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JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION

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September 2025

JCAA Annual Sportsperson-of-the-Year Dinner

Saturday, November 8th



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Jersey Coast Shark Anglers

2025 Tournament Schedule

Spring Striper Fever: May 10-17

Fluke Fever: July 19

Arrowhead Inn Fluke Tournament: Aug. 23

Fall Striper Fever: Nov. 1-8

Bluefin Fever: TBD

For information go to www.jcsa.org

(p) 201.836.2100 x2118

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NJ 07666

sandel@otterstedt.com
www.otterstedt.com

Charles (Chuck) Santoro
Insurance Specialist



Forked River Tuna Club 2025 Tournament Schedule

War at the Shore Meeting - TBD

Ladies Catch of the Day - July 12

Bi-Club Fluke Tournament - TDB

Tuna Tournament - TBD

Tournament Rain Date - TBD

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In Memory of Bruce Wagner
West Orange Anglers, West Orange, NJ, (793) 669-6799



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www.FISHHAWKSNJ.com

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New Jersey Beach Buggy Association

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Buggy Membership Info: Ken Hollins 732-814-7021

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PO Box 513, Manasquan, NJ 08736

Meetings held first Friday of the month at 7:30pm

Manasquan Woman's Club, 62 Main Street

www.manasquanfishingclub.com

JCAA NEWSPAPER SEPTEMBER 2025

Official Newspaper of the *JERSEY COAST ANGLERS' ASSOCIATION*

(Published on August 25th, 2025)

"WORKING FOR MARINE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS"

JCAA REGULAR MEETING

September 30th, 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, September 11th

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 (732) 245-9445 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
Treasurer	Doug Tegeder	732-575-2661
Rec. Sec.	Karen Noe	732-245-2751
Cors. Sec.		
Mem. Sec.	John Toth	732-656-0139

Committee and Chairpersons listed on last page

IMPORTANT DATES

September 11th JCAA Board Meeting

September 30th JCAA General Meeting

November 8th JCAA Sportsperson Dinner

JCAA Sportsperson of the Year Dinner

By John Toth

Save the date! Our **Sportsperson of the Year Dinner** is going to be held on **Saturday evening on November 8th**. Once again, the dinner will be held starting at **5:00 p.m.** at the **Captain's Inn** located at 304 E Lacey Rd., Forked River, NJ. This is a dinner you don't want to miss, just ask anyone who has attended over the last three years what they thought of it. It's going to be a great event again this year. This sit-down dinner starts at 5 PM with Cocktail hour. Appetizers will include bacon wrapped scallops, mini crab cakes, calamari and pigs in the blanket. A cheese and cracker platter along with bruschetta and toast will also be placed at each table. That will be followed by a dinner beginning with a house salad and stuffed shells with vodka sauce. Then you will have your choice of 4 entrees, prime rib, a broiled seafood combo, chicken marsala and pecan salmon. All entrees will come with potatoes and vegetables. Finally, dessert will consist of Tartufo & mini pastries. Coffee, tea and soda are also included. There will be a cash bar.

We will have approximately **50 Door Prizes, 60 Tricky Tray** prizes, and silent auctions along with a huge 50/50 for the lucky winner. We will have a lot of really nice prizes including some for the ladies. We are requesting that our member clubs and individuals donate something for our raffle and/or our silent auction, or perhaps a bottle for our basket of cheer or even tackle that you have not used but is still in great shape. To make a donation, please contact **Don Marantz** at (908) 347-1434. Tickets are \$100 per person. **John Toth** will be handling the ticket sales as well as the seating arrangements this year. John can be

reached at tothjohn@verizon.net or at (732) 656-0139. Or Mickey Sherry at marcandiori@gmail.com or (732) 421-6668.

The price for the dinner is **\$100 per person** to keep pace with the rising cost of food. This dinner is a fundraiser for the JCAA for it to continue protecting the rights of all anglers who fish in New Jersey.

Also, there are 4 entrees to choose from and please ask your members which of these entrees they want to have as their dinner selection. Please provide me with this information so that I can pass it on to the Captain's Inn so that they can know how much food to prepare for each entrée.

Nominations for the Sportsman of the Year will be made at the JCAA's General Membership Meeting on September 30th. Start **NOW** to think of who from your club should be nominated to receive this prestigious award!

When writing up your nomination, please do not write several pages for it. Present your nomination in just a few paragraphs and focus on the major points about why your club member should receive the award. When we meet in September to hear your nomination, the reading of a few paragraphs will make your nomination easier to comprehend to our membership than reading several pages of it.

JCAA Hi-Roller Raffle

By Mark Taylor

Congratulations to all the winners of the **2025 JCAA High Roller Raffle**. We extend our sincere gratitude to all the anglers who supported JCAA through this fundraiser. It was a pleasure engaging with attendees at each event where raffle tickets were sold. The drawing took place at the Toms River Knights of Columbus #4969 Building, 113 Tennyson Ave., Toms River, NJ 08753, on July 10th at 7:30pm.

All winners have been contacted and are in the process of receiving their prizes. For those to whom I had the opportunity to personally deliver prizes, we enjoyed meaningful discussions about fishing. A future article will have pictures of the winners.

2025 JCAA High Roller Raffle Results Drawing Date July 10, 2025, at 7:30pm

1. **Lara DeLorenzo-Sims** – Jersey Nutz Six Man Charter (6-hour, 6-man inshore weekday charter) –

\$1200, Donated by Captains Robert and Cody Melton

2. **Ronica Jones** – 7'4" Shimano Curado Rod/Shimano TPXD Reel Combo – **\$660**, Donated by JCAA
3. **Steve Olsen** – \$500 Gift Certificate from Fisherman's Headquarters – **\$500**, Donated by Fisherman's Headquarters
4. **Lisa Dawe** – 7' Penn Battle III LE / Penn Spinfisher VI 2500 Reel Combo – **\$235**, Donated by Atlantic Bait & Tackle
5. **Kevin York** – 7' Shimano Rod / Montauk Cerebus CER210 Reel Combo – **\$230**, Donated by JCAA
6. **Tom Tomasulo** – 7' Penn Spinfisher Rod / Penn 6500LL Reel Combo – **\$215**, Donated by Penn Fishing

President's Report

By Mark Taylor

I hope everyone is having an enjoyable and successful fishing season so far. As you all know there were no General Membership Meetings held in July and August. The meeting on **September 30th** at 7:30pm is going to be an important one. I will be having it in-person and by zoom. Please make every effort to attend. You will be voting for the 2025 JCAA Sportsman of the Year.

The ASMFC has held several meetings, as noted in the previous newsletter. Readers are encouraged to stay updated on proposals for upcoming seasons. While agreement among all stakeholders may not always occur, ongoing engagement is vital. The **2025 ASMFC Summer Meeting took place August 5–7**. An ASMFC advisors' meeting is also expected at the end of August before the next phase. The **Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met August 11–14**, and the **Ecological Reference Points Benchmark Assessment Peer Review is set for August 12–15, 2025**. More details about these meetings can be found in this publication.

The 2025 JCAA High Roller Raffle was drawn on July 10th at the Toms River Knights of Columbus Council #4969 Facility, 113 Tennyson Ave, Toms River, NJ 08753. I reached out to all the winners personally and they were incredibly surprised they won. I am in the process of getting their prizes to each of them. I would like to thank each and every one of

you who continue to support JCAA. I will have an more detail article in this newsletter with all the lucky winners' names and our dedicated supports that donated the prizes for this year's High Roller Raffle.

Coming up on **November 8th** is an event you do not want to miss. This outstanding event is the **Annual JCAA Sportsperson of the Year Dinner**. It will be held at the Captain's Inn in Forked River. The is an event where a dedicated individual is honored for being selected as 2025 JCAA Sportsperson of the Year. Club's needs to provide the nominee's name and electronic summary of five hundred words detailing why your nominee deserves selection. These submissions should be sent to Tom Fote at tfote@jcaa.org. Nominees that were submitted prior to the deadline for this newsletter will be published, all others will be sent to club representatives as JCAA gets them. The club will need to discuss these with their club members who their club will vote on at the JCAA General Membership Meeting held on September 30th. For more details and ticket information read Chairperson John Toth's article. JCAA also honors another dedicated individual that night for the prestigious Youth Education Award. For this award, all electronic submission for this needs to be sent to Greg Kucharewski at gkucharews@aol.com.

Recreational clubs or individuals interested in saltwater fishing can contact JCAA Membership Secretary John Toth at (732) 656-0138 or tothjohn@verizon.net for information. Member clubs that have not submitted current details and dues should also reach out. Updated information is vital for meeting notifications and fishery alerts.

For those passionate about supporting their local fishing community, the importance of staying informed and engaged cannot be overstated. Whether through attending meetings, volunteering at events, or discussing pressing issues with peers, every effort contributes to preserving the vibrancy of the recreational fishing scene. Organizations such as JCAA play a pivotal role in advocating for regulatory measures and resource management that directly affect the angling experience. By fostering community unity and participation, anglers can collectively address challenges and ensure the future of this cherished activity. Contact me at (732) 245-9445 or via email at mtsport64@aol.com.

*Join the Community, Share Your Concerns, and
Protect Recreational Fishing's Future*

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

Striped Bass Seasons Likely to be Established in 2026

By Paul Haertel

On Wednesday, 8/7/25, the ASMFC's Striped Bass Board discussed Draft Addendum III to Amendment VII regarding striped bass. After over five hours of deliberation, a few changes to the document were made and the final addendum will be released for public comment in late August. The dates for public comment have not yet been established, but once the document is released public comments will probably be accepted until early October. The Board will meet again in October to decide which options in the addendum will become mandated.

The Board intends to restore our striper stocks by 2029. In order to do that, further restrictions will be required. At their meeting, the board voted in favor of including a 12% reduction in mortality in the addendum which would give the stocks a 50% chance of being rebuilt by 2029. They voted to remove the option for an 18% reduction that would have given them a 60% chance. By an 8-6 vote, the option for a 0% reduction for the commercial sector was also removed from the addendum. Surprisingly though, NJ voted against the motion to remove that option, despite the fact that we do not allow commercial fishing for stripers in our state. Our bonus bass program's quota is derived from our old commercial quota but we only harvest a small fraction. Therefore, our state seemingly is in favor of putting all the burden of rebuilding our stocks on the recreational fishermen.

Since we already have a very narrow slot of 28-31" for stripers in the ocean, about the only thing that can be done to reduce mortality is to establish seasons. The big questions that will be answered in October is when the closures will be and whether they will include no targeting. We are probably looking at a closure of at least a month if no targeting is included. If the C&R is allowed to continue the closure will be significantly longer than a month. C&R mortality accounts for 40-50% of the total removals each year, so it seems that the C&R guys should not get a free pass. All striper fishermen should have to chip in to rebuild our stocks.

However, where possible, any no targeting closures should occur when there are other species to fish for. We certainly don't want to hurt the local tackle stores that depend on striped fishermen when there is little else to fish for.

There are a number of other options that will be considered as well including regulations for Chesapeake Bay, special regulations for the for-hire fleet, a standard way to measure striped bass and tagging at the point of harvest for commercial fishermen.

Bruce Franklin was Right about Menhaden. The Science Finally Proves It.

By Capt. Paul Eidman

A world-leading fisheries scientist now backs Franklin's case with hard data. That's what we should be talking about.

H. Bruce Franklin was a dear friend of mine. He passed away last year. So, when I read Charles Witek's recent column dismissing Franklin's *The Most Important Fish in the Sea* by dredging up decades-old political activism and painting him as a "radical," I was more than disappointed — I was appalled.



Bruce Franklin and Paul Eidman

You don't win an ecological argument by attacking someone's résumé or political history, especially when that person is no longer here to respond. You win it with

science. And on the science, Franklin's warnings have now been vindicated.

The Man Witek Ignores: Dr. Jerald Ault

If Witek truly believed in "good science and good data," he'd be talking about **Dr. Jerald Ault**, Professor Emeritus of Fishery Management Science at the University of Miami — not Franklin's time as a Stanford professor in the 1970s.

Ault's credentials are unimpeachable: 30+ years developing stock assessment methods, peer-reviewed publications in the world's top fisheries journals, and international recognition for his **Length-Based Risk Analysis** as the top-performing method for data-limited fisheries.

Franklin's Predictions, Ault's Proof

In 2007, Franklin warned that industrial menhaden fishing would:

- Harm predator populations.
- Create ecosystem imbalances.
- Rely on flawed stock assessments that overestimated population health.

In 2025, Ault's research confirms:

- **Atlantic menhaden are likely overfished.**
- **Striped bass are both overfished and experiencing overfishing.**
- Current stock assessments may **overestimate biomass by up to 400%.**
- The ASMFC has been forced to adopt **ecosystem-based management** — exactly what Franklin called for.

This isn't nostalgia for a late friend's work. It's peer-reviewed science proving that he was right.

The Mississippi Study Misses the Point

Witek leans heavily on a University of Southern Mississippi study showing Gulf predators eat a variety of prey. That's hardly news to anyone who's cut open a striped bass, bluefish, or weakfish. But the study is about the **Gulf** — a completely different ecosystem.

Franklin's book was about **Atlantic** menhaden and their central role in that ecosystem's productivity. Ault's work isn't about "what's in a fish's stomach

today” — it’s about population risk and the systemic collapse that follows when a keystone forage species is overfished.

The Real Irony

Witek dismisses Franklin because he had an English degree. But when one of the world’s leading fisheries scientists backs Franklin’s conclusions with hard math, suddenly credentials don’t seem to matter. That’s not science — that’s selective hearing.



Time to Focus on What Matters

We can debate how to manage menhaden. But let’s do it based on data, not personal attacks. Franklin deserves better than to be caricatured in death, and the science — from Dr. Ault and others — demands we stop treating this as an abstract fight.

The health of our fisheries depends on it.



Capt. Paul Eidman is the Forage Fish Committee chair for JCAA and the founder of [Menhaden Defenders](http://MenhadenDefenders.org), a non-profit organization with focus on Menhaden conservation.

Fisheries Management & Legislative Report

By Tom Fote

Blue Catfish Destroying the Resource

I think it is important that you have information about what we are dealing with. Because Virginia stocked blue catfish back in the ‘70s and ‘80s, we have imperiled the Chesapeake Bay blue claw population, striped bass population and probably many forage species. The stocking in Virginia has led to blue catfish in Delaware Bay and River.

Just last month, bipartisan legislation was introduced to address the growing phenomenon of the invasive blue catfish which has threatened ecosystems in Virginia and Maryland waters - including the Chesapeake Bay. Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01) and Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth (MD-03) introduced the Mitigation Action & Watermen Support (MAWS) Act which, if passed, would establish a pilot program administered by NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office to provide grants to pet food companies to purchase blue catfish caught by local fishermen. The law would also instruct NOAA to collect data on the impacts of this program on the biodiversity of the Bay and health of fish and crustacean populations. Additional cosponsors of the MAWS Act include Congresswoman Jen Kiggans (VA-02) and Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD-05). It would set up how other states like Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania that have this invasive species in their waters can also deal with this issue.

I have been dealing with striped bass issues and Chesapeake Bay since the early eighties. My involvement with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and my role as the New Jersey Commissioner spanned most of the years from 1991 until I retired in 2023 was dealing with the rebuilding of the striped bass stocks. The latest problem in the bay is the poor recruitment of striped bass and other native species that provides the needed ecosystem that the striped bass needs.

This is a start, albeit a challenging one, to address one of the problems in the Chesapeake Bay. While this is far from the only issue we need to tackle. Acting now this issue is crucial as the first step in dealing with one of the problems. We must also address

water quality and climate change issues that are wreaking havoc with all the native fish species of Chesapeake Bay and all the estuaries on the east coast. We need to explore real solutions to improve water quality and reduce pollution, which impedes the production of young striped bass in the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware and Hudson River stocks. Climate change and the warming of the oceans has caused major problems for the last 50 years. Species that were abundant in New Jersey's water were disappearing and we were managing fisheries ignoring the real reasons. Climate change and endocrine disruptors were a major part of the problem and now we realize it. These two are major problems with all the fisheries no matter what they are. I have enclosed Ryan Lockwood full article in the newspaper on blue cats.

Below, I have enclosed the full legislative press release on the bill as well as Ryan Lockwood's and Andrew Lewis' full articles from 2024. Read the below articles and write your Congressional delegation and ask them to support the blue catfish bill. JCAA will be reaching out to our legislators and want you to do so as well. While as individuals we cannot solve the problem of climate change or pollution, this is something we can do to make a difference.

Striped Bass ASMFC is Holding Hearing on Addendum 3

There will be public hearings on Addendum 3. As of the printing of this newspaper we don't have the New Jersey dates. The meeting was close to 6 hours long. I was allowed 2 minutes in the beginning to make comments about the blue catfish. There were two other people who spoke less than a minute each during the public comment period about the disastrous pollution and health of the Chesapeake Bay. Luckily the public got to comment 6 minutes in the beginning because the remainder of the 6 hours, only 4 members of the public were allowed to speak, two minutes each. That is less than 20 minutes total of public comment in a 6-hour meeting. There was no further opportunity for public comment before the votes. Since there had been no public hearings before this meeting, there should have been more opportunities for the public to comment. The Board Chairperson did not go to the public to get their opinions. This should always happen when they are drafting an amendment to go to public hearing. You wonder why the public feels they are not included. This just offers more proof. It was only during the public comment periods that we discussed the real issues that are impacting the health of the stocks and recruitment.

The next 6 hours were spent on how we reduce the recreational and commercial catch. We know that reducing the recreational and commercial catch will not solve the problem since we have been doing that for at least the last 10 years without an improvement in recruitment. What they should have done was spend 6 hours discussing how we correct the real problems (climate change, pollution, endocrine disruptors and blue catfish). In my two minutes I discussed the federal legislation to create a pilot program to deal with blue catfish. I was hoping I would have a chance to tell the commissioners to go back to their states with a mandate to support the federal legislation. I know the Commission feels helpless since these issues are beyond the scope of their authority. It doesn't help that the federal government and NOAA, because of the direction of the President, has taken climate change out of every opportunity for discussion at any agency.

Sector Separation Discussion of ASMFC Policy Board & MAFMC

There was a meeting during the Joint Meeting to discuss working on the proposed plan for sector separation in the recreational community. When you do sector separation in the commercial community, you give quotas to the particular harvesters of that quota based on history or the best data available. As an example, that is what they did in the bait industry on menhaden. They established the history of the reduction boats in relation to the bait harvesters and used that information to split the quota. That was a disaster because they gave the quotas that belonged to many reduction boats in different states all to Virginia instead of retiring them. The bait industry got a small quota. What do they do in the recreational sector when they try to decide the difference between charter and party boats? When Maryland did that in state waters many years ago, they gave 15% to party and charter boats and split the rest between the commercial and private recreational community. Claiming that the recreational data is so flawed that they can't do this for the recreational community, they decided to bypass the rules of sector separation. But this data seems to them to be good enough to cut the quotas. They decide they can ignore the data when it shows that we should be catching more black seabass and scup. It seems the common recreational fisherman is always getting the short end of the stick. A perfect example is what they did on blue fish at this meeting. I will explain that under blue fish. Rules are rules and they should not be ignored.

Bluefish Joint Meeting of ASMFC & MAFMC

They didn't want to give us the increase the data suggested we should have. In 2019, they never went to public hearings with the sector separation and didn't produce any data to support their decision. It was an arbitrary decision again not based on any data. Now in 2025, they are going to increase out catch of bluefish. Instead of raising both sectors equally, which they could have done, they decided to go with a 5/7 split, 5 for private boats and private fishermen and 7 for party and charter boats. Again, not producing any science to support their numbers. That is why I can't support sector separation because that will result in quotas and bag limits within the recreational community based on who has more members on the council and commission. This will only create a division in the recreational community and will lead to us fighting among ourselves instead of speaking with one voice. We should have all demanded 10 fish as the data would have supported that. Or at least there should have been public hearings or other opportunities for public input. I had my hand up, but I was ignored. Someone mentioned that at one meeting I had my hand up for 40 minutes and at another for an hour but only got to speak for 4 minutes.

Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass

There were Joint Meetings of the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Boards. The public participation was again severely limited. It seems when it is a commercial issue to be decided there is much debate and more public input. But when it is recreational measures being discussed, they don't want to hear from the public. When I was a commissioner, my anglers would complain that I didn't want to listen to their comments before making a decision. As I pointed out, I always made sure comments were heard from both the commercial and recreational communities. You need to put pressure on your commissioners to do the same. As usual, on black seabass and scup, they admit we are 200% above the target but the increase was very small. Just a way for them to say they did something. This is what is putting the charter and party boats, tackle stores, marinas and recreational anglers in distress. We are losing recreational anglers, we are making less trips and there is nothing to fish for at certain times of year. They have not dealt with the economic impact. When they look at the commercial, they look at how much they are getting per pound, and how to adjust the quota to support

maximum value. With the recreational sector, they have never considered the millions of dollars lost to the recreational industry based on their decisions. Considering economic impact is required but they always say they have the best available data that they can afford. Nothing has changed.

Atlantic Striped Bass Board Approves Addendum III for Public Comment

Press Release, August 6, 2025

Draft Addendum Considers Further Fishery Reductions

Arlington, VA – The Commission's Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board approved for public comment Draft Addendum III to Amendment 7 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. The Draft Addendum considers management measures to support rebuilding the stock by 2029. The Draft Addendum will also address requirements for commercial tagging programs, a coastwide definition of total length for size limit regulations, and changes to the Maryland recreational season baseline.

The Board initiated the Draft Addendum in response to stock projections indicating a low probability of meeting the 2029 stock rebuilding deadline. The most recent stock projections estimate an increase in fishing mortality in 2025 due to the above average 2018 year-class entering the current recreational ocean slot limit. There is also concern about the lack of strong year-classes behind the 2018 year-class.

This proposed action is intended to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by reducing fishery removals by 12% with management measures implemented in 2026. For the commercial fishery, the Draft Addendum proposes a commercial quota reduction. For the recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum considers season closures and/or size limit changes. For Maryland's Chesapeake Bay recreational fishery, the Draft Addendum also proposes changing the recreational baseline season to simplify Maryland's Chesapeake Bay regulations, which could improve compliance and enforcement, and to re-align fishing access based on stakeholder input and release mortality rates.

For commercial tagging, the FMP currently allows states to choose whether to tag commercially harvested fish at the point of harvest or point of sale.

To address concerns that waiting to tag harvested fish until the point of sale could increase the risk of illegal harvest, the Draft Addendum considers requiring commercial tagging at the point of harvest or first point of landing intended to improve enforcement and compliance.

There is also concern that inconsistent methods of measuring the total length of striped bass for compliance with size limits undermines the intended conservation, consistency, and enforceability of the coastwide size limits. To address this, the Draft Addendum considers coastwide requirements for defining total length for both sectors.

The Draft Addendum will be posted to the website in late August at [this link](#). A subsequent press release will provide the details on the public hearing schedule and how to submit written comments. The Board will meet to review submitted comments and consider final action on the addendum in October 2025 at the Commission's Annual Meeting in Dewey Beach, DE.

For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Meeting Summary

In addition to approving Draft Addendum III for public comment, the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Board met to receive a report on the ten-year review of commercial tagging programs and consider the draft Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Review and state compliance for fishing year 2024.

The Board received a report on the ten-year review of the commercial tagging program. In August 2024, the Board tasked the Plan Review Team (PRT) with reviewing the striped bass commercial tagging program since it has been over a decade since program implementation through the FMP. The PRT and state commercial tagging contacts met in July 2025 to provide overviews of each state's tagging program, share information and best practices among states, discuss key observations across programs, and streamline reporting. A written report of those discussions is being developed in August 2025. The Board requested that the Law Enforcement Committee (LEC) meet prior to the 2025 Annual Meeting, if possible, to review the report and discuss any further LEC recommendations on point of tagging and potential improvements to state tagging programs.

Finally, the Board approved the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year and state

compliance reports. For more information, please contact Emilie Franke, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at efranke@asmfc.org or 703.842.0740.

Motions

Move to approve the Atlantic Striped Bass FMP Review for the 2024 fishing year and state compliance reports.

Motion made by Mr. Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion approved by unanimous consent

Move to remove the 18% reduction option in Section 3.4 (Option D & E)

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Ms. Meserve. Motion passes (13 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.4 Option C (0% commercial reduction and -14% recreational reduction).

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Sikorski. Motion pass (8 in favor, 6 opposed, 2 abstentions).

Main Motion

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the ocean.

Motion made by Mr. Gary and seconded by Mr. Gates. Motion amended.

Motion to Amend

Motion to amend to include "with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated" at the end of the sentence

Motion made by Mr. Nowalsky and seconded by Mr. Hasbrouck. Motion passes (9 in favor, 6 opposed, 1 null).

Main Motion as Amended

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the Ocean with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated

Motion passes (12 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 null).

Main Motion

Move to remove in Section 3.4 option B: options CB2, CB3, CB5.

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Clark.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to remove "CB3"

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Luisi. Motion passes (14 in favor, 2 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.4 option B: options CB2 and CB5.

Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Move to remove no-targeting closure options for the Chesapeake Bay with the assumption that striped bass only trips are eliminated

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Grout.
Motion passes (12 in favor, 4 opposed).

Move to add an option for tagging at first point of landing in Section 3.2

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Borden.
Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Main Motion

Move to remove in Section 3.3 Option D (25% uncertainty buffer for the Maryland season baseline).

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Clark.

Motion to Amend

Move to amend to add “and Option B (MD baseline with no buffer)” to the end of the sentence.

Motion made by Ms. Meserve and seconded by Mr. Grout.
Motion fails (4 in favor, 8 opposed, 4 abstentions).

Move to remove in Section 3.3 Option D (25% uncertainty buffer for the Maryland season baseline).

Motion made by Mr. Sikorski and seconded by Mr. Clark.
Motion passes (10 in favor, 3 opposed, 3 abstentions).

Move to approve Draft Addendum III for public comment as modified today.

Motion made by Mr. Clark and seconded by Mr. Luisi.
Motion passes by unanimous consent.

Wittman, Elfreth Introduce Legislation to Protect Chesapeake Bay from Invasive Blue Catfish

Press Release, July 8, 2025

WASHINGTON – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-01) joined Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth (MD-03) in introducing the *Mitigation Action & Watermen Support (MAWS) Act*, bipartisan legislation that will address invasive blue catfish and protect aquatic ecosystems throughout the Chesapeake Bay. Specifically, the *MAWS* Act would establish a pilot program within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Chesapeake Bay Office to facilitate a new market for blue catfish in the pet and animal food industry and instruct the NOAA to collect data on the

impacts of this program on the biodiversity of the Bay and health of fish and crustacean populations. Additional cosponsors of the *MAWS* Act include Congresswoman Jen Kiggans (VA-02) and Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD-05).

“Having grown up on the Chesapeake Bay, I understand how important it is to protect our marine wildlife and restore the Bay’s ecosystem,” **said Congressman Wittman**. “Since their introduction, blue catfish have become an invasive species, posing a growing threat to the biodiversity of the region’s waters and inflicting economic damage to the seafood industries that rely on the Bay. I am proud to join Representative Elfreth in introducing the *MAWS* Act, which will create a new market to incentivize the harvest and sale of blue catfish while providing valuable data for future efforts to combat invasive species in our waterways.”

“The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States, with more coastline across the Watershed than the entire coast of California. It is a pillar of our local economies through recreation, seafood, and tourism. The ecology and economy of the Bay are under threat by an invasive aquatic species - the blue catfish. I am introducing the bipartisan *MAWS* Act alongside co-lead Rep. Rob Wittman to take decisive action to address the damage inflicted by blue catfish in a way that strengthens the seafood economy and provides critical protein to pets nationwide,” **said Congresswoman Elfreth**.

Read the full bill text here:

Endorsements:

The bill is endorsed by the Pet Food Institute, American Feed Industry Association (AFIA), CITIZEN’S Pet Products, Virginia Marine Products Board, American Sportfishing Association, Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, Virginia Watermen’s Association, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Choose Clean Water Coalition, Chesapeake Bay Commission, National Aquarium, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and the Maryland Sea Grant.

“The Pet Food Institute (PFI), whose members make the vast majority of dog and cat food and treats in the U.S., is proud to endorse the *MAWS* Act, which establishes a pilot program enabling pet food makers to use Chesapeake Bay blue catfish as a high-quality ingredient in complete and balanced cat and dog food,”

said PFI's president and CEO, Dana Brooks. "PFI applauds Reps. Sarah Elfreth and Rob Wittman for introducing legislation that opens the door to a potential new pet food ingredient market while also offering local economic impact and environmental benefit."

"The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) is pleased to endorse the 'Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act of 2025' to encourage the commercial use of blue catfish harvested from the Chesapeake Bay, including use as a wholesome and nutritious ingredient in pet food." – **Leah Wilkinson, AFIA Chief Policy Officer**

"This is exactly the kind of policy that makes a lasting difference. The *MAWS* Act creates a clear path to address a significant environmental problem while giving pet parents the chance to make a meaningful choice — one that's good for pets, good for people, and good for the planet. I'm proud to support it." — **Aaron Merrell, CEO, CITIZEN'S Pet Products (Plato Pet Treats and Furry Republic)**

"Invasive blue catfish impact important recreational fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay, outcompeting and directly preying on species like striped bass," said **Mike Leonard, Vice President of Government Affairs at the American Sportfishing Association (ASA)**. "The *MAWS* Act helps to address this challenge, establishing an innovative program to encourage the harvest of these invasive species, while gathering data that will support fisheries management in the Bay. ASA thanks Representatives Elfreth and Wittman for their leadership of this bill, which could set a strong example for invasive species control nationwide."

"The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are my home waters, and I can personally attest to the changes in the Bay's fisheries in recent years due to various pressures on the resource, not the least of which is the invasive blue catfish," said **Jeff Crane, President and CEO of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation**. "We applaud Rep. Elfreth and Rep. Wittman for their leadership and their innovative proposal to address the growing population of this invasive species in the Bay."

"Blue catfish pose a clear and present danger to valuable native Bay species like blue crabs and striped bass. Finding and standing up new markets for this invasive species, like the pet and animal food industry, is essential to keeping its numbers in check. So is ensuring that it makes economic sense for watermen to catch them. The Mitigation Action & Watermen Support Act does both, which is why the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is pleased to support it," said **Keisha**

Sedlacek, Chesapeake Bay Foundation Federal Director. "We thank House Natural Resources Vice Chairman Rob Wittman and Vice Ranking Member Sarah Elfreth for their leadership and creative thinking on ways to control this dangerous predator threatening iconic Bay species and the people who make their living on them."

"The Choose Clean Water Coalition is pleased to support the *MAWS* Act, which will take a critical step in mitigating the damage caused by invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation is yet another example of an action that's positive for both the environment and local economy. Opening up new markets for blue catfish will provide an additional revenue stream for watermen while also addressing a growing threat to the health of the Bay's ecosystem. We want to thank Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth (D-MD) and Congressman Rob Wittman (R-VA) for introducing the *MAWS* Act and are looking forward to it progressing through Congress." – **said Choose Clean Water Coalition Director, Kristin Reilly**.

"Blue Catfish are a significant and unchecked threat to the Chesapeake Bay's major river systems, preying on iconic and economically important species like blue crabs, Atlantic menhaden, and striped bass" said **Anna Killius, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission**. "As apex predators, these non-native fish are rapidly expanding in population and range, putting our ecosystem and our coastal economies at risk. We need solutions like the *MAWS* Act that will put science and market-based solutions to work to control this growing threat and support those whose livelihoods depend on our native fisheries."

"The invasive blue catfish has spread throughout the Chesapeake Bay, harming our ecosystems and iconic native species including blue crab and rockfish," said **National Aquarium President and CEO John Racanelli**. "As an organization committed to saving wildlife and habitats, the National Aquarium encourages people to consume blue catfish, and we proudly serve it in our café. We also believe there is strong potential for blue catfish to contribute to healthy pet and animal diets and are investigating the possibility of incorporating it into the diet of animals in our care. The National Aquarium applauds this bipartisan legislation and its innovative approach to help create new markets, support watermen, and spur demand for greater consumption of invasive blue catfish."

“Invasive species can lead to the extinction of native species and reduced biodiversity,” said **Dan Ashe, president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums**. “We applaud Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth and Congressman Rob Wittman for their leadership. This bill would be a critical step forward in protecting native species and the commercial entities that rely on the Chesapeake Bay for their livelihoods.”

“We recognize the many challenges created by the population expansion of the invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Maryland Sea Grant supports science-informed action to address this difficult fishery issue and believes the proposed pilot project in the *MAWS* Act is an important step towards understanding and managing blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland Sea Grant is grateful for the opportunity to consider this legislation and the many issues around blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay.” – **Dr. Fredrika Moser, Director of the Maryland Sea Grant program**

Catfish in the Chesapeake are Gobbling Up Everything in It

*By Ryan Lockwood, TRCP.org
April 22, 2024*

This aquatic invasive species eats the striped bass, menhaden, and blue crabs so vital for the Bay’s health, recreational fishing, and economy

Great tasting: check. Will pull the rod from your hand: check. High chance of success: check.

It probably sounds like we’re talking about peak-season Gulf redfish or Long Island striped bass, but believe it or not, we’re talking about blue catfish – an incredibly resilient invasive species that is taking over the Chesapeake Bay’s waterways and harming important fisheries as it gobbles its way through them.

While native to middle America’s Mississippi and Ohio River watersheds, blue catfish are considered an aquatic invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay. Like other AIS threats around the country, their presence negatively impacts recreational fisheries, ecosystems, and economies. When TRCP and its partners [convened an AIS commission two years ago](#), we had harmful species just like this in mind.

As the largest species of catfish in North America, blue cats can exceed 100 pounds thanks to a voracious appetite, unmatched adaptability, and a

willingness to live just about anywhere and eat just about anything. So what are they doing in the Bay, and what can be done to blunt their impacts?



Photo Credit: Rocky Rice

Unforeseen Consequences

In the mid-1970s, the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries were overfished and highly polluted. In response, fisheries managers in Virginia decided they needed to stock a different type of fish – a hearty specimen that could handle the poor conditions, offer anglers a good fight, and provide nice table fare. They settled on blue catfish. An added benefit they saw to this freshwater species was that it wouldn’t be able to spread beyond the targeted rivers.

“They thought because they are river fish they wouldn’t tolerate the saltwater conditions in the Bay,” said **Dr. Noah Bressman, assistant professor in the Department of Biology at Salisbury University**. “But they were wrong.”

Managers initially released blue catfish into the James and Rappahannock rivers, but they have since spread widely throughout most of the upper Bay. Today, blue catfish can be found in every major tidal river in Maryland, and in some locations make up as much as 70 percent of the total biomass.

“As an apex predator, invasive blue catfish continue to impact the ecological balance of the Chesapeake Bay by competing with native species for [important forage species like menhaden and herring](#),” said **Dave Sikorski, executive director of Coastal Conservation Association Maryland**.



Photo Credit: Noah Bressman

Not a Picky Eater

Dr. Bressman is a top expert on invasive blue catfish, researching such areas as their primary diet, feeding behavior, and ecology in the Bay. His lab uses boat-based electrofishing with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to catch hundreds of thousands of blue catfish for research. What they've learned is that these generalistic, opportunistic omnivores—much like coyotes or cockroaches—will eat anything.



Photo Credit: AKZOphoto

Bressman's research has turned up a 47-pound catfish with a whole adult wood duck in its stomach, and a 30-inch catfish with a 19-inch striped bass inside. Blue catfish eat many millions of blue crabs per year, and readily gorge on white perch, menhaden, striped bass (also known in Maryland as rockfish), even turtles and muskrats and their own young. On the Eastern Shore, they also target other [important forage fish species – alewives and blueback herring](#). Tissue sampling evidence even suggests they are eating the eggs of striped bass, herring, and other fish, and as top

predators they also compete with sportfish for the same prey.

"People think of catfish as slow-moving bottom feeders," Bressman said. "But these are active predators. They eat anything and everything they can get their mouth around."

If You Can't Beat 'Em, Eat 'Em

Ask anyone, and they will tell you this problem is not going to go away. Bressman said that blue catfish are the most abundant fish, by biomass, in the rivers around the Bay. The problem has gotten so bad in the last couple decades that it's actually generated a growing commercial fishery.

"What started as me targeting striped bass and hard crabs, and only fishing for blue catfish in between, has now gotten reversed," said **Rocky Rice, owner and operator of Piccowaxen Creek Seafood**.

Rice has been commercially targeting blue catfish in the Potomac River for the last 12 years. He started fishing for these invasives merely to generate income in slow seasons, but now blue catfish are the main focus of his operation. Using primarily longlines and hoop pots, he targets fish in the best eating range of about 3 to 10 pounds.



Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program

And Rice is not alone. In 2022, commercial harvesters on the Potomac reported more than 3.1 million pounds of blue catfish landed, according to the Potomac River Fisheries Commission. This number far exceeds those for all other finfish species, except menhaden, harvested in the brackish river. By comparison, striped bass was the next highest fish species commercially landed at 428,000 pounds. And that's just in the Potomac.

Unlike striped bass, whose numbers have been trending lower for years, blue catfish populations are

practically impossible to eradicate, or even stunt. Rice says it's one reason he targets this invasive.

"Granted I'm a fisherman and I need to make money," Rice said. "But if I can minimize negative impacts on our native species also it's a win-win."

Dr. Bressman says just to keep the blue catfish population stable, fishermen must remove 15- to 30-million pounds of catfish from the Chesapeake Bay each year, and much more to reduce it. He asserts that without active human intervention, catfish could likely become the dominant predator in brackish portions of the Bay.



Photo Credit: Rocky Rice

Fun to Catch

So the best solution to keeping blue catfish populations in check, and to help protect native species, is one that offers real rewards: Go fishing. Blue cats are known for growing big, fighting hard, and tasting far better than most people expect. They're also fairly simple to coax a bite from, and in Maryland there's no catch limit.

If you've got a rod and reel, and willingness to target a different sort of fish, Rice says you can fish virtually anywhere in the brackish and fresh portions of the upper Bay. Dr. Bressman can back this up. In a previous tournament targeting blue cats, he fished from shore to pass the time while he waited for boats to come back in for weigh-ins. He had to stop one hour into the eight-hour tournament, and still almost won the shore fishing category with a half-dozen fish.

CCA Maryland, along with partners like Yamaha Rightwaters, is working to raise awareness with recreational anglers to help get them into the game. To target the threat of [aquatic invasive fish species in the state](#), they offer fishing tournaments and other events to help engage anglers. A good example is

the [Great Chesapeake Invasives Count](#), which launched April 1 and runs through March 31, 2025.



Photo Credit: Noah Bressman

"To combat this looming issue, and empower anglers to do their part, CCA Maryland is proud to partner with Fish & Hunt Maryland, Maryland DNR, Maryland's Best Seafood, and others to promote the opportunities for fishing that invasive catfish present, and support data collection efforts to help guide future management actions," said Sikorski.

Even Better to Eat

"These aren't your muddy-bottom catfish," Bressman said. "They eat things we like to eat and that makes them taste better than other catfish."

Bressman, Sikorski, and Rice all say they love dining on firm, flaky blue catfish filets, which taste quite similar to those of striped bass – largely because both species are active predators that compete for the same prey. The culinary value of this fish is catching on. Maryland's Best, a state-run program that connects consumers with locally sourced agricultural products, offers a [listing of 16 grocery stores and 24 restaurants](#) that sell wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish, to help support the state's watermen and fight this invasive.

"It makes no sense for someone to buy a catfish that comes from overseas, because we have a better quality product right here," Rice said. "We have to eat our way through this problem."

Rice says he personally likes to deep fry the white, flaky filets, but has broiled and blackened them too. He's even had blue catfish pot pie. He said their versatility and palatability is probably why chefs like these fish so much.



Photo Credit: Stephen McFadden

“I’ve fed it to a lot of my friends who’d said they didn’t like catfish,” he said, “and now that they’ve had it it’s one of their favorite foods.”

Do Your Part

If you do head out looking for blue catfish in the Bay area, be sure to share the photos and filets with family and friends – especially via online imagery – to help drum up interest. And whether or not you target these fish, if you ever catch one, be sure to not throw it back into the water alive (an exception being some parts of Virginia, where you need to be aware of a daily 20-fish creel limit and allowance for only one catfish over 32 inches).

Also important to note is that in some areas around the Chesapeake Bay, catfish – especially larger ones – along with other fish species like striped bass may have unsafe contaminant levels due to poor water quality. Avoid eating catfish over 30 inches long, remove the skin and fat when preparing, and keep up with each state’s fish consumption advisories like those for [Maryland](#), [Virginia](#), [Washington, D.C.](#), and [Delaware](#).

If you don’t want to catch or cook blue catfish, you can always support Bay-area businesses that offer locally sourced blue catfish filets. The bottom line is that dealing with blue catfish is an all-hands-on-deck situation, so the conservation community needs a lot of people working to tackle it in different ways.

“We need a cultural shift,” Bressman says.

“The more catfish you eat, the more striped bass and blue crabs will be in the Bay.”

Invasive Blue Catfish Threaten Marine Ecosystems in Delaware River Watershed

*By Andrew Lewis, NJ Spotlight News,
January 2, 2024*

Blue catfish vacuum up native species and are equally voracious when it comes to reproduction

“This is ground zero,” Mike Steiger, a fisheries biologist with Delaware’s Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, said one morning last month. Steiger was standing on a wooden walkway in the Russell Peterson Wildlife Refuge, looking over the steel-gray Christina River, a narrow tributary that twists through Wilmington, Del., and along I-95, eventually spilling into the Delaware River. “This is the first place we found them.”

That first find was a decade ago. In 2013, a recreational fisherman hooked an unfamiliar, 25-inch brute of a fish while casting into the Christina from a boat ramp in the town of Newport, about two miles from where Steiger now stood. The fisherman knew he had a catfish, but it didn’t look like a channel catfish, a common species in the Delaware River watershed. He snapped a photo and sent it off to the natural resources department.

The department forwarded the image to fishery biologists at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science who were quickly able to confirm that the fish in question was a blue catfish. The Christina “blue cat” was the first of its kind recorded in the watershed but it would not be the last. These days, Steiger and his counterparts in Pennsylvania and New Jersey are bracing for an invasion that has already upended marine ecosystems in Virginia and Maryland.

At first, the Christina blue catfish appeared to be an anomaly. The Delaware natural resources staff had put out an alert to Delaware anglers, asking them to notify the department of any other blue catfish encounters, but no additional reports surfaced for another five years. “For a long time, we wondered if someone had stocked this one fish here and that the fisherman just happened to catch it,” Steiger said.

How the blue catfish got in

But then, in 2018, during their annual gill-net surveys in the Delaware River, not far from the mouth of the Christina and adjacent to South Jersey’s Pennsville Township, Steiger and his colleagues hauled up more

[Learn about TRCP’s Aquatic Invasive Species Report here.](#)

blue catfish. The following year, Steiger finally got what he believes is the answer to the question of how the lone 2013 fish had made it into the Christina: That September, eight big blue catfish were caught in the C&D Canal, the manmade corridor connecting the Delaware Bay with the Chesapeake Bay.

The reports have poured in ever since. “I believe the northeast section of the Chesapeake Bay is feeding our infestation,” Steiger said.

Chris Smith, who oversees invasive aquatic species for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, agrees. “We don’t know for sure if the C&D Canal is directly where they came from,” Smith said. “But we can speculate that it’s the most likely pathway the blue cat took.”

Effect on ecosystem

“Invasive” is a tricky label. The channel catfish, which most New Jersey anglers would consider native, was in fact introduced in the state’s waters about a century ago. The largemouth bass, a beloved game species among freshwater fishermen, comes from the Mississippi River basin and the Southeast. At this point in history, when humans have so thoroughly and haphazardly scattered plants and animals across the globe, it is less about a species’ origin than it is about the impact it may have on its new ecosystem.

And blue catfish, Steiger said, “are big, angry, slimy, eating machines.”

In the 1970s, blue catfish — named for their silvery-blue hue — were stocked in Virginia to boost recreational fishing in the Rappahannock, York and James Rivers, whose ecosystems had been decimated by decades of pollution. Unlike the rivers’ native species, especially the shad and Atlantic sturgeon, blue catfish and other nonnative species, like the northern snakehead, thrive in the kind of low-oxygen environments that result from poor water quality.

Feasting on native species

Though they are native to the Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Rio Grande River basins, blue catfish have also proven to be tolerant of salty water. When they reached the mouths of the Rappahannock, York and James, they had the entire Chesapeake Bay before them. Year by year, they crept north, vacuuming up native species, like menhaden, shad, river herring and blue crab.

Steiger and Smith worry that mature blue catfish may also enjoy eating young Atlantic sturgeon, a particularly worrying preference in the Delaware

River and Bay, where fewer than 250 spawning adults remain. Each fall, Steiger and his colleagues conduct net sampling of juvenile Atlantic sturgeon in the Delaware River, about three miles downriver of the Christina’s mouth, and in recent years they’ve found blue catfish in their nets. “We’re only catching little ones, but if a 100-pounder was there, it could definitely eat a juvenile Atlantic sturgeon,” Steiger said. “We haven’t seen it yet, but it absolutely could happen.”

Blue catfish are equally voracious when it comes to reproduction — an aquatic version of the rabbit. During the spawning season, which runs from late May to June, a female blue catfish will produce up to 8,000 eggs per kilogram (2.2 pounds) of her body weight. The species can grow up to five feet and weigh over 100 pounds — a size that could yield over 360,000 eggs. “Snakeheads actually eat each other, so their numbers are kept down that way,” Steiger said. “Blue cats protect their young, so their numbers tend to explode.”

In New Jersey, Smith said, word-of-mouth reports of anglers catching blue catfish have made their way to the DEP for the past decade. But it wasn’t until 2021 that the department received a photo of a blue catfish that was caught in Salem County’s Lower Alloways Creek, a Delaware River tributary that is south of the C&D Canal and close to where the river turns into the Delaware Bay.

That the species is heading toward saltier water is a concern for the DEP, Smith said. He used the northern snakehead as a cautionary example. “We’ve confirmed them as far south as the Cohansey River this year, and, most likely, they will continue to expand down to the Maurice River,” he said. Both the Cohansey and Maurice rivers are in Cumberland County.

Anglers not dependable source of data

As of now, though, Smith and his colleagues have not detected any blue catfish below Lower Alloways Creek. But relying on anglers to map the species’ movement through the watershed is problematic. Many don’t bother — or don’t know — to report their catch to the DEP.

To fill that gap, Smith is hoping that, in the coming years, the DEP will invest in eDNA sampling, which is the process of identifying plant and animal species by analyzing the DNA they leave behind in the water column. “It’s a great screening tool,” Smith said. “We won’t have to do electrofishing” — a tool that uses an electrical current to temporarily stun fish — “or put

a net in the water. We can just take a water sample and get a better indication of the distribution of species.”

Both Smith and Steiger, along with their counterpart in Pennsylvania’s Department of Environmental Protection, Sean Hartzell, are part of the Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species, which brings together state and federal agencies, academic institutions, environmental groups and other stakeholders to develop and coordinate strategies to manage an ever-growing list of destructive invasive species.

For now, though, the most effective way to stay ahead of the blue catfish’s spread throughout the Delaware River watershed is regular coordination among Smith, Steiger, and Hartzell. If an angler reports a blue catfish or a northern snakehead or a freshwater drum — another recent arrival to the watershed — the three biologists will add that information to their growing body of research. If one turns up in the Delaware team’s Atlantic sturgeon nets, Steiger will alert the others.

Most importantly, Smith and Steiger said, is that anglers know a blue catfish when they see one, so that they can report it back to their state environmental agency. And then, if they’d like, they can take their catch home for dinner.

JCAA Membership Report

By John Toth

The following is a list of clubs that have paid their dues and sponsorships for 2025. Please check to see if my information is correct and let me know if I am in error with it. I can be contacted at (732) 656-0139 or at tothjohn@verizon.net.

- Barrington Rod & Gun Club - \$150
- NJ Beach Buggy Association (NJBBA) - \$300
- Surf Kings - \$50
- Hi-Mar Striper Club - \$500
- Belmar Fishing Club - \$50
- Seaside Heights Fishing Club - \$100
- Bradley Beach Surf Casters - \$150
- Manasquan Fishing Club - \$300
- Delaware River Shad Fishermen’s Association - \$100
- Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County - \$100
- Bay Head Shores Fishing Club - \$50
- Hudson River Fishermen’s Association - \$100

- Village Harbor Fishing Club - \$50
- Sandy Hook Bay Anglers - \$250
- Spring Lake Live Liners - \$100
- Fun Under the Boat - \$100
- Fish Hawks - \$50
- Berkeley Striper Club - \$50
- Menhaden Defenders - \$100

Sponsorships have been received from:

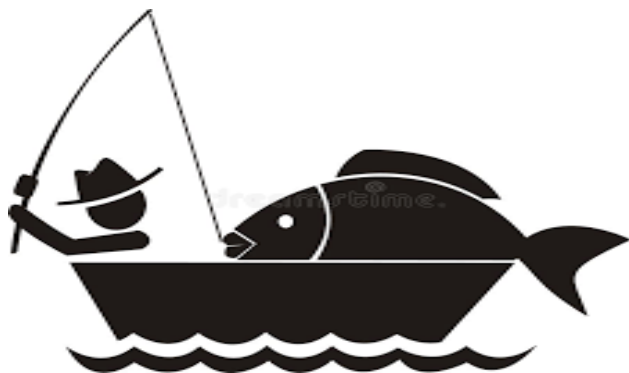
- Paul Shafer - \$200
- Barnegat Animal Clinic - \$70
- Jon Brunetti - \$100
- Linda & Chris Jewel - \$210
- Adam Piasecki - \$70
- Joseph Palumbo - \$500
- Greg Jewell - \$45
- Raymond Humphreys - \$100
- Fisherman’s Headquarters - \$100
- Louis Schott - \$100
- Fins on Feathers - \$100

We are already approaching the fall of this year, and a number of clubs have still not paid their dues. Please send in your club dues to the address below.

Jersey Coast Anglers Association
P.O. Box 1191
West Branch Post Office
Wall, NJ 07719

Our next JCAA General Membership meeting be on **September 30th, 2025**, and it will be held as an in-person meeting at the Shark Anglers Building in Herbertsville and by ZOOM starting at 7:30 p.m.

Have a good summer and catch some big fish!



Youth Education Report

By Greg Kucharewski

NJBBA YOUTH FISHING

New Jersey Beach Buggy Association will host the 29th Annual surf fishing contest for children on Saturday, September 13th at Island Beach State Park (IBSP). The FREE EVENT is for youngsters 16 yrs. old and younger. Registration starts at 7:30 am at the first swimming area, "OBA-1". The kids will receive an event t-shirt and a grab bag full of goodies after attending 5 Learning stations. "Prizes will not be given out before the awards ceremony. Fishing starts at 10 am, any fish caught could be a winner. When the 3-hour fishing period ends, everyone returns to OBA-1 for a FREE lunch. Please contact Ken Hollins at: njbbawebmaster@gmail.com for more information.

LAKE JULIANNA FISHING DAY

Mr. Vito Cardinale and Randy Johnson, along with their family and friends hosted the 9th Annual "Play HOOK-e" Veterans, Children with Disabilities and Active-Duty Military Fishing Day on August 23, 2025. The Vietnam Veterans of America Shore Area Chapter 12 presented their Eagle Award to Dominic Tanzi, and the membership of the Jersey Shore Surfcasters Foundation their generous support and their member volunteerism since the first Play HOOK-e from PTSD event.



Last year Don Marantz received the Eagle Award for his dedication to the disabled veteran fishing community.

All participants enjoyed a fun day at Ponderosa Estates Farm, Millstone, NJ to catch and release fish at Lake Julianna. Pictures and a story will be posted in the

October 2025 Newspaper along with photos on the VVA Chapter 12 Play HOOK-e website.

We thank our gracious hosts and all the volunteers, food handlers, and merchants that make the 9th Annual Play HOOK-e, KWTGF, and Take a Veteran Fishing Day a remarkable success. We regret we cannot mention all the business names and contributors at this time.

GRANT LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The JCAA Youth Education Committee wrote letters of support (included below) for the American Sportfishing Association's (ASA) and Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) to support their R3 grant applications. According to the 2025 Recreational Fishing and Boating Foundation's Special Report on Fishing, there were **16.6 million anglers that fished in 2023 that did not return in 2024**. This program directly targets what is widely seen as the sport's most pressing challenge. This initiative is essential to ensuring the long-term health and growth of recreational fishing.

The R3 Grant Program is designed to fuel solutions that:

- Retain current anglers and build relationships with retailers
- Recruit new anglers to participate through the retail programs
- Support the sportfishing industry with revenue streams for sustainable tackle sales at the retailer.

Over the years JCAA has utilized and assisted with developing learning materials for school age children. Hopefully, we can help rebuild and retain the anglers that did not return in 2024.



Jersey Coast Anglers Association
Working for Marine Recreational Anglers
PO Box 1191, Wall Branch Post Office, Wall, NJ 07719

Dear Grant Selection Committee:

I am writing to express our dedicated support for the American Sportfishing Association's (ASA) application for funding through the 2025 National Outreach Communication Program Grant.

ASA's proposed initiative to increase participation in recreational fishing through the recruitment, retention and reactivation of anglers at fishing tackle retail stores is a key investment in the health, well-being, and economic vitality of communities across the United States.

ASA has been the leading voice of the recreational fishing industry for more than 90 years, supporting conservation and representing manufacturers, retailers, and the entire recreational fishing community with a focus on clean water, abundant fisheries, and access to those fish. Their history to work with federal and state governments, as well as Congress and non-profit organizations, demonstrates their commitment and effectiveness in growing fishing participation in a sustainable, impactful way.

ASA's proposed program is unique as it will be the first national outreach to draw hundreds of thousands of new anglers to fishing tackle retail stores through events, education and follow up programs that will engage and retain anglers for years to come. It connects families, inspires youth, and fosters an appreciation for our natural resources. It is exactly the kind of forward-thinking, community-driven initiative where excise taxes should be invested.

Our organization supports this initiative and looks forward to partnering with ASA to ensure its success. Over the years, ASA has partnered with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation that also provided resources to JCAA member clubs and stakeholders that serve to educate our recreational fishing and boating community. As marine educators in the industry JCAA relies on new educational materials to continue our mission to promote fishing/boating as healthy outdoor activities for families and retain/recruit new anglers.

I urge you to give the American Sportfishing Association's application your full consideration. ***Their leadership, experience, and national reach positions them to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the future along with educating our most precious resource "youth anglers" that will grow and protect the tradition of sportfishing.***

Sincerely,

Greg Kucharewski
Youth Education Chair
Jersey Coast Anglers Association



Jersey Coast Anglers Association
Working for Marine Recreational Anglers
PO Box 1191, Wall Branch Post Office, Wall, NJ 07719

Dear Grant Selection Committee:

On behalf of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association's Youth Education Committee and member clubs, I would like to express strong support for the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and its exemplary work to increase participation in recreational boating and fishing and aquatic conservation.

RBFF's work to recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) participants through its consumer marketing campaigns, digital resources, state agency and industry focused programs and products has helped remove barriers to boating and fishing participation for all Americans, contributing to recent all-time high fishing participation numbers, as well as to significant fishing license and boat registration sales. These sales and all-time high participation numbers directly benefit the critical work state agencies do to manage our nation's aquatic natural resources and boost our nation's sportfishing and recreational boating economy.

*Since the inception of RBFF, the Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA) has utilized their digital resources and family fishing/boating learning aids. As marine educators in the industry, the JCAA Youth Education Committee relies on **new** aquatic educational and advanced marketing materials for our member clubs to expand our mission of teaching youngsters and their families about conservation and sportfishing. Please award 2025 National Outreach and Communication Program funds to RBFF for their Community -Based First Catch Centers grant application.*

With its longstanding history of high-quality boating and fishing how-to information, access locations and state-by-state resources, in addition to impactful programs and products to support state and industry R3 activities, RBFF can leverage its deep industry knowledge, connections and partnerships to provide the highest quality experience to consumers and

remain an invaluable partner to state agency and industry stakeholders in their outreach to consumers.

We urge you to award RBFF a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Outreach and Communication Program grant so that they may continue their important work to grow fishing and boating participation and build upon their success – success that is vital to sustaining not only the fishing and boating industries, but also the critical aquatic conservation projects that enhance the waters in which participants boat and fish.

Sincerely,

Greg Kucharewski
Youth Education Chair
Jersey Coast Anglers Association

2025 JCAA YOUTH EDUCATION AWARD

We already have a nomination from Hi- Mar Striper Club for 2025. There is still time to send your nomination to the JCAA Youth Education Committee. We will announce the recipient in the next JCAA Newspaper.

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 vkucharews@jcaa.org. Please view the JCAA website for the next general membership meeting.

NJ FREE FISHING DAY

NJ’s second Free Freshwater Fishing Day will be **Saturday, October 18, 2025**, when no license is required to fish regardless of age.

This fall, consider becoming a HOFNOD instructor. New Jersey HOFNOD facilitator workshops are hosted by the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife. It is well worth the time to learn creative aquatic activities to teach youngsters the importance of 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 x 122 email: liz.jackson@dep.state.nj.us.

WARRIOR DAY PARADE

Warrior Day is **Saturday, October 11th**. Don't forget to let Al Dolce know if you will attend. Many of our Play HOOK-e Go Fishing veterans are attending. Register early Al needs a headcount for food and supplies. Central Jersey Rifle and Pistol Club, Jackson, NJ. This is always a great event for veterans. I remember the sporting goods giveaways that you get. Email Al at njgunfun@gmail.com or call him at (732) 637-7881.

5 STATION FISHING INSTRUCTION NEW QUICK START GUIDE

Well, I’m still finding better ways to introduce new anglers to fishing. I decided to take all the little tricks I learned over 50 years and apply them to a new quick start five station instructional guide. I’m working with some very talented members from the Flagler Sportfishing Club. Our team is awesome, and we are utilizing all the bits and pieces of information from Pathway to Fishing, Passport to Fishing and Boating, Fish America, The Future Fisherman Foundation, NJ Fish and Wildlife, and our own JCAA Youth Education Committee members and member clubs to include the Flagler Sportfishing Club. The development of the five Station Quick Start Guide is to add humor to each station and have fun while learning and presenting the program. The guide will teach instructors how to interject fun while teaching and getting the fishy message across to students and parents. If you would like to learn more about the five Station Quick Start Guide, send me an email at: vkucharews@jcaa.org and we’ll be happy to share our winning ways!

SUPPORT LOCAL TACKLE DEALERS

Most tackle dealers offer discounts to veterans. [Here is a list](#) of local tackle dealers to support.



Please Support our Sponsors!

2024 Sponsors List

Super Sponsors

- **Yamaha** - www.yamahaoutboards.com

Gold Sponsors (\$1000+)

- **Fisherman's Headquarters** – fishermansheadquarters.com
- **Jersey Nutz Sportfishing** – jerseynutzsportfishing.com
- **Sea Owl Sportfishing** – (see on FB)
- **South Harbor Marina** – 116 Oregon Ave, Waretown, NY (609) 693-3658

Silver Sponsors (\$500+)

- **Aqua Traction of the Mid-Atlantic** – www.aquatractionmidatl.com
- **Rich Hunsinger Custom Rods** – (732) 779-2604

Bronze Sponsors (\$200+)

- **Ahern Tackle** – aherntackle@gmail.com
- **Captain's Inn** – www.captainsinnnj.com
- **Chatter Lures** – www.chatterlures.com
- **Coastal Fishing** – www.coastalfishing.com
- **Creekside Outfitters** – www.creeksideoutfittersnj.com
- **Jigging World** – www.jiggingworld.com or www.tackleworld.com
- **Natural Balance** – www.thenbpowerbracelet.com
- **Next Level Tackle** – Dan McGrath (908) 472-7258
- **Palmarius Rods** – www.palmariusrods.com

Raffle, Door Prize and Gift Auction Sponsors

- **Alit'le Irish Too** – www.alittleirishtoo.com
- **All American Tackle Company** – www.allamericantacklecompany.com
- **Atlantic B&T** – www.atlanticbaitandtackle.com
- **Beach Haven Charter Fishing Association** – www.bhcfa.net
- **Captain Bill's Landing** – (see on FB)
- **Fishermen's Den** – www.fishbox.tv/Belmar/FishermansDen
- **FJR Lures** – (see on FB)
- **Gambler Fishing** – www.gamblerfishing.net
- **Jewelry by Etchings, etc.** – www.etchingsetc.net
- **Jim's Bait and Tackle** – www.jimsbaitandtackle.com
- **Johnny's Tackle** – www.johnnyotackle.com
- **M3Tackle** – www.m3tackle.com
- **Manhattan Tackle** – www.manhattantackle.com
- **North Atlantic Jigs** – www.najigs.com
- **NY Damascus Cutlery** – www.nydamascuscutlery.com
- **One Stop Bait and Tackle** – (see on FB)
- **Papa's Plugs** – papasplugs@gmail.com
- **Pappy's Pride** – www.pappyspridefishing.com
- **Riverside Outdoors** – www.riversideoutdoors.com
- **Tak Waterman** – takwaterman.com
- **Viking Eyewear** – www.vikingeyewear@gmail.com

We need the support of your club and its members

Your club should be a member of JCAA and make a difference for only \$50 a year. Your club will have a voice in all JCAA positions that affect your fishing future. Your club will receive up-to-date information on vital issues each month. Look for [club membership link](#) on the JCAA home page or complete application below.

Club Membership Application

Club Name: _____

President's Name: _____

Pres. Address: Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Ph. # _____

Fax # _____

Please make check \$50 payable to JCAA

Individuals can join JCAA as an Associate Member

Membership is now free! Sign up as an Associate Member and receive monthly JCAA News that gives you the most up-to-date news about Fisheries Management and Environmental Issues. If you would like to support the goals of JCAA, please contribute if you are able. Look for the [Subscribe](#) button on the JCAA home page or complete application below.

JCAA Associate Member Application

Date _____ New ___ Renewal ___

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Ph. # _____

If contributing, please make check payable to JCAA

COMMITTEES & CHAIRPERSONS

Legislative	Tom Fote	732-270-9102
Operations Manager	<i>Open</i>	-
Office Manager	Karen Noe	732-245-2751
Fluke Tournament	<i>Open</i>	-
Access	Paul Eidman	732-614-3373
Blackfish	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Blue Claw Crab	<i>Open</i>	-
Lobster and Clam	Frank Macalik	732-754-5345
Bluefish	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Habitat	Paul Eidman	732-614-3373
Pelagic Species	<i>Open</i>	-
Forage Species	Paul Eidman	732-614-3373
Striped Bass	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Science & Research	<i>Open</i>	-
Website	Philip V. Celmer	jcaa@jcaa.org
Youth Education	Greg Kucharewski	732-429-9637

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.

JCAA SPONSORSHIP

The JCAA has 4 levels of sponsorship \$50, \$100, \$250 & \$500

Dues paying clubs or individuals can also provide additional help by becoming Sponsors. Sponsors are recognized in our newspaper. For more information call JCAA at 732-506-6565.

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.

Meetings:
1st Tuesday
of month
7:30 PM

VFW Post 2179
Port
Monmouth
Middletown
Route 36
New Members
Welcome



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P. O. Box 126 Middletown, NJ 07748
www.Hi-Mar.com

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Date: TBD

Hi-mar.com
for info



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