
- There is a nest, and
- The birds have chicks.
- Once the chicks have fledged, the area is reopened.

Under no conditions should closures occur if the birds are not physically there for breeding and/or foraging.

You can submit written comments until the close of business February 14, 2025. You can submit your comments at [this link](#). Each comment should be identified by the applicable N.J.A.C. citation (Proposed New Rules: N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A), with the commenter's name and affiliation following the comment.

If you want to mail your comments here is the address:

Stephanie J. Press, Esq.
Attn: DEP Docket Number: 13-24-11
Office of Legal Affairs
Department of Environmental Protection
401 East State Street, 7th Floor
Mail Code 401-04L
PO Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Striped Bass Hearing Shock!

By Stephen Machalaba

I was listening to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting webinar regarding proposed changes to the Striped Bass Management Plan under "Emergency Action" on December 16, 2024. Shortly after the meeting resumed following a lunch break, a heard a statement from one of the member state's representatives that was so shocking, I could not

believe what I was hearing. I wish I had the ability to play it back to hear it again at that time, to confirm what I had just heard. Of course, I couldn't but I confirmed it later. This shocking statement was New Jersey's Governor's Appointee, Jeff Kaelin, making a motion to ***Decrease the reduction to the commercial Striped Bass Quota.*** The question is, whose interests is Mr. Kaelin looking out for? Obviously, it is not the recreational Striped Bass Fisherman of New Jersey; Perhaps it is the commercial Striped Bass Fisherman from other states that have a commercial Striped Bass fishery and are interested in taking New Jersey's commercial Striper Bass quota, if this becomes possible. JCAA have always supported an equal reduction of both our quotas when a reduction is necessary. Mr. Kaelin, who works for Lund Fisheries, one of the largest commercial fishing companies in the country, was appointed to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in 2023, by Governor Murphy. He replaced Tom Fote, who represented New Jersey on the Commission for approximately 30 years, vigorously striving to represent both New Jersey's recreational anglers and commercial fisherman and did so successfully during his tenure.

Given Mr. Kaelin's employer and background, this was a concern of recreational anglers in New Jersey when his appointment was announced. These concerns have shown themselves since this only motion I heard him make at any of the fishery management meetings I have participated in.

Also surprising, New Jersey's Administrative representative, Joseph Cimino, NJDEP Marine Resources Administrator voted in support of this motion. It should be questioned as to why he voted to support Mr. Kaelin's motion. Fortunately, the motion failed. The final vote of the Commissioners was to take ***No Action*** on changes to the Striped Bass Management Plan for 2025 under Emergency Action. New Jersey's recreational Striped Bass anglers owe a large debt of gratitude to New Jersey's Legislative Commissioner (proxy) Captain Adam Nowasky, for his statements that led to the vote to Take No Action.

New Jersey's recreational Striped Bass anglers now look to the next struggle, which is the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board now looking to impose proposed changes via the Amendment Process. The problem and issue with these proposed management changes, is they are not based upon the most current and correct data and seek to address the concern of possibly not meeting the Striped Bass Stock

Management Plan Target without addressing the reasons causing poor recruitment in the sampling area, specifically Chesapeake Bay.

New Jersey needs all of its commissioners to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to represent the recreational saltwater anglers and commercial fisherman of New Jersey, who also vote, in regard to the management of all saltwater species; Not other states commercial fisherman. At present, this does not seem to be the case and needs to change!

JCAA Membership Report

By John Toth

We have been having been experiencing difficulty receiving mail at our JCAA office and I did not want to mail any invoices to clubs until this issue was resolved. We have opened a new post office box at a nearby post office where all JCAA mail will be delivered. Here is the new mailing address:

**Jersey Coast Anglers Association
PO Box 1191, Wall Branch Post Office
Wall, NJ 07719**

Also, new JCAA raffle books are in the process of being printed and these raffle books are enclosed when we mail JCAA invoices to clubs. Expect to receive your club membership renewals during February.

Our next JCAA Membership meeting will be held on **January 28th** at the Jersey Coast Shark Anglers Building in Herbertsville starting at 7:30 p.m. and also available by ZOOM.

Youth Education Report

By Greg Kucharewski

JCAA YOUTH EDUCATION

It's show season. Look for our JCAA booth at hunting and fishing expos. Stop by the JCAA booth and learn about how you can help protect recreational fishing. Become a member, volunteer or an associate member to support the voice of recreational anglers. Is recreational marine fishing getting better or worse? Let us know so we can do something about making saltwater fishing better for the future of fishing.

Become a JCAA associate member today. Join from [this link](#) or [download form here](#).

New this year! The Governor's Surf Tournament Committee will hold a virtual meeting for High School Teams to discuss rules and answer any questions. The virtual meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 12, 2025, time to be determined. This meeting is MANDATORY for advisors to attend.

The Jersey Coast Anglers Youth Education Committee is encouraging high school students to participate in the Island Beach State Park 34th Annual Surf Fishing Tournament. High school teams are already gearing up for the tournament. Five students per team plus a high school representative must accompany each high school team. If you know a school team that would like to register for this event, please email Karen Byrne at: karen.byrne@dep.nj.gov.

Please visit the JCAA Website for updates and don't forget to [register](#) for free with the NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program.



Visit the NJ Hooked on Fishing not on Drugs [website](#) to view instructor training opportunities, NJ county leader groups, and youth fishing opportunities. (Scroll down to see youth fishing photos.)

34TH ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S SURF FISHING TOURNAMENT

Get ready to enter the largest surf fishing tournament along the Jersey Shore. Don't miss a day of family fishing fun! Pick up a brochure about the tournament at Island Beach State Park or at your favorite tackle dealer. Remember admission to the park is FREE for the tournament. This year the Governor's Surf Fishing tournament is scheduled for Sunday, May 18, 2025. Veterans that register must check the veteran box to win the veterans category. The veteran who wins will be asked to prove their veteran status by showing a government issued ID or copy of DD 214. For, early

registration, [click here](#). Early registration will end April 19, 2025.



TAKE A VETERAN FISHING

Veterans wishing to learn about fishing can contact our 2025 veteran Play HOOK-e fishing instructors. We are passing the information along to our Play HOOK-e instructors. If you would like to learn more about our fishing programs, please contact Karen Noe at (732) 245-2751. Pictured below are some of our Play HOOK-e instructors.



Left to right: Kevin Nolan, American Warrior Outdoors; Don Marantz, JCAA; Jim Vinciquiera, Naval Weapon Station Earle Pier Volunteer; Karen Noe, Play HOOK-e Veteran Women Fishing Instructor; George Browne, Island Beach State Park Volunteer Instructor; Tim Burden, Play HOOK-e/Jersey Shore Surfcasters Volunteer Instructor, and Gary Conk, New Jersey Beach Buggy Volunteer Instructor. Not present: Paul Huwett, American Warrior Outdoors; Sean Moley, Naval Weapon Station Earle Veteran and Active-Duty Military Fishing Instructor

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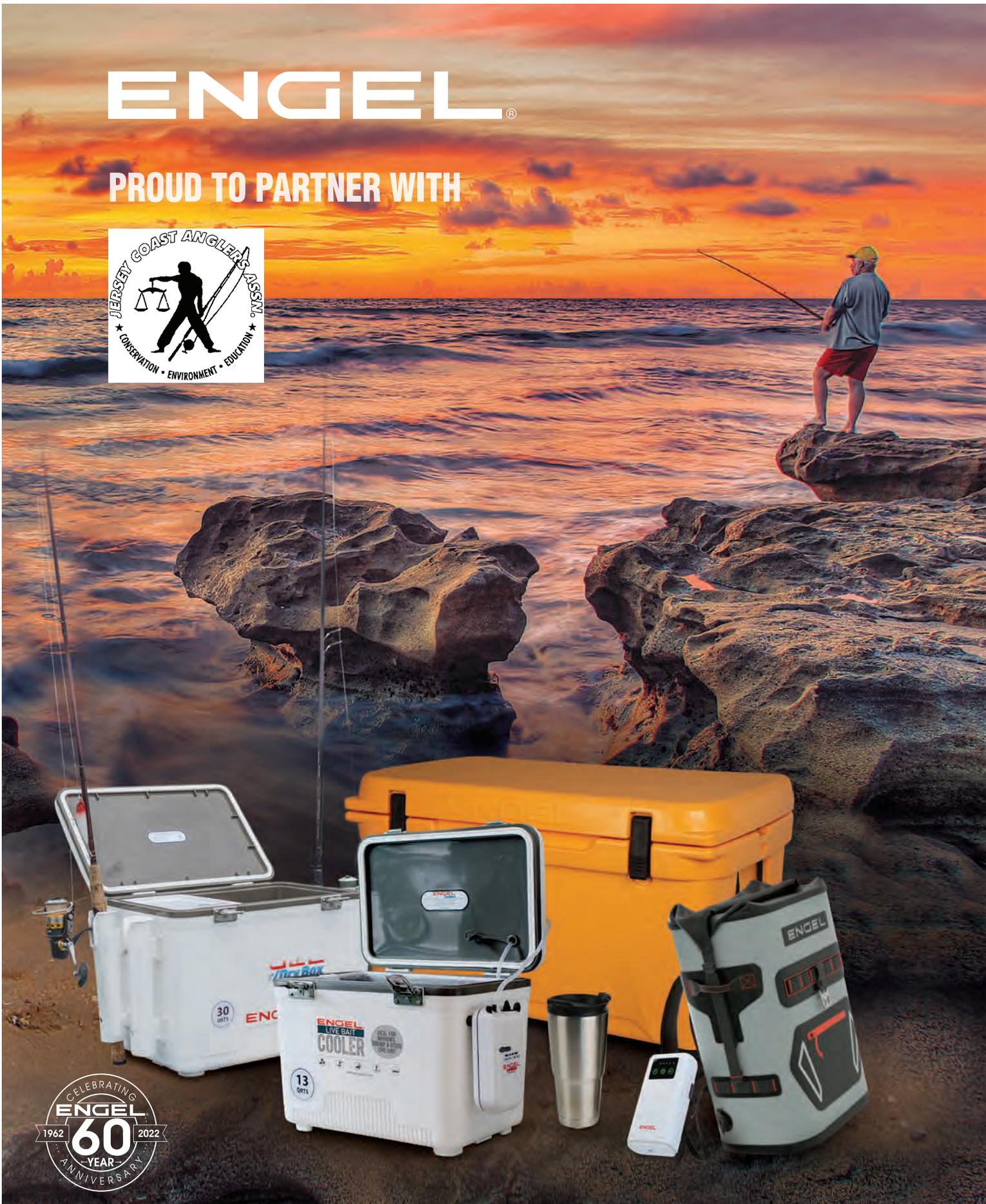
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| | | |
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| Legislative | Tom Fote | 732-270-9102 |
| Operations Manager | | |
| Office Manager | Karen Noe | jcaa@jcaa.org |
| Fluke Tournament | | |
| Access (North) | Paul Novello | 609-203-4812 |
| Access (Cntrl+South) | Greg O'Connel | 609-204-0220 |
| Blackfish | Pat Donnelly | 732-295-1755 |
| Blue Claw Crab | | |
| Bluefish | Al Marantz | 732-859-0020 |
| Habitat | Pat Donnelly | 732-295-1755 |
| Large Pelagic | | |
| Forage Species | Capt Paul Eidman | |
| Striped Bass | Paul Haertel | 973-943-8201 |
| Science & Research | Bruce Freeman | 732-793-7871 |
| Website | Philip V. Celmer | jcaa@jcaa.org |
| Youth Education | Greg Kucharewski | 732-840-9197 |

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Become a JCAA sponsor and help our cause. As you can see by our newspaper many of our member clubs are also JCAA sponsors. If your club is not contact us today to become one. With all the new battles we are engaged in, we need to raise more funds in order to be effective. Become a sponsor now and help us to continue the fight.

If you would like to receive JCAA Email alerts email your Name, Club, if you belong to one, and your interest to tfote@jcaa.org or just go to the JCAA site and [subscribe](#) from there.

Meetings:
1st Tuesday
of month
7:30 PM

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for info



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