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JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION

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April 2026

JCAA High Roller Raffle

Thursday July 9, 2026



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Jersey Coast Shark Anglers

2026 Tournament Schedule

Spring Striper Fever: May 9-17
Fluke Fever: TBD
Arrowhead Inn Fluke Tournament: TBD
Fall Striper Fever: TBD
Bluefin Fever: TBD

For information go to www.jcsa.org

Forked River Tuna Club

2026 Tournament Schedule

War at the Shore Meeting - June 1 to August 31
Ladies Catch of the Day - TBD
Bi-Club Fluke Tournament - TDB
Tuna Tournament - TBD
Tournament Rain Date - TBD

Mark Your Calendar

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JCAA NEWSPAPER APRIL 2026

Official Newspaper of the *JERSEY COAST ANGLERS' ASSOCIATION*

(Published on March 27th, 2026)

"WORKING FOR MARINE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS"

JCAA REGULAR MEETING

March 31st, 2026, 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, April 9th

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.

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

March 31st JCAA General Meeting

April 9th JCAA Board Meeting

April 28th JCAA General Meeting

April 11th Opening Day Trout

May 17th Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament

July 9th JCAA High Roller Raffle Drawing

JCAA Hi-Roller Raffle

By Mark Taylor

JCAA High Roller Raffle tickets are now available. They were first sold at the Atlantic City Boat Show and Saltwater Fishing Expo. To purchase, call (732) 506-6565 or email mtsport64@aol.com with your name, address, and desired number of tickets. Tickets will be sent promptly. The drawing will take place **July 9, 2026, at 7:30 PM at Toms River Knights of Columbus Council #4969**, 113 Tennyson Ave., Toms River, NJ 08753.

List of Prizes & Retail Values (Total Value \$3,143)

1. Jersey Nutz Six Man Charter

Experience an exciting six-hour inshore weekday charter for up to six guests with Jersey Nutz. This prize, valued at \$1,300, offers a memorable outing on the water. Donated by Captains Robert and Cody Melton

2. 10' 6" TFO Tactical Surf Rod and Shimano Reel

Win a 10' 6" TFO Tactical Surf Rod (TAC SUS 1064-2, two-piece) paired with a Shimano Sustain 8000FE reel, valued at \$625. This combo is perfect for surf fishing enthusiasts. Donated by JCAA / Tom Fote

3. \$500 Gift Certificate from Fisherman's Headquarters

Receive a **\$500** gift certificate to Fisherman's Headquarters, a fantastic opportunity to select top-

quality fishing gear or accessories. Donated by Fisherman's Headquarters (Stan and Greg Cudnik)

4. Engel 123 QT High Performance Hard Cooler and Ice Box

Take home an Engel 123 QT high performance hard cooler and ice box, valued at **\$469**. This cooler is ideal for keeping your catch or refreshments cold all day long. Donated by Engel

5. 7' Penn SSVI6500LL701MH Spinfisher VI Spinning Combo

This prize includes a 7' Penn SSVI6500LL701MH Spinfisher VI spinning combo, valued at **\$249**, perfect for your next fishing adventure. Donated by Penn Fishing

JCAA extends sincere gratitude to all our sponsors for providing these exceptional prizes. Their support is essential to the success of this fundraiser and offers participants valuable opportunities to win. Each sponsor is consistently committed to safeguarding the interests of the recreational fishing community. We encourage you to support them by purchasing their products and visiting their establishments.

NJMFC Sets Sea Bass Regulations for 2026 and 2027

By Paul Haertel

At the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council Meeting on 3/26/26 the council set the recreational sea bass regulations as follows:

12 ½" Size Limit

- 10 fish May 15 – June 21
- 1 fish June 22 – Sept 22
- 10 fish Sept 23 – Oct 31
- 15 fish Nov 1 – Dec 31

The season will open on 5/15, which is two days earlier than last year. The one fish season begins on 6/22 and extends through September 22 before the ten fish season begins on 9/23. That means we have no closed season, other than prior to 5/15. It also allows us to keep ten seabass during the last three days of fluke season. Further, it closes the gap from when fluke season ends until sea bass season begins.

A big thank you goes out to Joe Cimino and Adam Nowalsky who fought very hard for New Jersey at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council meetings. We also would like to thank Marine Biologist Peter Clarke of our Bureau of Marine Fisheries for spending a great deal of time developing a plethora of options for us to choose from. Further, we would like to thank all those from our BMF and the NJMFC for accepting public input and doing the best they can for the fishermen of our state.

JCAA Show Season Recap

By Mark Taylor

The Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA) hosted booths at both the Atlantic City Boat Show (February 25th to March 1st) and the Saltwater Fishing Expo (March 13th to 15th). If you missed either or both events, you missed some great opportunities. The Atlantic City Boat Show was perfect for anyone interested in boats, while the Saltwater Fishing Expo was ideal for those wanting to check out fishing tackle and speak directly with manufacturers. I attended both events and had conversations with many fellow anglers.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to the dedicated individuals who volunteered at the JCAA booths, taking time from their busy schedules. Their efforts, engaging with every angler who stopped by, were outstanding. Without these volunteers, JCAA would not have been able to participate in the shows. They also sold 2026 High Roller Raffle tickets and enjoyed the shows themselves.

I would like to recognize our volunteers:

Atlantic City Boat Show:

Frank Macalik, Chris Tyls, Howard Rottweiler, John Legrande, Ed Baluta, Karen Noe, Michele Kohler, Ron Nachmann, Bill Figley, Don Marantz, Gen Wong, John Toth, Paul Haertel, Andrew Giordano, Rick Lombard, Mark Taylor, Phil Simon, Chuck Dishian

Saltwater Fishing Expo:

Michele Kohler, Karen Noe, Don Marantz, Gen Wong, Steve Machalaba, Chuck Dishian, Thomas Devine, Jack Pongracz, Paul Shafer, Joe Camarata, Mark Taylor, John Toth, Phil Simon, Joe Chetsos

Having a strong presence at these shows is vital for our organization to connect with the recreational angling community. I hope these committed individuals, along with others, will continue to generously support the JCAA at future shows and events.

President's Report

By Mark Taylor

The show season has concluded for JCAA. We participated in two major events: the Atlantic City Boat Show and the Saltwater Fishing Expo. Both proved to be excellent opportunities for engagement, and we encourage attendance at future shows if you were unable to join us this year. Our participation would not have been possible without the commitment of dedicated volunteers who staffed our booth. Additional information is provided in the show wrap-up article featured in this newspaper.

Tickets for the JCAA Annual High Roller Raffle are now available. Sales began at the two recent events we attended. The raffle drawing will take place on July 9, 2026. We have an impressive selection of prizes, and we extend our sincere gratitude to the dedicated and generous individuals who contributed donations. Further details regarding the prizes and their donors will be published in a forthcoming article in this newspaper. If you have not yet purchased your ticket, there is still time to contact us and support JCAA.

JCAA is currently finalizing the arrangements for the upcoming Heavy Hitters Fluke Tournament. Chairperson Frank Macalik will share further information once details are confirmed. The tournament is scheduled to take place from July 7th through August 2nd; please mark your calendar if you plan to participate.

JCAA is excited to announce a change for 2026. Our Annual Sportsperson of the Year Dinner will be held at a new venue. Since Captains Inn was sold and its rates increased, JCAA searched for alternative locations for this special event in November. Chairperson John Toth and his committee worked diligently and have selected Spring Lake Manor, a Victorian mansion in Spring Lake Heights, NJ. John will share more information as it becomes available. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

The 2026 New Jersey Black Sea Bass regulations have not yet been finalized. According to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's

(ASMFC) stock assessment management track for 2025, the spawning stock biomass is estimated at 2.8 times the target biomass. The New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council (NJMFC) will convene on March 26th to finalize the state regulations. Paul Haertel, Chairperson of the JCAA Black Sea Bass Committee, along with others, will be attending this meeting.

Please note that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) continues to discuss and advocate for Sector Separation FMAT/PDT. A meeting is scheduled for March.

It is important for all anglers to get involved and stay informed, so our recreational community can have a stronger voice in the decision-making process and possibility make a difference.

It is essential for every angler to visit the NJDEP – NJ Fish & Wildlife website. The site provides comprehensive and regularly updated information, making it a valuable resource for saltwater fishing enthusiasts. Anglers are encouraged to review all available materials related to saltwater fishing, and to register or renew their registration for the **2026 New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry** at [this link](#) — a process that every angler must complete annually. Registration is free of charge; however, participation ensures accurate counts of saltwater anglers in New Jersey. These data are critical for determining eligibility and allocation of federal funding necessary to support future fisheries research and management initiatives.

It is essential for all of us to become more engaged in ensuring the future sustainability of our fishery.

Meeting Dates:

The JCAA General Membership Meeting will be held on **March 31st** at 7:30 pm. Members are invited to attend either in person at 385 Herbertsville Rd., Brick, NJ 08724 or remotely via Zoom, as this meeting will utilize a hybrid format and is open to recreational anglers.

The next JCAA Board Meeting is scheduled for **April 9th** at 7:30 pm and will be conducted exclusively via Zoom.

Please note that the subsequent JCAA General Membership Meeting is planned for **April 28th** at 7:30 pm. This meeting will also follow a hybrid structure and remain open to recreational anglers. Kindly mark your calendars accordingly.

JCAA New Ad Program

By Tom Fote

The full-page ads in our newspaper cost \$1,000 for the year and we are pleased to announce [Engel Coolers](#) as our first full-page ad under our new ad program.

These ads can be for tackle stores, fishing clubs and any other individuals who would like to advertise in our newspaper. It is easier to change a full-page month to month so if your tackle store is running a special sale, you could have a new ad for that specific event for the month before and the month of. Clubs can list their tournaments, flea markets or any other event by just submitting a new ad to replace the existing one. If you have any questions, contact Tom Fote at (732) 270-9102 or email at tfote@jcaa.org. This does not replace the \$500 or \$250 business ad already in place. We are hoping to use the ad money to pay for the operation of the newspaper. We hope that you will solicit ads and get your club to take an ad. It is a great way to publicize your club and get new members. We will also have a link to the sponsors' webpages. Please call me if you have any questions. Mark also has put together some forms that will be ready by the next newsletter.

Fisheries Management & Legislative Report

By Tom Fote

Reaching Out to NJ Governor and Legislators

The night of the NJ Marine Fisheries Council Meeting, I did not comment on the black sea bass regulations. What I testified about was we need to reach out to the Governor's Office, the Commissioner of DEP and our Federal and State Legislators. Over the years we had Congressional Representatives and State Legislators at our JCAA Dinner. They introduced themselves to our clubs, gave a short speech and got to know us. Because I spent a great deal of time in Washington when I was Commissioner, I would spend an additional day and visit Congressional Offices. We would discuss ASMFC issues, NOAA and Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council. Sometimes we would team up with the RFA and make visits together. Sometimes we

would do it with ASA. They always understood what was happening in NJ and knew what we needed them to do. I would go to Trenton to see the State Legislators and visit with the Commissioner of DEP as well. By visiting with them, they knew our current issues and that helped us get the actions that we needed. I am not traveling to DC or Trenton as much as I used to. It is now up to you and your clubs and JCAA to keep these people informed. From the Florio Administration to the Christie Administration, DEP Commissioners would meet with fishing and hunting groups about our most important issues. That did not happen during the Murphy Administration, and we need to get back to that.

We also used to go with our JCAA representatives to our State Legislators' offices. This was very helpful because they knew we lived in their district. That has not been going on for a while due to lack of participation of the clubs in JCAA. You need to reach out when it is not panic time. You need to invite them to come to your club meetings and events. We need to reach out to both sides of the aisle.

When you are writing to the Governor's Office, copy that letter to JCAA so we know what you are doing and can support your work. Also copy the DEP Commissioner, the head of Fish and Wildlife and the head of Marine Fisheries. If you are writing to legislators, call the office and find out the aide who is working on these issues. Copy that aide on any letter. JCAA will set up a workshop to help you do these things. That is how we got the striped bass gamefish bill passed, stopped the dumping of dioxin in the ocean and many other issues. One of the latest examples is when NJ was out of compliance on summer flounder. Without these connections, we do not have any power as an organization. If anyone is interested in being legislative chairman or just helping out, just let me know. Remember our t-shirts and bumper stickers say "I fish, I Vote."

If you want to do that, I am your legislative chairman and I will help organize those meetings. If you invite a legislator to a dinner or meeting, let us know and someone from JCAA will show up. If you have any questions, I will help you with the process. You can't just reach out to legislators at the last minute to ask for their vote. You need to establish a relationship in advance.

Articles from the Past

I was looking for some articles from the past that deal with current issues. I came across an old article that

dealt with how we got screwed on summer flounder and other fisheries allocations. What is going on with black sea bass creates a good time to revisit this. I will be covering that in another article. The last three articles deal with environmental concerns. One was in USA Today in 2007 reflecting on the studies done on mercury in lakes in NJ. Because of all the work done to clean up the environment, I was hoping that I would not have to talk about the increase in mercury in our lakes. But we haven't learned, we have turned back the environmental regulations cutting back on the air deposition from fossil fuels. Instead, the opposite is happening and there is a push from the federal government to increase our dependence on coal and other fossil fuels. I always think of the song, "When will we ever learn." Since we are approaching the opening of the spring fishery in NJ, it seems like a good time for this reminder.

The 2nd of these three deals with endocrine disruptors and the impact they are having on fish and on us. Again, I thought in 19 years we would have found a way to cut back on the continuing discharge into our nation's waterways. Again, I was naïve to think we would actually do something in 20 years. We are still dumping almost as much chemicals as we were in 2007. Before 2007, we were only discussing the impact on fish and wildlife. Now, because of sperm studies that were in the New York Times about 5 years ago, we now know it is having an impact on human reproduction because of men's low sperm counts. Sounding like a broken record, when will we ever learn and take action.

The final article from 2022 deals with global warming. It seems like we are going in the opposite direction since we have taken all references to climate change from NOAA, EPA and any other agency. The perfect example is how they did away with MAFAC because this advisory committee dealt with climate change and environmental justice.

Indigestion: Summer Flounder, Scup & Sea Bass

By Tom Fote

Reprinted from January 2001 Newsletter

Years ago, Axel Carlson gave me a video called Black Tuesday. This video showed boats trying to enter Manasquan Inlet during stormy weather in the '30s. The boats are crashing into the rocks on both sides of

the inlet. I always associated that film with the struggles fishermen face and the term "Black Tuesday" always reminds me of that image. December 12, 2000, was Black Tuesday again. Only this time it was Black Tuesday for recreational anglers.

Recreational anglers were placed under increasingly stringent regulations beginning in the early 90's. The data clearly supports our contention that problems with scup were due to commercial discard and bycatch. Summer flounder stocks were depleted due to commercial overfishing in the late 80's. When fisheries managers take measures to rebuild stocks, they generally attempt to spread the burden throughout both the commercial and recreational sectors. They pay little attention to the cause of the problem. The data they use to determine the new shares of the quota is usually based on the years that the commercial fishery had the highest catch. These are the very same years in which they did the most damage to the stocks. They are clearly being rewarded for destroying the stocks.

Thank goodness Al Ristori never throws anything away. He provided me with a copy of a report titled the 1974 United States Marine Fisheries Resource Report from NOAA and National Marine Fisheries Services on the status of the stocks. According to this document the summer flounder recreational catch in 1970 was 39,000,000 pounds. The commercial catch was 5,700,000 pounds. The recreational was almost seven times that of the commercial catch. A quota based on 1970 figures would give us between six and seven times the commercial quota. Instead, we are getting a 60/40 split with the commercial community getting 60% of the quota. Their current quota is 11,800,000 pounds, an increase of 6,000,000 pounds.

Our new quotas for this year will be 7,100,000 in federal waters or 8,200,000 pounds in state waters, a reduction of more than 30,000,000 pounds from our 1970 catch. That is what the council and commission call a fair and equitable share of the pain. The scup fishery is even more ridiculous. The recreational harvest of scup according to this report averaged 55,000,000 pounds during the same time. The commercial harvest was listed between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000 pounds. The current quota gives the recreational sector 22% and the commercial sector gets 78%. You can do the math. Somehow, when we were catching 55,000,000 pounds the stocks were fine. The stocks did not crash. Now the National Marine Fisheries Service, the commercial fishermen, National Audubon, National Resource Defense Council,

Environmental Defense, and The Center for Marine Conservation are upset because the recreational community overharvested their quota and took advantage of the poor commercial fishermen.

The point is we've gotten screwed on the quotas. We are the ones that have been disadvantaged since day one of these FMP's The National Marine Fisheries Service and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission put quotas in place with no thought given to the health and well-being of the recreational fishing industry. They don't understand or they just plain don't care. The people who suffer the most from these draconian measures are the poor and the subsistence fishermen.

They are the people who fish from docks and piers and the shore. Scup and summer flounder are an important part of this specific fishery. Once you raise size limits these anglers are unfairly eliminated from the fishery. And nobody cares. It is time for the recreational organizations, the recreational community and the recreational industry to wake up and speak up. People wonder why there is no fishing in urban areas. Clearly it is because there is no opportunity to bring fish home to eat.

We need to demand a reallocation and a restructuring of the quotas. Write to your congressman, your governor and your state fisheries regulators. Turn the heat on them. Black Tuesday was a "four Zantac" meeting with indigestion to spare. Below is the meeting report.

N.J. Freshwater Fish Advisories Remain DEP Studying 4 Lakes for Effects of Cutting Mercury Emissions

*By Todd B. Bates, Asbury Park Press
Reprinted from January 2008 Newsletter*

Mercury contamination is so widespread in New Jersey that all of its fresh waters are covered by advisories warning people — especially pregnant women, children and others at high risk — to generally limit or avoid eating freshwater fish.

Although the state has reduced mercury emissions, "the problem we're dealing with is all the coal-fired power plants" in the Midwest, said Thomas P. Fote of Toms River, a recreational fisherman and legislative chairman of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association.

However, the state Department of Environmental Protection is investigating the hypothesis that significantly reducing mercury emissions from individual sources here will lead to a significant reduction in mercury levels in fish in nearby water bodies, according to DEP information e-mailed to the Press.

One of the four lakes being studied is Lake Assunpink, which is in Upper Freehold and Millstone townships.

The mercury issue, which became high-profile in New Jersey after high levels of the toxic metal were found in largemouth bass and chain pickerel in 1994, is about as persistent as the metal itself.

For mercury, the state has a general statewide advisory for all fresh waters and freshwater fish species, and 23 are covered by advisories for specific water bodies, the DEP says.

Aside from Lake Assunpink, Mountain Lake, Merrill Creek Reservoir and Parvin Lake are the focus of a new DEP long-term mercury monitoring project focusing on the mercury reduction hypothesis.

The project began last month, and the hypothesis has important implications for how mercury emissions are regulated in New Jersey and, potentially, nationwide, the DEP says.

Largemouth bass and surface water in the four lakes will be sampled every two years through 2013.

Leaf samples upwind and downwind of mercury sources also will be analyzed as an indicator of mercury that falls from the sky.

The DEP is also sampling fish from about 32 freshwater ponds, lakes and other waters within the Atlantic coastal region, including the Pinelands, according to the DEP.

Fish are being tested for mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls, which are long-lasting industrial chemicals, pesticides and polybrominated diphenyl ethers, which are flame retardants, according to the DEP and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Web site. Results are expected next year.

Other research involves sampling in the Raritan River watershed, including lakes, reservoirs, streams and rivers that drain into the North or South Branch of the Raritan River and ultimately into Raritan Bay. Limited sampling was done in the tidal Raritan River and Raritan Bay, according to the DEP.

The information will be used to update advisories next year, the DEP says.

"In the long run, we should be reducing the inputs of mercury to the environment," according to an e-mail from Dr. Michael Gochfeld, a professor of environmental and occupational medicine at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway.

Gochfeld chaired the New Jersey Mercury Task Force, which released a comprehensive report on mercury in 2002.

Some sources of mercury, including waste incinerators and mercury switches in cars, have been or are being addressed, according to Gochfeld's e-mail. But "the main problem" is emissions from Midwest power plants that are carried by the prevailing winds over New Jersey and New England and then deposited on land and water, mainly when it rains, Gochfeld wrote.

Effects of Endocrine Disruptors Researched

*By Todd B. Bates, Asbury Park Press
Reprinted from January 2008 Newsletter*

Cutting-edge research on endocrine-disrupting chemicals, which may feminize male frogs and cause other abnormal impacts, is under way in New Jersey, according to state officials.

"It's scarier than global warming," said Thomas P. Fote of Toms River, legislative chairman for the Jersey Coast Anglers Association.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out something's wrong here," he said.

Recent evidence suggests that levels of the herbicide atrazine that are common in New Jersey surface waters can cause male frogs to develop female characteristics, according to a 2003 state Department of Environmental Protection publication on the Web.

The causes of gross frog deformities are still unresolved, but environmental contaminants may play a role, the paper says.

In addition, male fish in waters with effluent from sewage treatment plants have been found with female characteristics, including egg-containing testes. The discharge of female hormones, including birth control metabolites, appears to be involved, according to the paper.

Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that interfere with hormones in the body, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council Web site. Known

or suspected disruptors are in pesticides, plastics and other common chemicals.

"It's one of those issues that's like global warming," Fote said. "It affects every country, every area."

It's a relatively new field of study, and the DEP has "no indicators of trends at this time" in New Jersey, according to an e-mail from DEP spokeswoman Elaine Makatura.

"Other than the frog study, we in (New Jersey) have no evidence of effects of endocrine disruptors on humans or critters," her e-mail says.

The state is looking into how to reduce the impacts of endocrine disruptors on wild-life and people by limiting the ability of such chemicals to get into surface and drinking water, according to e-mailed DEP information.

Studies also are under way to learn more about the potential impacts of endocrine disruptors. Here's DEP information on the studies:

Samples of maternal urine, maternal serum, amniotic fluid, cord serum and infant meconium (first stool) have been collected from 150 mother-infant pairs at St. Peter's University Hospital in New Brunswick.

The samples, which reflect fetal exposure during gestation, are being analyzed for a wide range of potential endocrine-disrupting chemicals. They include phthalates, organophosphate and organochlorine pesticides, phenols and flame retardants.

Despite concern about widespread exposure to such chemicals and their impact on health, this is the first time such data have been collected in New Jersey, and almost the first time anywhere.

The data, to be published in scientific and medical journals, represent the first step in understanding the extent of exposure during pregnancy. The information also provides the foundation for investigating sources of exposure, identifying populations at higher risk and linking health to exposures.

Warming Atlantic Spurs Fishermen to Adapt to New Challenges, Opportunities to Bring Seafood to Shore

*By Dan Radel, Asbury Park Press
Reprinted from November 2022 Newsletter*

Beneath the sand on New Jersey's seabed are millions of dollars' worth of buried treasure. They are called

surfclams. Prized for chowder meat, they mature fast and grow big, with their shells reaching over eight inches in length, making them the largest bivalves on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

New Jersey's clam beds are one of the top producers of the tasty hard shell. In 2021, clambers raked in 15 million pounds of surfclams, equivalent to 913,478 bushels, at a dock value of more than \$10 million, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's landing data. But the surfclams are on the move to colder, deeper water and encroaching on the turf of the oldest living clams in the sea, the ocean quahog, which can easily live for 100 years. Some are well in excess of 200 years old. But they grow slow and small, which makes it difficult for them to keep the faster-growing, bigger surfclams out of their beds.

Warming ocean waters are causing a unique set of problems — and in some cases new opportunities — for fishermen, albeit subtly. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration historical weather data shows the ocean around New Jersey has warmed by about 2 degrees since 1901.

New Jersey's recreational and commercial marine fisheries industry supports more than 52,000 jobs and has a total economic impact of \$3.45 billion highlighting their important contributions to the state's economy, tourism and food production, according to NOAA.

Research is showing that sea life, from bottom dwelling shellfish and mollusks to finfish, are shifting as result of the temperature change. "The fish respond very quickly to changes in the ocean," said Malin Pinsky, an associate professor at Rutgers University, who specializes in the consequences of climate change on biodiversity. "Whether that be changes in the ocean current, water temperature, oxygen levels or location of prey. We're already seeing that the fish are being dramatically affected by rapid ocean warming."

Some of the species that are key to the industry, like lobster and summer flounder, are shifting further north, away from New Jersey, according to a report published by Rutgers's New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station last summer.

The march of the surfclams, for example, is creating a problem, not just for quahogs, but for fishery managers, clambers and their processing plants in New Jersey. "The area of overlap is getting potentially larger and larger as the Middle Atlantic warms, because one species is moving in, and the other one hasn't quite got

the message and moved out yet," said Roger Mann, a biologist who's been studying the phenomenon with a team of researchers at the Science Center for Marine Fisheries. For quahogs, which grow at the incredibly slow rate of 1 millimeter per a year-and-a-half in New Jersey, the higher density of clams in a bed slows their growth rate down even more.

1. Shellfish war for space hits fishing jobs, food prices

While surfclams don't get up and move, their temperature-sensitive larvae do by floating in the ocean current until they find a suitable water temperature to settle into. The ideal temperature for surfclam larvae is 68 degrees.

"These shifts have been happening since the beginning of time, they are just more pronounced now with the climate in the mid-Atlantic warming faster than other areas," said Capt. Tom Dameron, a former clammer and now government relations and fishery science liaison for Surfside Foods in Cumberland County's Port Norris.

The main problem with the surfclams lying in the ocean quahogs' beds is that by law, commercial clambers can't land surfclams in the same cage as ocean quahogs, because fishery managers won't be able to get a clear count of the clams. That data needs to be precise for accurate stock assessments, which in turn is used to set quotas. A lower quota can adversely impact the income of the clambers. The mixing in the beds also makes it harder for clambers to avoid the slower-growing quahogs, which can't refill their ranks as quickly as surfclams can. To avoid the quahogs, clambers must skip over acres and acres of lucrative surfclams.

The other problem is at the dock, where processing plants don't want the two clams mixing. "Most of the processing plants process one species or the other," said Jessica Coakley, who is responsible for the Atlantic surfclam and ocean quahog fishery management plan for the Mid Atlantic Fisheries Marine Council (MAFMC). "The clams are very different in terms of the product. Ocean quahog have a very strong flavor and they tend not to use it for chopped clam meat. They use it a lot for creating broths. The preferred chopped clam that go into chowders is surfclam," Coakley said.

The MAFMC and the clamming industry are working for a solution. An amendment is in the public comment stage that proposes modifications to the regulations to allow for mixed catches onboard vessels.

Conservation officers have been lenient on infractions and forgoing fines, and Coakley said they're looking at possible technology that can count clams on the boat during the tedious sorting process out at sea.

Dameron said they'd also like to see the MAFMC do away with the zero-tolerance rule for a single clam species, which is a possible fix to the management issue.

New Jersey clammers aren't the only ones seeing their quarry react to changes in water temps. The situation in two prized Alaskan crab fisheries has taken a turn for the worse as the Alaska Division of Fish and Game has shut down the snow and king crab fisheries in the Bering Sea and Bristol Bay.

Crabbers there are now faced with the loss of a \$200-million-a-year industry that supports 60 vessels. Warming waters may be one of the causes behind the closing of the crab fisheries. Record-breaking warm ocean temperatures occurred in 2019 on the southern Bering shelf, while bottom temperatures on the northern Bering shelf exceeded 39.2 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time in November 2018, reports NOAA. Biologists have said the warmer water could be forcing crab larvae to move further north or die off, leaving the population starving for new recruits.

The Alaska Division of Fish and Game trawl surveys found the population of the crabs has decreased to levels too low for a sustainable fishery, which forced the agency to close the crab fisheries this season.

2. Currents slow, and new fish move north

The routes taken by marlin and a host of highly migratory species such as tuna and swordfish are potentially being altered by the slowing of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation, or AMOC, a network of currents that work like a conveyor belt to transfer warmer, surface water northward and push colder, denser deep water to the south.

Last year, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research released a report that found the AMOC is at its slowest in 1,000 years, due to climate change. The AMOC is driven by what the scientists call deep convection, triggered by the differences in the density of the ocean water: Warm and salty water moves from the south to the north, where it cools down and thus gets denser. When it is heavy enough, the water sinks to deeper ocean layers and flows back to the south.

Global warming disturbs this mechanism: Increased rainfall and enhanced melting of the Greenland ice sheet add fresh water to the surface

ocean. This reduces the salinity and thus the density of the water, inhibiting the sinking and thus weakening the flow of the AMOC.

New Jersey's fishing fleets benefit from the biodiversity brought to the region by ocean currents mixing along the continental shelf, particularly the Gulf Stream current. Along this shelf, cold New England water currents interact with the Atlantic's warm Gulf Stream and occasionally swirl off into water eddies, or circular currents. Those eddies provide nutrient-rich feeding grounds that attract fish.

The Hudson Canyon, a submarine canyon that starts about 90 miles east of Manasquan Inlet, is one of those prolific fishing grounds dependent on those warm water eddies. Capt. Alan Lee, owner, operator of the Mushin charter boat out of Point Pleasant, said those eddies are vital for pushing the plankton and small baitfish around that are key to attracting the tuna. Tuna boat captains hunt for the temperature breaks, a sign of an eddy, and then drift them, ladling cut bait such as sardines and butterfish into the current to draw the tuna under their boats.

Lee said it's hard to say if he's seen any changes offshore due to the slowing of the AMOC, particularly the warm water brought in by the eddies. "On any given offshore season, you're going to see wide fluctuations in water temperature. If you don't find the warm water in one place, you go looking for it in another place," Lee said.

This summer fishermen caught yellowfin tuna 13 miles off the coast in a fishing ground known as the Mud Hole, a depression initially carved out thousands of years ago by retreating glaciers. Lee said that was off the normal pattern as the yellowfin tend to stay in deep offshore water in the Hudson, or areas a little inshore of the canyon such as the Texas Tower or Atlantic Princess wrecks, and the Chicken Canyon, all of which are 50 plus miles from the coast.

Pinsky said it's not likely the Gulf Stream will completely shut down, but he said it's very possible the frequency of the eddies could change, especially if climate change accelerates. "We're in a critical decade right now," Pinsky said.

3. A marlin where it shouldn't be

On July 21, 2021, the water temperature was 76 degrees in Mantoloking, three degrees above average for the ocean for the month here. Beachgoers were startled by the sudden appearance of a small marlin in the surf. The billfish swam freely in and out the waves, coming in as

shallow as four or five feet of water. Reported sightings of it occurred at several northern Ocean County locales.

A few types of a marlin, a highly migratory warm-water fish, do come north in the summer, but they tend to stay closer to the canyons on the edge of the continental shelf where water temps are influenced by the warm water eddies that spin off from the Gulf Stream current. It's not odd for them to come as far in as the 30-fathom line, or 180 feet of water. Whether this marlin was behaving normally, a lost fish or a sign that things are out of whack, is hard for fisherman to say.

Capt. Howard Bogan Jr., who operates the Jamaica party boat in Brielle where his family has been in business since 1931, said he's never seen or heard of a marlin in that close. But neither was he surprised.

Forty years ago, his father saw a blue marlin 13 miles off the beach at a fishing ground called the Barnegat Ridge. "He called it into a newspaper and the reporter wouldn't write about it because he didn't believe him. He said it was boloney," Bogan said.

Other than warm water, Bogan said the water clarity, which was noticeably clear and green like the canyon that day, could have influenced the marlin.

4. Grunting triggerfish fill the catch

Finfish are on the move, but for what reasons can be head scratching to boat captains. Across the Manasquan River in Point Pleasant Beach, Bogan's cousin Capt. Mike Bogan who runs the Gambler party boat said they're catching more triggerfish than usual. Gray triggerfish, which let out audible grunts when landed, are not uncommon to New Jersey waters but they come from two stocks to the south, one in the Gulf of Mexico and the other in the South Atlantic region of the U.S. from North Carolina to Florida. Their visits to New Jersey in the summer have usually been short. That may be changing, as their presence seems to be increasing. New Jersey's fishermen reeled in 26,890 pounds of grey triggerfish in 1990. Thirty years later, they caught 599,947 pounds, according to NOAA's landing data.

Asked if he thought warmer water was causing more of them to swim north, Bogan couldn't say. And this year, which saw lots of triggerfish, he said the ocean was slow to warm up. "It's been really cold this summer," Bogan said. "We've had a lot of south wind." South winds can push warm water away from the coast and bring colder water up from the bottom. On July 26, the ocean temp dipped to an unseasonably cold 56 degrees, according to NOAA weather data.

Cobia is another fish that fishermen in the recreational sector say they're seeing more of lately.

The fish can grow to 100 pounds, and occasionally is mistaken for a shark. Its range is mostly from Virginia south through the Gulf of Mexico but they're not strangers to New Jersey. A nominal amount is caught each year as bycatch by commercial fishermen. In the last 30 years, that number was, with a couple of exceptions, less than a ton a year.

However, so few are caught in New Jersey by rod and reel fishermen that NOAA doesn't have any data entered in its recreational landings' page. The National Marine Fisheries Service has limited data on cobia catches through its Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP. The data however, is imprecise and is missing several years. Nonetheless, in 2010, New Jersey anglers caught 3,032 cobia. In 2019, they caught three times as much — 10,166. "I'd say every other summer you hear of one caught from shore. They're pretty rare though, especially from the surf," said Ray Kerico, a part-owner of Grumpy's Tackle in Seaside Park. This year though, the shop weighed in two cobia, and they're not the only ones. Fishermen's Headquarters in Ship Bottom had one. The Queen Mary party boat had one. Last year, the Jamaica II party boat had two. The list goes on.

Researchers are making similar observations. While the bulk of the cobia population is centered off Virginia, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science predicts that to change. "During the summer months like July, we predict the percentage of cobia habitat to increase north of Virginia and decrease south of Virginia. Forty years from now in the summer, we predict that waters off New Jersey will have the most cobia habitat of any state. During October, we project cobia habitat to shift to more northern states and remain inshore longer," the institute said about its recent research findings.

5. New Jersey's fish gain is southern states' loss

Another fish where the science is building on climate change data is black sea bass. An economically important fish, it's on the move north, according to new research in the Journal of Marine Science. While warmer water is part of the cause, the sea bass population has also increased leading to its expanded range.

New Jersey so far has benefited from the shift as the main body is now centered here, but for how long? Federal fishery managers have adjusted the coastwide allocation of sea bass to increase fish for states like Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts with growing sea bass fisheries while

taking away fish from fishermen in states from Delaware south through North Carolina.

Howard Bogan said they used to joke about it with some of the party boat operators in Massachusetts. "They were getting tired of hearing about the big sea bass we catch on our winter trips, kind of like we always heard about all the big codfish they caught," Bogan said. "But now they're catching sea bass."

When Jersey Shore native Dan Radel is not reporting the news, you can find him in a college classroom where he is a history professor. Reach him at @danielradelapp, dradel@gannettnj.com, or at 732-643-4072.

JCAA Membership Report

By John Toth

First of all, I want to **Thank** all of you who have already paid your 2026 dues and sponsorships!

Forms have been mailed to clubs for payment of their 2026 JCAA dues and sponsorships. One of the forms requests information on your current board members and the club member who will be the person to represent your club at JCAA Membership Meetings. Please complete this form in full so that we have updated information not only on your membership, but who to contact in the event of an important issue that your club needs to be aware of that affects our ability to fish. The lists below show what we have already received from clubs and sponsors to date:

Clubs:

- Spring Lake Live Liners - \$300
- Seaside Heights Fishing Club - \$100
- NJ Beach Buggy Assoc. - \$300
- Hi-Mar Striper Club - \$500
- Surf Kings Fishing Club - \$100
- Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County - \$100
- Belmar Fishing Club - \$100

Sponsorships:

- Paul Shafer - \$259
- Susan Gene Geld - \$50
- Barnegat Animal Clinic - \$100
- Adam T. Piaseki - \$50
- Fins on Feathers - \$50
- In Memory of Tom Ortman - \$100

- Linda/Charles Jules - \$100
- John Zingis - \$50
- L. Raymond Hunphreys, Jr. - \$100
- Jon Brunetti - \$100
- Louis Schott - \$100

Our next JCAA General Membership Meeting will be held on **March 31st, 2026**, at the Shark Anglers Building in Herbertsville. It will be done as an in-person meeting and by ZOOM starting at 7:30 p.m.

I can be contacted at tothjohn@verizon.net or at (732) 656-0139 if you have any questions.

Youth Education Report

By Greg Kucharewski

JCAA MEMBER CLUB NEWS

All JCAA member clubs, please submit information about your youth fishing activities before the 15th of each month. We would like to keep our information current. If your club has a specific event let us know as soon as possible so we can include your event in the JCAA newspaper.



SHARK RIVER SURF ANGLERS BELMAR, N.J.

2026 Trout Contest for Kids

SAT. APRIL 11th - 8 to 1:30 at SPRING LAKE

Take a shot at THE GRAND PRIZE!
An amazing trophy, a custom rod and reel, a charter fishing trip, and assorted tackle will be awarded to the child landing the largest trout!

MORE PRIZES for the contenders!
1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes will be presented for the 3 heaviest trout in the following age divisions: 5 yrs & under, 6-9 yrs, 10-12 yrs, 13-15 yrs

Everyone goes home a winner!
All children weighing-in a trout are eligible to receive a special prize, while those who do not will still take home a bag of goodies. How's it work? Fish at Spring Lake and catch a trout during contest hours. Bring it to the big white tent at Mercer Ave to weigh and register it! Trout must be caught from Spring Lake to be eligible, and **SNAGGING OF TROUT IS NOT PERMITTED!** Contest is open to ALL children 15 years old and under. Stop by the tent throughout the day for free food and bait, fishing guidance, to make a donation, or just to say "Hi!"

Prizes will be awarded at the club's tent at 2 PM Saturday.
Winners MUST ATTEND the ceremony to claim prizes!

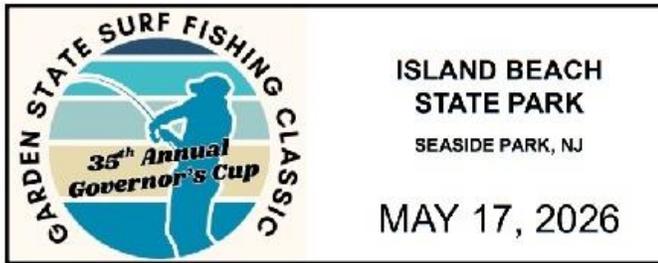
Follow & Get More Info
SRSA Kids Trout Contest on Facebook
Shark River Surf Anglers on Instagram
www.sharkriversurfanglers.com on the web

Join us for the BONUS EVENT two days before
Thursday, April 9th at 4:30 PM - All kids are invited to come help stock the lake! Over 500 trout will be arriving...meet by Mercer Ave.

Note: The Shark River Surf Anglers fishing club is not liable for illness, personal injury, property loss, or damage sustained while participating in these events. Please take appropriate wellness precautions as you see fit. Participate at your own risk.

35th ANNUAL GARDEN STATE SURF FISHING CLASSIC

The 35th Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament (GSFT) will be held at Island Beach State Park on Sunday, May 17, 2026. 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. Win prizes. Register online at [this link](#).



We would like to remind our physically challenged anglers that there is an area at OBA 1 with beach wheelchairs available. Anglers that cannot walk in the sand can now get to the water and try surf fishing. The JCAA Youth Education Committee is helping novice and physically challenged anglers at the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament. Larson Ford of Lakewood, NJ will assist physically challenged anglers with a NEW 2024 4x4 VIP vehicle to transport anglers that will fish the reserved area in front of OBA 1. Members of the Vietnam Veterans of America (Chapter 12) and volunteer anglers from various fishing clubs will also aid physically challenged anglers.



HIGH SCHOOL SURF FISHING CHALLENGE IBSP

The Jersey Coast Anglers Youth Education Committee is encouraging high school students to participate at the

Island Beach State Park 35th 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.



4x4 VOLUNTEER JUDGES NEEDED AT ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK

Island Beach State Park Annual Surf Fishing Classic is looking for volunteer judges to ride the beach during the tournament and verify the length of fish caught by contestants. For details or to become a volunteer judge, please contact Ken Hollins, Judge Chairman, at rugburnsbleed55@optimum.net.

ANNUAL HOOKED ON THE HUDSON

Saturday, April 18, 2026, FREE Fishing Contest from 9:00am to 3:00 pm. The HRFA will supply all equipment and free bait for your children to use! Fishing information and assistance will be available. Prizes awarded. View details [here](#).

VETERAN FISHING TRIPS FINS FOR FREEDOM

Fins For Freedom will take place on May 16, 2026. The main event is a full day of New Jersey striped bass fishing combined with a fully sponsored and catered event for all of our military heroes.

The day starts with a full breakfast for all servicemen and women, captains and mates. This is the first time that our crews will meet the armed forces members whom they will be fishing with for the day. From there, our captains and mates will take the servicemen and women out for an unforgettable day of fishing in New Jersey waters. Lunches will be provided

to all that participate in the event. Once the great day of fishing is completed, all parties will come back to the dock to enjoy the highlight of the land side events where Fins For Freedom will host a fully catered dinner for all participants. For more information visit their website at [this link](#).

BECOME A CERTIFIED NJ HOFNOD INSTRUCTOR

Hooked on Fishing Team Leader Training – Two Day Training March 28 and April 18, 2026 - Neptune, NJ To register, please complete the registration form which provides instructions on how to submit the required fee. Visit the [NJ HOFNOD website](#) to view a group near you.



9th ANNUAL VETERAN FISHING DAY HEALING HEARTS AND MINDS

On March 10, 2026, we couldn't have had a better day for the 9th Annual Play HOOK-e from PTSD "Take a Veteran Fishing Day." The CVE fishing club, JCAA and VVA Chapter 12 hosted the annual event that helps veteran men and women take time to heal by teaching them fishing skills and introducing them to activities that can reduce PTSD symptoms. Over twenty-five veterans were honored at the annual Fishing Day and BBQ. The Play HOOK-e from PTSD program promotes eco-therapy, lifetime leisure pursuits, and healthy outdoor activities for veterans that enjoy spending time outdoors. Four veteran anglers from NJ drove to the event in Deerfield Beach, Florida.



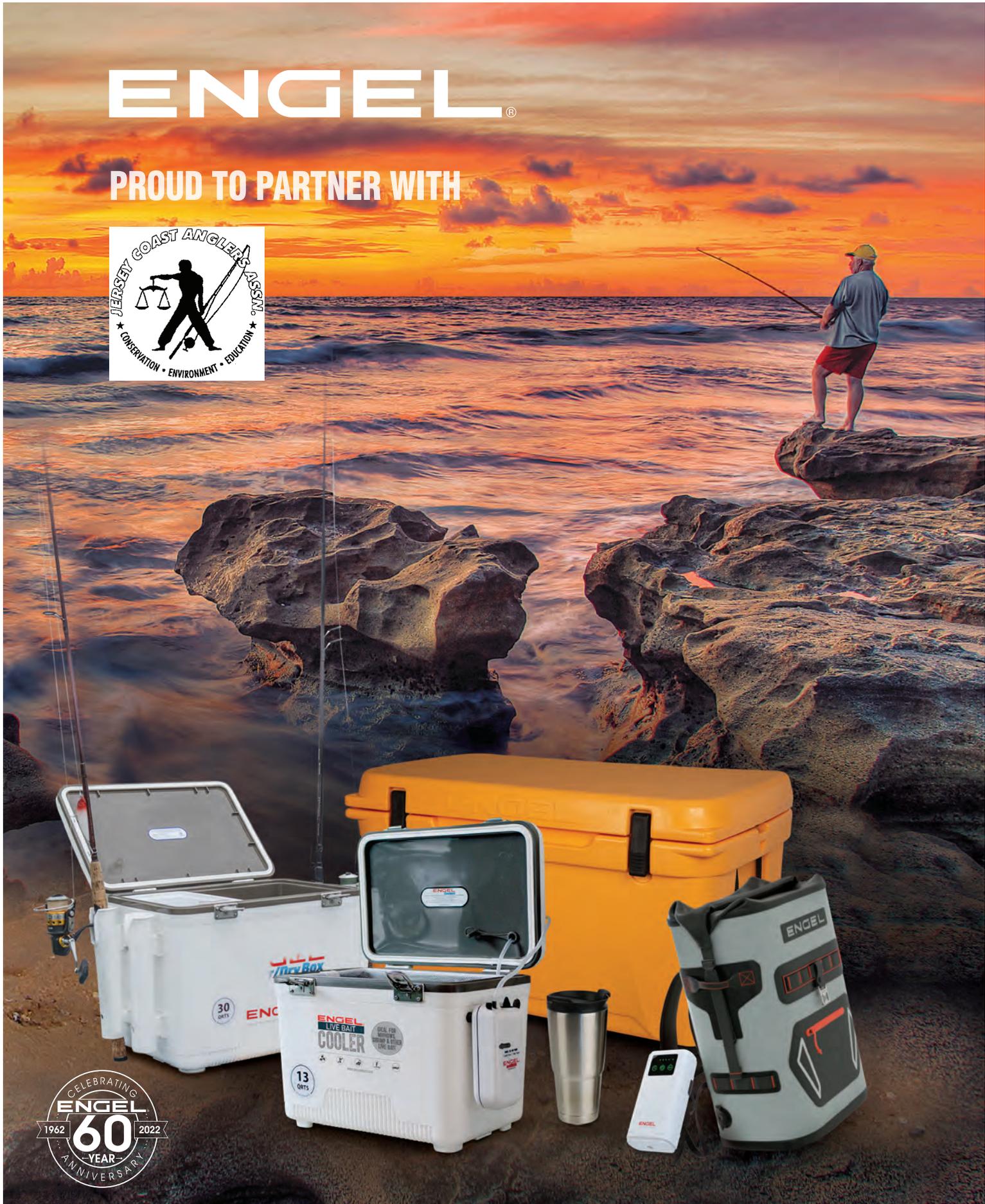
LAKE JULIANNA PLAY HOOK-E DISABLED FISHING DAY

Lake Julianna is celebrating its 10-year anniversary in 2026! Since launching in 2016, the program has grown to be one of the largest Free fishing events for the disabled community in Monmouth County. Disabled veterans and children look forward to making new fishing memories along with enjoying a day of food, family fun, and fishing at a private lake stocked full of big fish. You can register at [this link](#).



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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

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.

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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Monmouth
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