

THE NORFOLK ANGLERS CLUB

# WIRELINE

MARCH 2020

## What's Inside

Guest Speaker: Tautog Fishing with Anthony Barker, *Oceans East Bait & Tackle*

Fishing Tips: Fishing HRBT for Tautog & Sheepshead and Fishing Reel Service & Repair with Andrew Keisel

### Fishing Reports:

- Elizabeth River: Speckled Trout
- Lynnhaven: Speckled Trout
- Northwest River: Blue Catfish
- Lake Smith: Black Crappie and Largemouth Bass
- Florida/Key West: Snapper, Triggerfish and Grunts

# Leadership Notes...

Fellow Norfolk Anglers,

Looking forward to seeing many of you at the Annual Awards Banquet. We've got a great evening planned at the Norfolk Yacht & Country Club.

Welcome New Members Bryan Wright, Detra & Charles Blunt, and "BJ" Karwatt. We're glad you're with us and look forward to fishing with you!

Thanks to all the Boat Show volunteers. We made a fantastic showing and that's due to your help; Greg Rogers, Mike Hubert, Mike Davis, Alex Perez, Ned Smith, Mary Troutner, Tom Hubert, Kathy & Ike Eisenhower, Bert Sainz, George Grinnan, Jack Salvant, Angela Adams, and Wendy & Will Bransom.



On The Cover: Bert Sainz took this month's Cover Photo while fishing in the Elizabeth River in February for Speckled Trout. Read more about Bert's fishing trip in this month's Wireline.



## Meeting

Guest Speaker: Anthony Barker with Oceans East Bait & Tackle discussing Tautog fishing. Tautog are one of those species that can be challenging to catch and we're fortunate to have Anthony join us to share his expertise with Taug fishing.



## Important:

Date of next meeting - Monday, 9 March, 2020 at 7pm

## Location:

Teppanyaki Buffet & Grill  
7525 Tidewater Drive, Norfolk, VA 23505

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Norfolk Anglers Club

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**NORFOLK ANGLERS**



[www.NorfolkAnglersClub.com](http://www.NorfolkAnglersClub.com)

# Club Calendar

## March

Mon, March 2nd, ASMFC & MAFMC Scoping  
Hearing for Summer Flounder, Scup, and  
Black Sea Bass

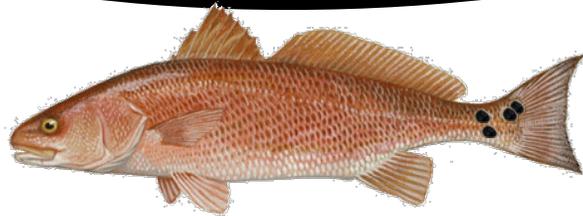
Sat, March 7th, Members Annual Award Banquet  
(Private Event)

Mon, March 9th, Club Meeting

Fri, March 13th, VGFTP Awards Ceremony, Bass Pro  
Shops Hampton, 7:00pm

Sat, March 14th, Fishing Flea Market

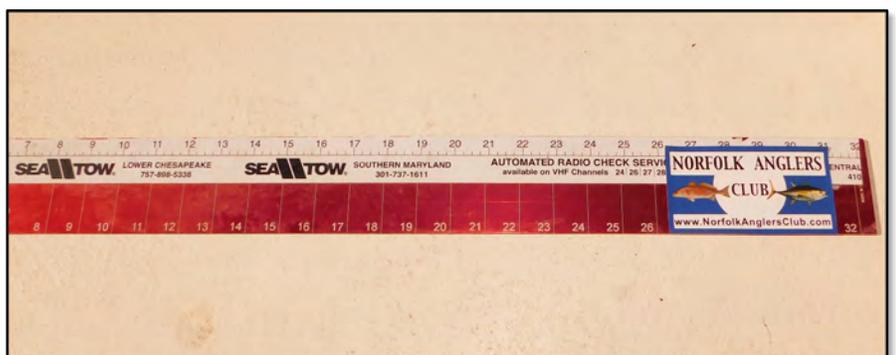
Sat, March 21st, Poquoson Nautical Flea Market



## Norfolk Anglers Club - Redfish "Spots" Tournament

### Rules

- Must be a Norfolk Anglers Club Member
- Tournament for fish caught between March 1, 2020 and November 30, 2020
- Must have the Norfolk Anglers Club decal in the photo with the fish on a measuring board showing the total length of the fish. See NAC Prize Fish Contest Rules for measuring info.
- Red Drum/Redfish up to 26 inches in length only and caught in Virginia and North Carolina waters
- Awards determined by 1st: number of Spots, 2nd: Largest Fish up to 26 inches, 3rd: Date of Catch
- Entries submitted on the Club Prize Fish Entry Form with photo (can be sent electronically to [NorfolkAnglersClub@gmail.com](mailto:NorfolkAnglersClub@gmail.com))
- No entry fee except the cost of the decal (\$1)
- \$50 Gift Card to the 1st Place Angler, \$25 Gift Card for the 2nd Place Angler and presented at the Club Holiday Party in December



## Sheepshead and Tautog at the HRBT with Andrew Keisel



The very same features that attract Tautog and Sheepshead to the larger and more well known areas like the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel also bring these fish into the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT) area. Those features are the vertical structure, horizontal/bottom structures, and food sources.

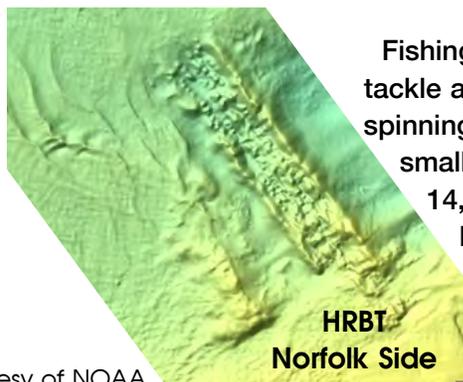
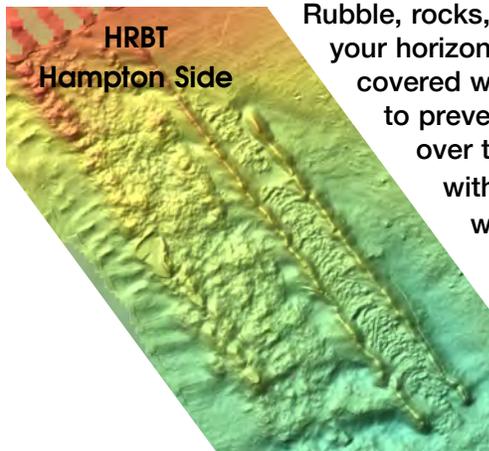
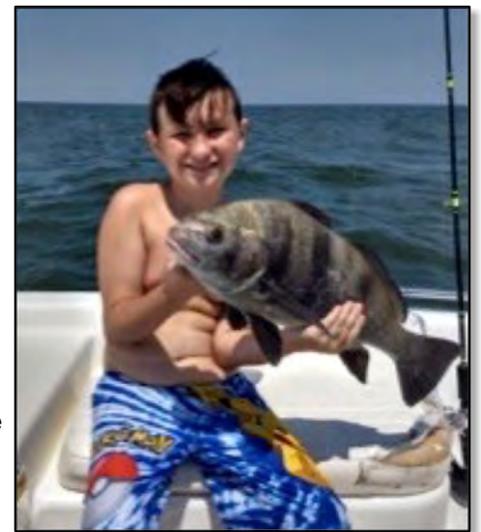
### Vertical Structures

Your vertical structures are your bridge tunnel pilings. You'll be fishing parallel or up/down the piling surfaces. Select rigs that will present baits inline with the features of the structure. Rigs like the Carolina Rig, Jigs, Single Dropper Loop with a hook girth hitched. Your ability to fish these vertical structures effectively is going to be limited by current flow. A fast moving current will wash your bait presentation too far away (scope out) from the structure and out of the strike zone.

Fishing vertical structures allows an angler to use lighter/more sporty tackle. A medium light-medium heavy spinner (2500-3000 series) or equivalent Baitcaster reel works well. Braided line 15-30# with 30-50# Fluorocarbon leader is a good range for vertical fishing. For Jig fishing Andrew will use 40# Fluorocarbon leader and advises not to go "too light" on line and leader material. Taug and Sheepshead can get themselves on the opposite side of the piling and lighter line/leader may not be able to handle the stress or chafe as you work the fish back around.

### Horizontal Structures

Rubble, rocks, wreckage, and other bottom lying debris are your horizontal structures. The tunnel sections are covered with rock as well as some of the piling bases to prevent scouring. These structures are fished over top and down into the structure. Select rigs that will penetrate the structure without risking too many hang ups. Rigs like the Belmar and Single Dropper Loop with a hook girth hitched work well. Your ability to fish bottom structure is also limited by a fast moving current. Fishing in fast moving current will require an angler to increase sinker weight and heavier weighting limits your ability "to feel" the bite.



Taug and Sheepshead are notorious bait stealers for their ability to work your bait over without signalling their presence. With multiple rows of teeth (especially the Sheepshead) designed to hold and crush the shells of crabs and mollusks, they can skillfully hold and work your bait with their powerful jaws and only give a nibble betraying their bite.

Fishing the horizontal structure will require upsizing your tackle as compared to vertical fishing. A medium-heavy spinning (3000-5000) or larger Baitcaster reels and some small Conventional reels & lever drags (AVET SX, Torium 14, etc.) will work fine too. Braid 30-65# and 40-80# Fluorocarbon leader is often needed to work the fish from deep in the structure. Rod selection is a tradeoff between limber enough to feel a light bite and strong enough to pressure the fish out of the structure.

## Bait for Sheepshead & Tautog

Andrew's #1 bait choice for Sheepsies and Taugs is Whole Live Peeler Blue Crabs. Hard Female Blue Crabs are his second crab bait choice. Peeler crabs and blue crabs are fished whole or can be halved or quartered depending on the size of the crab and the fish you're targeting. Shrimp, live and fresh dead, make excellent baits for Taugs and Sheepshead. Both of these are familiar food sources for the fish around the HRBT. Where do Fiddler Crabs fit in? While many anglers use Fiddlers with success, after all, they come from the crab family, they're Andrew's last choice for crab bait. As he explained, Fiddler Crabs just aren't a normal diet for fish around the HRBT. It's best to present a bait that the fish are accustomed to and in as natural a presentation as possible.

Mollusks (clams, oysters, mussels, barnacles) are another excellent choice bait. Clams and oysters are shucked while mussels are not. Andrew will generally halve the clam and leave the shucked oyster whole on the hook. You want to get a good sized piece of clam or oyster on the hook. His choice of hooks is the 3/0 Owner SSW Cutting Point hook, which is an extremely sharp and durable offset J-Hook.

Mussels and barnacles are primarily used for vertical fishing. Andrew recommends presenting these baits just as the fish would find them as they search up and down the pilings. Barnacles are simply rigged on the 3/0 Owner hook and the mussels are left in the shell. He'll rig mussels by making a small hole in the mussel shell close to



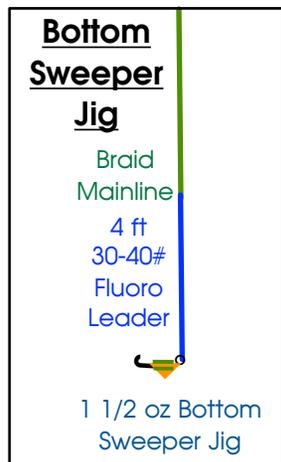
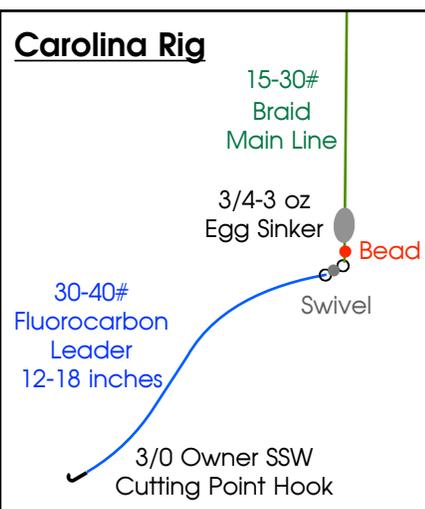
the edge where the "beard" attaches. Insert the J-Hook and orient the point inside the shell toward the large/thick end of the mussel. You want the hookpoint *inside* the shell and the mussel hanging naturally as they would growing on structure.



Collect your barnacles off dock pilings or other structure they grow on. Andrew uses a plastic bucket with the lip trimmed to nearly match the curved shape of the piling. He'll use the trimmed bucket lip to scrape the barnacles and collect them in the bucket. He recommends bringing some barnacles with you and using them for chum if not rigged on a hook.

## Rigging Techniques

Andrew shared a number of rigging techniques for vertical and horizontal fishing the HRBT. The classic Carolina Rig is an ideal rig for vertical fishing the pilings without fast moving current. Keep the egg sinker weight a light as possible to keep the rig from scoping out. Lighter weights will help with detecting the softer strike of Taug and Sheepshead. The 12-18 inch Fluorocarbon leader will position the bait close to the structure where you want it. The bead added before the swivel helps to prevent the weight from chafing the braided knot at the swivel.

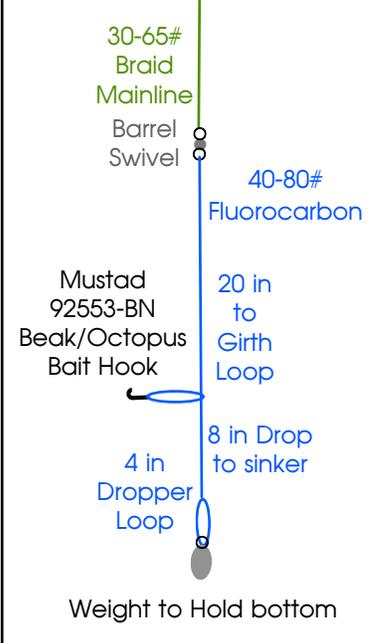


The Bottom Sweeper® Jig (photo lower right) is one of the most easy to rig for fishing the vertical water column. These jigs come with heavy duty 2x strong Mustad® ultra point hooks and 1/4 ounce to 3 ounce weight. Hook sizes for the 1/4-3/4 oz jigs are 1/0, the 3/4-1 oz jigs come with a 2/0 hook, and 1-1.5 oz jigs with a 3/0 hook. Andrew will rig up to the 1.5 ounce jig and ties directly to a 4ft fluorocarbon leader.

The advantage of the Bottom Sweeper® jig is that it provides instant feedback when Taugs and Sheepshead are working your bait. Andrew added that often this type of jig generates hard hitting strikes.



## Single Dropper Loop (w/Girth Hitch) Rig

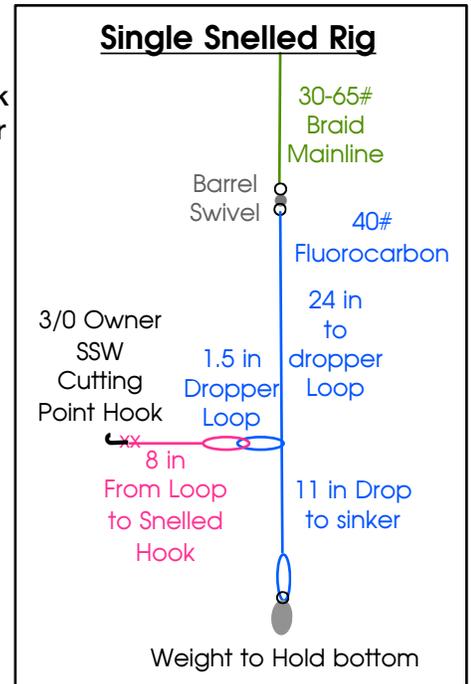


The Single Dropper Loop w/Girth Hitch Rig is a rig that can be used for vertical or horizontal structures. The 40-80# fluorocarbon rig is tied to a barrel swivel to make rigs easy to change out. From the swivel is 20 inch length to the dropper loop and an 8 inch drop to the sinker loop. The dropper loop is 4 inches in length and what sets this dropper style loop apart from others is the hook is double wrapped around the shank to form a figure 8 (photo right). The wrap serves to hold the hook in an extended position. Andrew prefers the 3/0 Mustad 92553-BN Beak/Octopus Bait Hook for this rig.

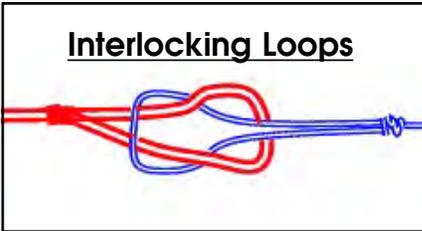


The Single Snelled Rig is another bottom structure fishing rig. While similar to most single dropper rigs, this rig differs by creating a small dropper loop 24 inches from the swivel and interlocking the dropper loop with the loop to the snelled hook. The snelled hook portion is an 8 inch piece snelled to the 3/0 Owner J-Hook and a loop tied at the other. The interlocking loop method makes changing out the drop length and hooks easy.

## Single Snelled Rig

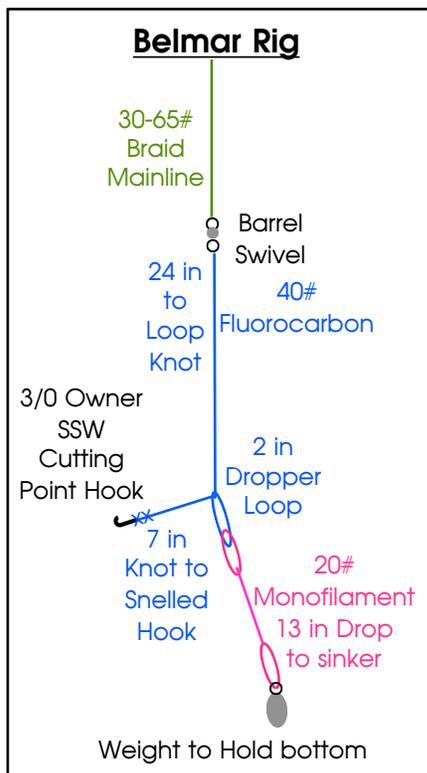


## Interlocking Loops



The Belmar Rig also uses the interlocking loop for modifying the length of the drop to the sinker. It's tied with 40# fluorocarbon leader with a 24 inch length to the dropper loop however, instead of using the loop for the hook attachment this rig uses the loop for the drop to the sinker. The remaining single end is used to create a 7 inch length to the snelled 3/0 Owner J-Hook. The 13 inch monofilament drop to the sinker has a loop at each end, one for the interlocking loop and the other for the weight. Anglers can vary the monofilament line class, Andrew uses 20# test for the drop so that if the rig hangs up in structure the sacrificial drop breaks away and saves the fluorocarbon rig. Reattaching another sinker drop is quick and easy using the interlocking loops.

## Belmar Rig



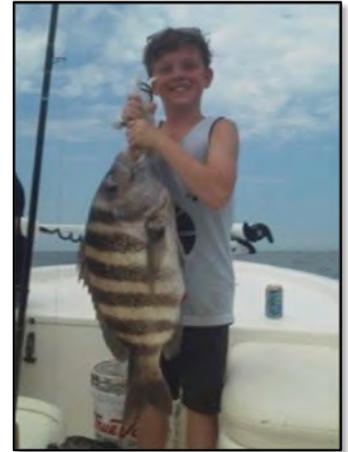
With all of these bottom structure rigs, anglers should use as little sinker weight as possible. Using stiffer rods to pull the fish from structure and heavier sinkers makes feeling the bite more challenging. As a general practice Andrew prefers not using more than 3 ounces for vertical fishing and no more than 8 ounces for bottom fishing. With those weights as a guide, if you're still scoping out, you're probably fishing in too fast of current.



## Fishing Tips and Techniques

Andrew shared some of the best times to target Sheepshead is May through November. Start in the spring when the water temperature is 55-60 degrees until it drops to 50 degrees in the fall. For Taugs he likes March through May and October through December when the water temperature is between 45-65 degrees. Remember Sheepshead and Tautog fishing isn't just for boats. The local piers, jetties, and breakwaters offer opportunities to fish for these species as well. The rigs, baits, and techniques apply for fishing the HRBT apply equally to shore and pier anglers.

Andrew fishes with the rod at about a 45 degree toward the water. He recommends not fishing the rod tip high and then reeling in the slack as you lower it to set the hook. Just as you feel everything with braided line so do the fish. Minimize the amount of rod movement or cranking before setting the hook. Keep the rod tip down and be ready to set the hook!



When fishing the vertical structure keep a tight line to the rig. If your rig is scoping out, or being carried away by the current, increase the weight. Remember, more weight lessens your ability to "feel" the bite. Look for a change in the "feel" of the rig, sometimes it's subtle and sometimes it's like a hammer banging on the rig. Andrew looks for his jig to move away, or the sharp hit from an aggressively feeding fish, sometimes the rig will go slack off the bottom. When this happens it's time to bring the rod tip up and set the hook. When fishing the bottom structure an angler might feel as though the rig is stuck in the mud, feel a slight thump, or the rig goes slack. These are typical indications of a strike. He added, "Swings are free so set the hook when you feel something different on the rig".

## About Peeler Crabs

Peeler crabs are Blue Crabs that are processing through their molting cycle. How often they molt or shed their existing shell can be as high as two dozen times in their 3 year lifespan. As a blue crab outgrows its shell it will begin the molting cycle. When they shed their existing shell the crabs new shell hasn't begun to harden, they're called "Peelers" (see photo lower left). Generally, it takes a few days for their new shell to harden. While the crabs are "Peelers" or SoftShell Crabs, they're quite defenseless without their outer armor. Anglers prize the Peeler crabs as bait for Sheepshead and Tautog.

To rig a Peeler for bait Andrew inserts the hook in the bottom side of the backfin joint coming up through the top of the carapace (top shell). Hooking a crab this way keeps the crab alive and in a more natural presentation.

In order to tell if a blue crab has begun the molting process look to their back fin or swimming fin. The middle segment will provide a clue to whether or not their molting. A "White Sign" indicates the crab may be two weeks from molting. A "Pink Sign" means it'll molt within a week, and a "Red Sign" means molting in less than two days. For more information on Blue Crab molting process visit the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center at <https://serc.si.edu> or BlueCrab.Info at [www.bluecrab.info/molting.html](http://www.bluecrab.info/molting.html)



Photo Courtesy of [www.ourstate.com](http://www.ourstate.com)

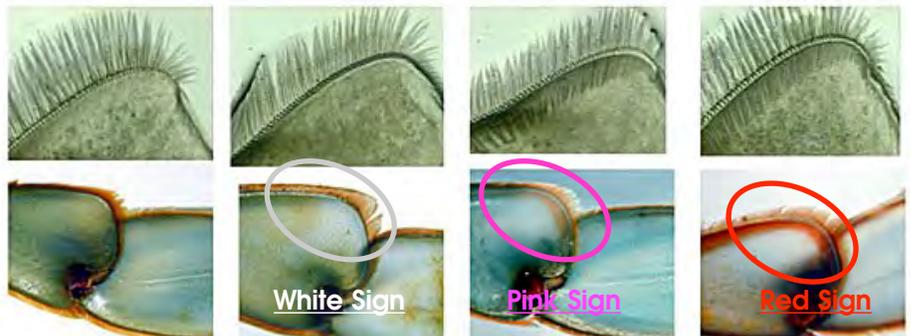


Photo courtesy of Alicia Young-Williams, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center

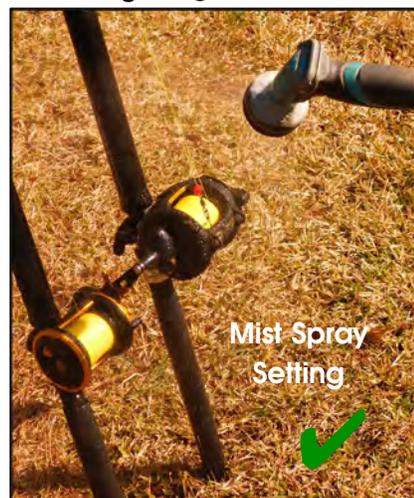
## Fishing Reel Service & Repair; Maintenance and Care to Keep You Fishing with Andrew Keisel



How many anglers come back from a saltwater fishing trip and clean the boat, flush the motors, rinse the trailer, clean the catch, freshwater rinse your fishing gear and then store everything for the next trip? For the majority of anglers that's the regular routine. Today's fishing reel manufacturers are producing high quality and finely machined products that require a bit more care than a simple freshwater rinse. Sharing his experiences with reel service and repair, Andrew Keisel added, a light misting freshwater rinse is one of the best things anglers can do for their rods & reels after a trip. Don't stop there!, he added. If you want to keep your reels working year after year there are a few simple minor maintenance needs for reels every time it's used. Preventative maintenance tasks should be completed every time you return from a trip and a few things avoided.

### Things to do:

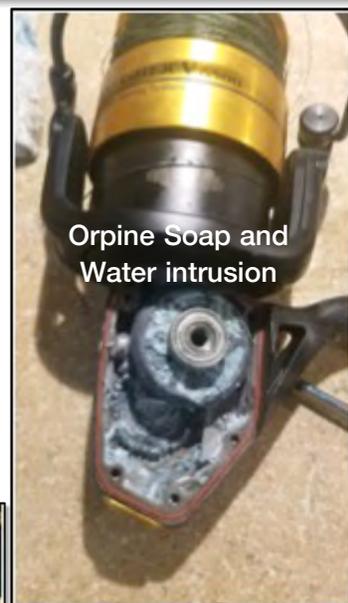
- ✓ Keep reels away from constant salt spray during the trip. Placing your reels along the gunnel during your transit will subject them to hard hitting salt spray. That's never good for the reels. A better option would be to place them under the gunnel in a rod holder, in the upper rod holders, and use reel covers.
- ✓ Provide an initial light misting freshwater rinse to remove encrusted salt. Using too much pressure can drive contaminants and water into the reel where they will begin doing damage.
- ✓ Apply oil (1 drop) to handle knobs, bail joints, line rollers, worm assemblies and other exposed areas after each use.
- ✓ Back off the drag settings for storage, bait clickers can be used to hold light tension if the rods and reels are left rigged.
- ✓ Use products, oils and greases designed for fishing reels.



Mist Spray  
Setting

### Things to AVOID:

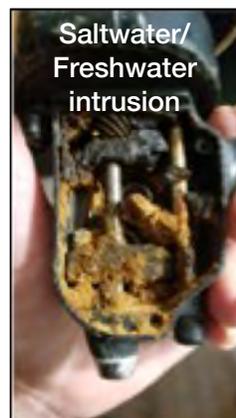
- ✗ Avoid washing reels with lots of soapy water. Soaps can degrade oils and greases. Soaps are fine for rods but soap solutions getting inside the reel will emulsify with grease and degrade the lubrication (photo right).
- ✗ Medium or heavy water pressure on the reel. Use a light misting spray. You don't want to force water and contaminants inside the reel (photo lower right).
- ✗ Avoid lubricants or solvents not specifically designed for fishing reels. Gun lubes and WD40 should be avoided. Using lubricants not designed for reels may damage plastic parts, fail to provide proper lubrication, and interfere with the reel's operation. WD40 though labeled as a lubricant is a degreaser and degrades the oils and grease.



Orpine Soap and  
Water intrusion

### A Typical Routine

So what should be a typical routine when it comes to your rod and reel after a trip? Andrew recommended washing your rod and reel gently. Soap on the rod is fine, also okay are products like Salt-Away®, which help to dissolve and remove salt accumulations. Give the reels a light misting rinse and dry them off. Be sure to back off the drags on all reels. Doing so will release the pressure on the drag washers and insure smooth operation later. Apply a single drop of oil to handle knobs, bail joints, line rollers, worm assemblies, and other exposed areas. For spinning reels be sure to remove the spool and apply a small amount of oil to the internal components.



Saltwater/  
Freshwater  
intrusion



### When the reel "just isn't right"

Occasionally an angler might have an issue with the reel working properly. It could be a momentary glitch when cranking, a drag that's not smooth, or some "rubbing" inside the reel. Now is the time to stop using the reel and get it serviced. Even though the issue may appear to correct itself, something could seriously be wrong inside the reel. These kinds of problems don't get better with additional use. As Andrew shared, small issues snowball into larger repair bills. Pieces of broken materials will jam into other moving parts and cause additional damage. When damage is done to frames, housings, and gears, it comes at a higher cost. Take the Penn Battle 2500 (pictured right), after experiencing a momentary "hiccup" while cranking the owner continued to use the reel. A screw had backed out and began rubbing against gear teeth producing metal particles which eventually sheared the drive gear. Repair expenses were over 60% of the reel replacement cost. Stop and get a reel serviced anytime there's a problem.



### Don't wait for problems to emerge to get a reel serviced

If you want to keep your reels in top shape and avoid costly repairs, get your reels serviced annually. Each reel Andrew services, whether it's an annual cleaning service or a minor repair goes through the same process. Every reel is completely disassembled ultrasonic cleaned with the proper cleaning solutions, inspected, relubricated with the correct lubricants and reassembled. Any parts found to be an issue are replaced. The cost of an annual reel service is rather small when compared to any major repair or reel replacement. Andrew added, if you've attempted a reel service yourself and found it to be a bit more than expected, bring the parts in a plastic bag and it can be made whole again for the same cost as a regular service, plus the cost of any parts that didn't find their way in the bag.

### Oil or Grease? for the DIY'er

For those anglers who regularly perform their own preventative maintenance Andrew recommends reviewing the owners manual that came with the reel. Some manufactures call for oil in some areas and grease in others. Most Owners Manuals include instructions for servicing and an illustrated breakdown of the reel.



Andrew Keisel is an avid angler who performs part-time full service fishing reel repairs and maintenance in Hampton Roads since 2007. He and his wife Stephanie support our angling community's reel repair & service needs through two local tackle shops; Bishop Fishing Supply in Yorktown and Princess Anne Distributing Co. in Virginia Beach.



757-591-9300

**Support Your  
Local Tackle  
Shops**



757-428-1000

## Coast Guard Cutter Bear crewmembers return home after interdicting \$59.8 million in drugs

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — The crew of Coast Guard Cutter Bear returned to their homeport in Portsmouth, Virginia, after a 45-day patrol in the Caribbean Sea, Saturday.

The crew of the Bear conducted counter-narcotics and migrant interdiction operations as a part of Operation Unified Resolve, as well as took part in a search and rescue case. In total, crewmembers of the Bear detained 12 suspected drug smugglers and confiscated 72 bales of cocaine while working with the Department of Defense and other law enforcement partners.

Notably, the crew of the Bear conducted a four-day boarding on a 295-foot coastal freighter after a maritime patrol aircraft observed the vessel with two suspicious objects being towed astern. Subsequently, Bear's crew conducted another four-day joint law enforcement boarding with Haitian partners.

"It was an exceedingly difficult boarding due to the vessel's large size, configuration, and amount of cargo onboard," said Cmdr. Don Terkanian, commanding officer of Coast Guard Cutter Bear. "I am proud of the hard work and dedication our crewmembers put in during that four-day boarding. I am also thankful for the sacrifices their families make every day to support their Coast Guardsmen and their missions to keep our country safe."

*The Norfolk Anglers Club is very proud of Henry Troutner who served aboard U.S. Coast Guard Cutter BEAR during their operational deployment with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Henry was recognized by the Captain with an Auxiliary Commandant's Letter of Commendation for his service and support during this operational period.*

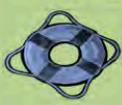


Photo Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard



Photo Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard

## Poquoson Kiwanis Club



Boat Sale, Nautical Art Show,  
Fishing Flea Market



Saturday, March 21, 2020  
8:00am – 1:00pm  
Rain or Shine

Poquoson High School  
51 Odd Road  
Poquoson, VA 23662

Admission Fee: \$3 (Age 13 & up)

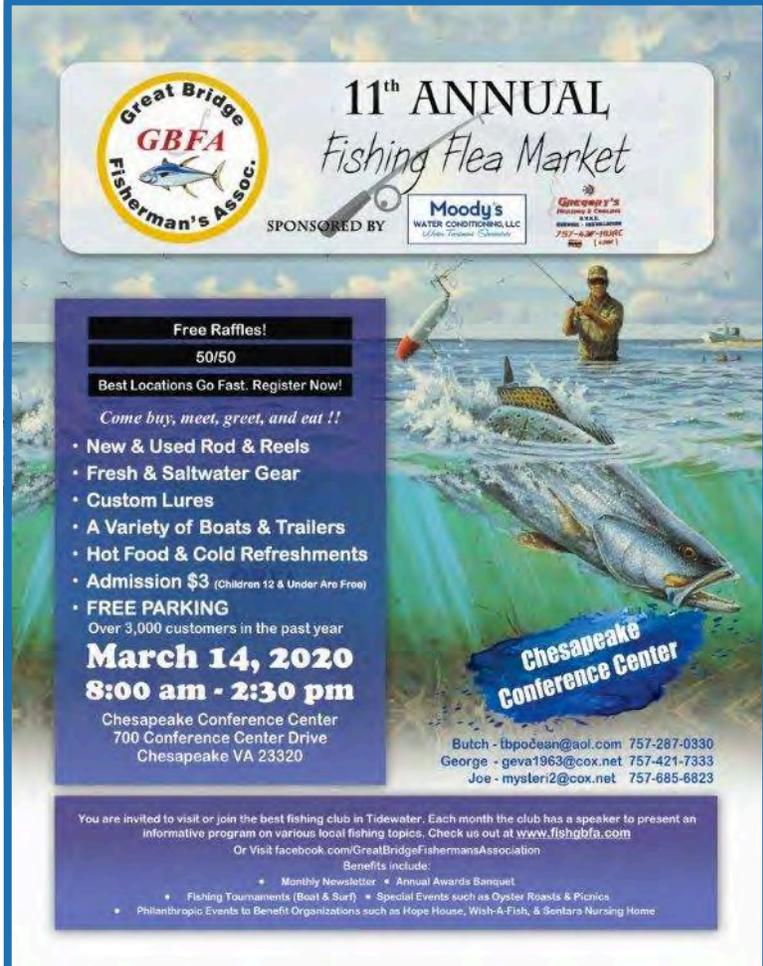


## Activities

- New & Used Boats
- Boating Gear
- New & Used Fishing Gear
- Nautical Arts & Crafts
- Refreshments & Food

For more information send e-mail:  
[boat-fish-art@poquosonkiwanis.com](mailto:boat-fish-art@poquosonkiwanis.com)  
or visit our website:  
[http://www.poquosonkiwanis.org/Kiwanis/Flea\\_Market.html](http://www.poquosonkiwanis.org/Kiwanis/Flea_Market.html)

Facebook Page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/PBFFM>





## 11<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL Fishing Flea Market

SPONSORED BY




**Free Raffles!**  
50/50  
Best Locations Go Fast. Register Now!

*Come buy, meet, greet, and eat !!*

- New & Used Rod & Reels
- Fresh & Saltwater Gear
- Custom Lures
- A Variety of Boats & Trailers
- Hot Food & Cold Refreshments
- Admission \$3 (Children 12 & Under Are Free)
- **FREE PARKING**  
Over 3,000 customers in the past year

**March 14, 2020**  
**8:00 am - 2:30 pm**

Chesapeake Conference Center  
700 Conference Center Drive  
Chesapeake VA 23320

**Chesapeake Conference Center**

Butch - [tbpocan@aol.com](mailto:tbpocan@aol.com) 757-287-0330  
George - [geva1963@cox.net](mailto:geva1963@cox.net) 757-421-7333  
Joe - [myster12@cox.net](mailto:myster12@cox.net) 757-685-6823

You are invited to visit or join the best fishing club in Tidewater. Each month the club has a speaker to present an informative program on various local fishing topics. Check us out at [www.fishgbfa.com](http://www.fishgbfa.com)

Or Visit facebook.com/GreatBridgeFishermansAssociation

Benefits include:

- Monthly Newsletter
- Annual Awards Banquet
- Fishing Tournaments (Boat & Surf)
- Special Events such as Oyster Roasts & Picnics
- Philanthropic Events to Benefit Organizations such as Hope House, Wish-A-Fish, & Sentara Nursing Home

# Fishing Reports...



31 Jan: Louis and I chartered Josh Andrews to take us catfish fishing on the Northwest River. Weather had us in upper 30's temps in the early morning that settled mostly in the mid 40's with light North winds, perfect for catching catfish in 45 degree water. We were headed down the river into North Carolina and set up lines in a deep feeder creek off the river and within a half an hour Louis was fighting a nice blue catfish 19.5 lbs. 34.5 inches. Next one was a 33 inch one for me and shortly after that I caught a 38", 25lb release citation blue catfish.



By 9:30 am Louis and I had caught 6 catfish; all were over 30 inches and a couple of small throwback size ones under 3lbs. As we were heading to our first anchoring we had set out 5 pool noodles with lines attached in hope of getting smaller keeper sized fish. As we headed back up the river stopping at each place fishing with rods we found each noodle held a fish waiting for us. The biggest was 44 inches that Josh is holding for the picture. Of the 15 caught total 8 were over 30 inches. All fish were caught on fresh shad Josh had netted. This was Louis' first experience cat fishing from a boat. We had an awesome time. Most catfish were released but I kept a couple for dinner. I'm not as concerned about PCB's with their meat like we have been with fish from the James.



- Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower

16 FEB: I was hoping the my third report was the best but sadly not this time. My friends Bill and Billy Hamilton, along with Danny Moore made an attempt to head out to the Tower reef to try for Tautog. Danny had made the drive from New Jersey just to fish so we were determined to go somewhere. Once seeing the weather report in the morning, we decided it wouldn't be the best weather for wreck fishing. We decided on our back up plan of trying the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel (MMBT) and Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel (HRBT) for Striped Bass.

We arrived at the MMBT island and anchored over the tube to see if anything would bite 28 feet down in the 46 degree water. We were using Jonah crabs and failed to get any bites. We changed over to drifting the bridge pilings and still found no action. Later in the afternoon we ran to HRBT as a last stop before heading in and found the same story, no bites. A skunk like this makes me feel good about the rest of the year. I don't mind paying our dues early to experience a wonderful season!

- Alex Perez



Not robbing a stage coach, just trying to stay warm!



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3 Feb: Russell and I fished the Elizabeth River today targeting speckled trout in his Carolina skiff. We launched out of Great Bridge Locks ramp and headed straight to the area we had heard was good the day before. Temps in the air was in the 60's and water temp was almost 50 degrees. I was casting MirrOlures and Russell 3 inch swim baits from shallow to deep we found the speckled trout. At first they were all short 12-13 inches but I did manage one 19 inch, a 17 inch and two 15 inch fish. Over the hour and a half we ended up with about 15 speckled trout between the two of us until the current went slack. They seemed to prefer my 52MR TT808 color with orange belly, brown back.

Once the bite stopped we traveled around the river and looked for more but found no bite in the slack tide even when we found fish on the sonar. We checked the Deep Creek but even an hour into the incoming tide there was little current. We fished the S curve area and did pick up a couple of small ones. So we went back to the place we caught well earlier and started catching again. But this time it was all small fish; the biggest was about 14 inches. They preferred my green 27MR but I had to count out 20 to make sure it got down to the 18 foot bottom. We finished the day with over 30 caught. I only kept the 19 inch speckled trout but it was fun catching those fish. We had great weather, it ended up at 70 degrees and light winds.

- Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower

16 Feb: I fished the triangle wrecks and closer inshore with Mike Hubert, Rich Redd and Frank Slevin. We caught one sea bass up to 12 1/4 inches for every 5 dogfish. No photos were permitted. We had a great crew and sea conditions. We finished with sighting humpback whales on the way in.



- Jackson B. Salvant Jr., M.D.



4 Feb: There are still a few Trout left in the creek. The water temperature was 47 degrees. The air temperature was 68 degrees. That temperature was hard to believe for this time of year.

- James Robinson

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*follow the fishing on facebook!*

10 Feb: I fished with Russell Willoughby in his john boat in Lake Smith. It was windy out of the SW but warm and with the wind protection of the Lake Smith's and Lawson's coves. It was fishable with bobbers and shiners. It started slow with my only catching a 10 inch .75 lb. black crappie keeper and two small ones and one small bass released with Russell catching only a small crappie. But when we went to the next cove and began to explore it casting our bait and bobbers around the cove, Russell got hooked up with a big one that got off at the boat. Next cast he brought in a crappie that weighed 1.64 lb. and was 14 inches long for a definite club minimum weight fish.

From that point we began to catch one after another with gaps in the time catching but we kept it up until we ran out of shiners. We finished the day with Russell catching another weight club minimum of 1.62 lbs., a release club minimum 12.5 inches and several more throw backs. I ended up with two more keeper fish and several more throw backs.



So we kept Russell's weight fish and my keepers making a great couple of meals for us. Great catch for Russell as he only used medium shiners and that seemed to make a difference. I used a mix of smalls and mediums. It was a super day over all.  
- Dr. James W. Ike  
Eisenhower



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12 Feb: I went fishing with Russell again on Wednesday in Lake Smith since the temperatures continued to be okay with a lot of sun. We started out in a place we had done well on Monday and decided to release all of the fish since I had 5 nice crappie from Monday to eat. Today was my day to shine with the crappie. I started with a 12 inch crappie club minimum release which was followed by a 11 inch crappie club minimum release so (sorry, no pics of them). Then there was no hits for a while so we moved to another nice spot. Then it was one bass after another. Russell ended up with 7 bass total for the day, the biggest was a 17 inch



club minimum release. I caught three bass with the biggest being an 11 inch. The bass seemed to prefer the bigger shiners. Water temperature was 54 degrees. - Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower

8 Feb: On a Saturday, I was limited in access to live bait for Tautog. I made due with frozen Jonah crabs and shrimp. I found an interesting structure on the Tower Reef and anchored up. I alternated between shrimp and crab. I could not entice a bite.

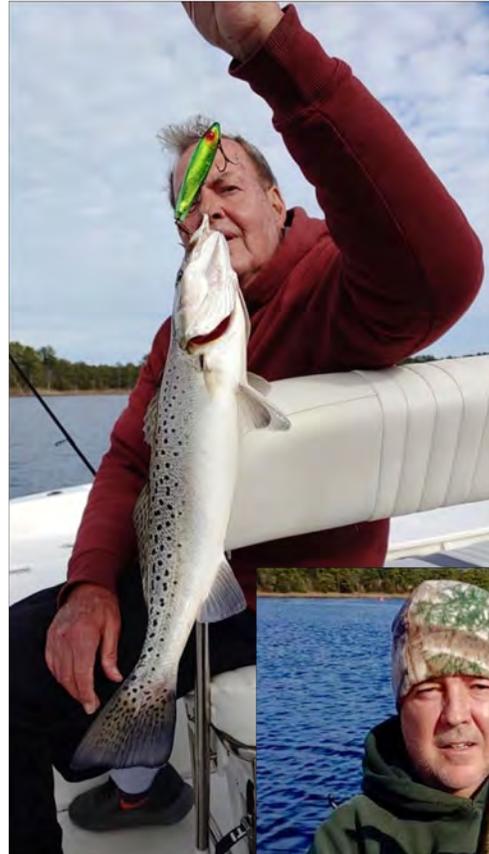


Tower Reef Bass

It was very quiet until the current slacked. Once that happened, the dogfish invaded. I caught three using crab and one lost Black Sea Bass which was tagged and released. I decided to head in and quit while I was ahead. - Alex Perez



Visiting Dogfish



18 Feb: I fished with Douglas Wilburn in the morning in the Elizabeth River under foggy conditions for speckled trout.

We ended up catching 25 speckled trout with 15 keeper size.

Most fish were caught on 52MR MirrOlures. Purple Demon and Green were most effective. The water temperature was 53 degrees. - Louis Glaser





24 Feb: I went fishing on Lake Smith with Russell again when we found a low wind day. The weather had been colder in the evenings going down into the 30's so we weren't surprised that the water temp was 46 degrees and we expected a slow start. We started fishing about 10:00 am and went straight for the back of Smith Lake. In about 5 minutes at this first stopover I got hooked up on a big bass that again went airborne and spit my jig at me almost hitting me in the head. *Great exciting start*, but I wasn't trying to catch bass at all. So a little later there I hooked a 12 inch black crappie club minimum release (sorry no photo of that one) and another that was throwback size. Then nothing. We tried another location on the lake and that produced nothing as well. Since the wind was coming out of the SW we tried one of our Northern coves and then the catching began again. Both Russell and I started catching fish, Russell caught bass and I caught crappie. I started there with a 11 inch and then a 11.5 inch release and several small ones but the big fish finally found

my shiner. This was a 14.5 inch, 1.8 lb. (28.8 ounces) crappie in the net and released for another club minimum. It was full of roe and fat despite the fact that it wasn't long enough for a state citation. Russell was able to boat two 15 inch bass for club minimums and hooked but lost a couple more. Then it began to rain on us earlier than predicted so we quickly left the lake around 2:00 pm. Overall, it was a productive few hours of fishing even with cold water in the lake. Medium sized shiners worked better than small ones, with a jig of various colors under a bobber. We use bobber stoppers also. - Dr. James W. Ike Eisenhower

I spent a week in Key West. We had to limit fishing a few days due to high winds. This was the catch of one of the days we did get out for a few hours.

We fished near Patch Reef with circle hooks using Ballyhoo, Pilchards, and Silversides. The 32 fish catch included Lane and Mangrove Snappers, Triggerfish and Grunts. We also caught twice as many non-keepers, including Groupers, Blue Runners and Sharks.

A 9-10 foot Bullshark followed one of my Snappers right up to the side of the boat, snapping at it as I pulled it out of the water. He did get a few if we didn't move the fish fast as we reeled in.

In 4 days of fishing we caught enough to have a fish fry for over 60 people. I, like many others, wish the Chesapeake Bay had such an abundance of fish.

- Hank Giffin

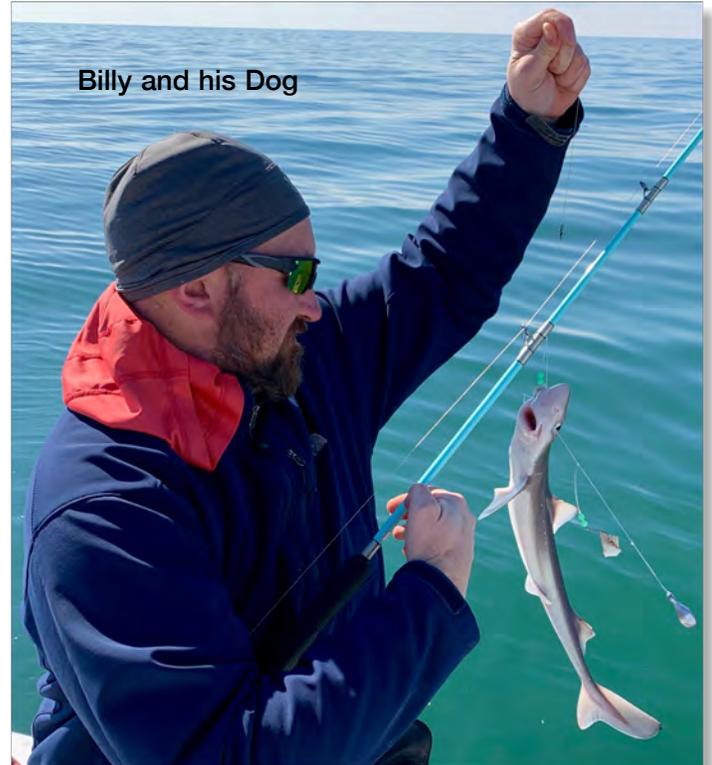




Al with a Dogfish on a jig!

9 Feb: I had Billy Ragulsky and Al Avendano with me for a trip to the Triangle Reef. We were targeting Black Sea Bass for the month long February season. I made my phone call to VMRC and we proceeded East for the 30 mile run. Approximately 15 nautical miles into the trip I lost all power and came to an immediate stop. There would be no Black Sea Bass on this day. I later found out I had an electrical short involving the engine control system.

While attempting to troubleshoot the issue, Billy and Al asked how they could help. I told them to stand by and start fishing if they'd like.

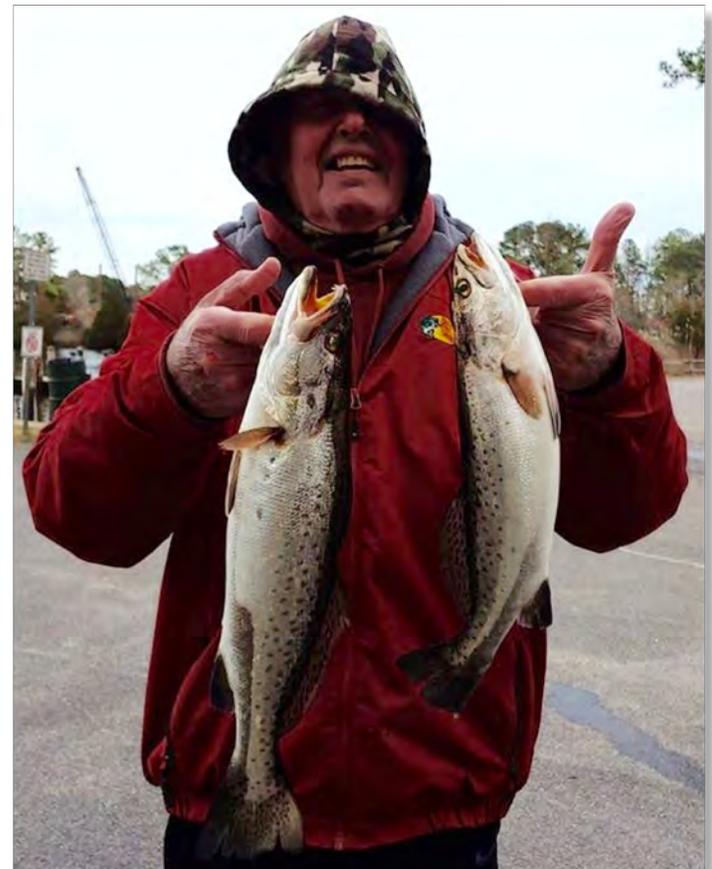


Billy and his Dog



Thank you Sea Tow Hampton Roads!

I was hoping to have us underway soon enough. We were over sand bottom, Billy and Al immediately started catching Dogfish. They were catching so many, they stopped using Squid and Shrimp, and switching to 2 ounce metal jigs. The Dogfish ate them too. After running out of 15A fuses (seven total!). I ended up calling Sea Tow Hampton Roads. They quickly arrived and even recommended we keep fishing on the way in!  
- Alex Perez



16 Feb: I fished in the morning with Bert Sainz and Mike Rynhart on the Elizabeth River. We ended up with 5 keepers and lost a big one at the boat. We caught 3 on MirrOlures and 2 on rubber. It was awfully cold and the water temperature was 50 degrees. - Louis Glaser

3 Feb: Bert and I went speckled trout fishing on the Elizabeth River on a sunny warm day. We started at 8:30 am and got off the water at 2:30 pm. We fished the incoming and outgoing tides. The current was strong and the water temperature was 50 degrees. We moved several times but each place we caught speckled trout. We used 27 and 52 MirrOlures and caught a lot on both baits. In all we had over 40 speckled trout with the largest being 20 inches. *Thanks Bert for the great day on the water!*



9 Feb Bert took Louis, Burt Whitt, and I to the Elizabeth River to do some speckled trout fishing. We fished the outgoing tide for 5 hours and caught 10 keepers (16 to 22 inches) and 5 throwbacks. We used 27 and 52 MirrOlures, rubber baits and a Paul Brown Fatboy. I enjoyed the time spent with the boys!

- Ned Smith



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# Angler Interests

## Atlantic Menhaden Update



**American Sportfishing Association**  
*Leading the Way for Sportfishing's Future*

## Virginia General Assembly Passes Legislation to Strengthen Menhaden Conservation

*Bill supports recreational fishing economy and science-based management*

**Alexandria, VA – February 27, 2020** – With strong bipartisan support, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation that improves menhaden management in the Atlantic.

The bill, which is headed to Governor Northam's desk, transfers management authority of Atlantic menhaden to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, which oversees every other saltwater fishery in the Commonwealth. Once signed into law, the legislation puts Virginia on a path toward compliance with the regional fishery management plan, which foreign fishing giant Omega Protein violated last year.

“With this landmark decision, the Virginia General Assembly has acknowledged the critical role that recreational fishing plays in the Virginia economy and the need for science, and not politics, to guide management,” **said Whit Fosburgh, president and CEO for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership**. “For too long, Omega has exploited the Chesapeake Bay at the expense of recreational anglers. This is a huge step forward for sound fisheries conservation in the Chesapeake. The recreational fishing community thanks the bill sponsors and Governor Northam for their leadership as well as the unfailing support of charter captains, fishing guides and other small businesses who rely on a healthy Chesapeake Bay for their livelihoods.”

In late 2019, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission found Omega Protein had exceeded the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishing cap by 35 million pounds, a ruling upheld by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. Conserving menhaden is particularly important because striped bass, which feed on menhaden, are in worrisome decline.

“As a critical food source for rockfish and other important recreational fisheries, menhaden must be managed sustainably to support their role in the ecosystem,” **said Mike Leonard, vice president of government affairs for the American Sportfishing Association**. “Allowing the fisheries management experts at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to manage menhaden is a long-awaited step in ensuring science-based management of the resource. The sportfishing industry is particularly grateful to Governor Northam and leaders in the Virginia state legislature for prioritizing this bill and working diligently toward its passage.”

“There is a growing need for more robust conservation practices in our fisheries – not only with menhaden but all forage fish – and the passage of this bill is an important step towards better recognizing and correcting the harmful impacts overfishing can have on our communities,” **said Nicole Vasilaros, senior vice president of government and legal affairs for the National Marine Manufacturers Association**. “Protecting menhaden is essential for recreational activities in the Chesapeake Bay and we thank Virginia legislators for taking action to that ensure our marine ecosystems remain healthy for generations to come.”

# Angler Interests



**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

## NEWS RELEASE

*Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 7, 2020

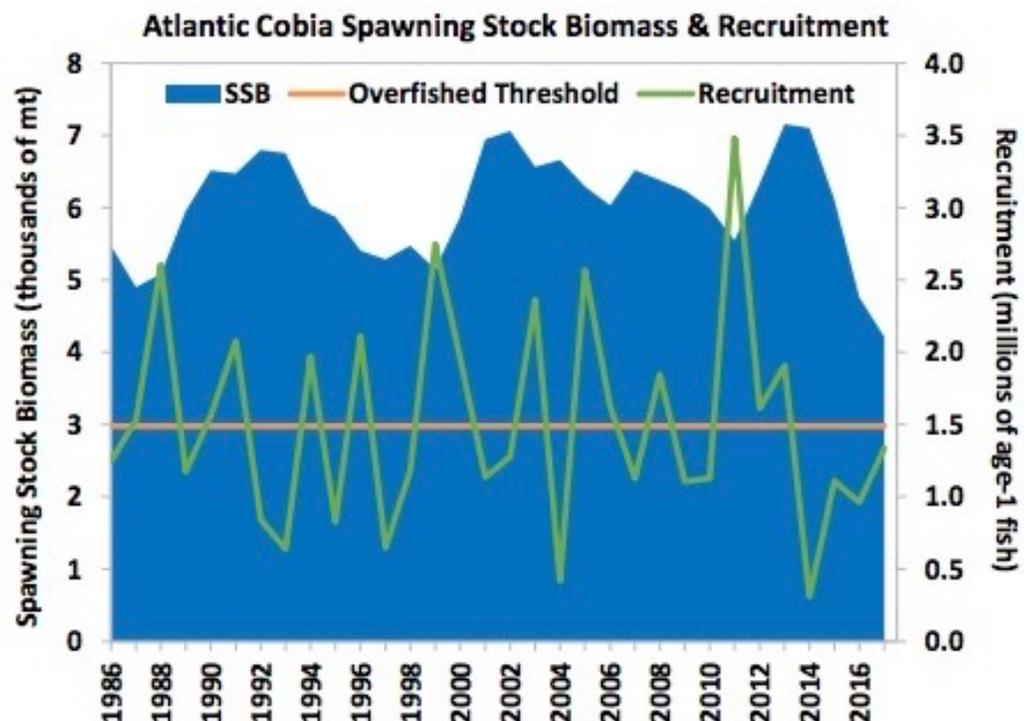
PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger  
703.842.0740

### **Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment Finds Resource Not Overfished Nor Experiencing Overfishing South Atlantic Board Sets Harvest Specifications & Initiates Addendum**

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board accepted the Atlantic Cobia Benchmark Stock Assessment and Peer Review Report, including new reference points, for management use. The assessment, which was conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process, evaluated the Atlantic stock of cobia, which extends from the Georgia/Florida border north. Assessment results indicate the stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

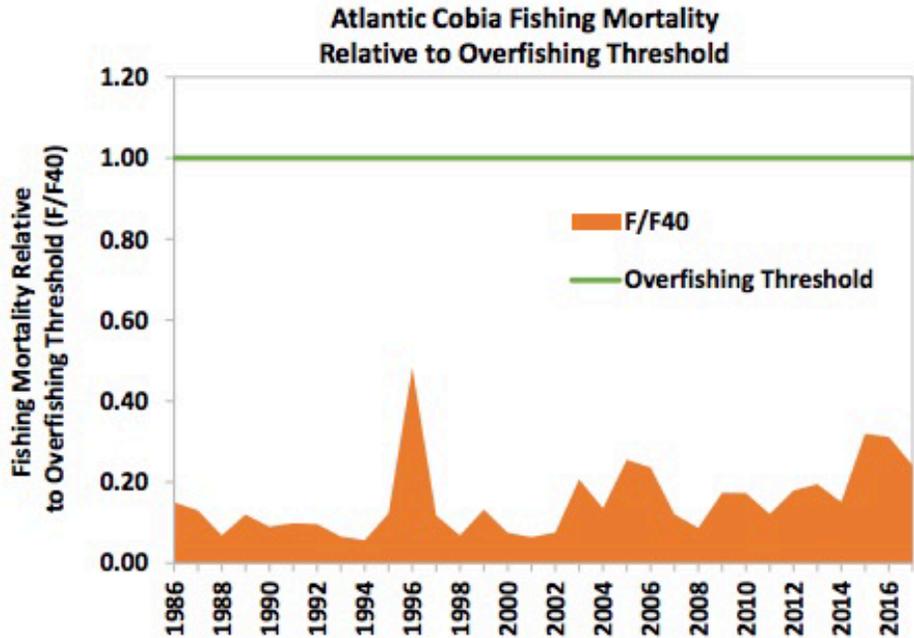
Spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been above the overfished threshold throughout the timeframe (1986-2017), indicating the coastwide stock is not overfished. SSB has shown several large increases following years of high recruitment, the most recent following the 2011 recruitment peak, with the largest SSB in the time series occurring in 2013. These peaks in SSB have been followed by declines when recruitment moves back towards its average. While

SSB has undergone a steep decline since the 2013 peak, SSB remains above the overfished threshold.



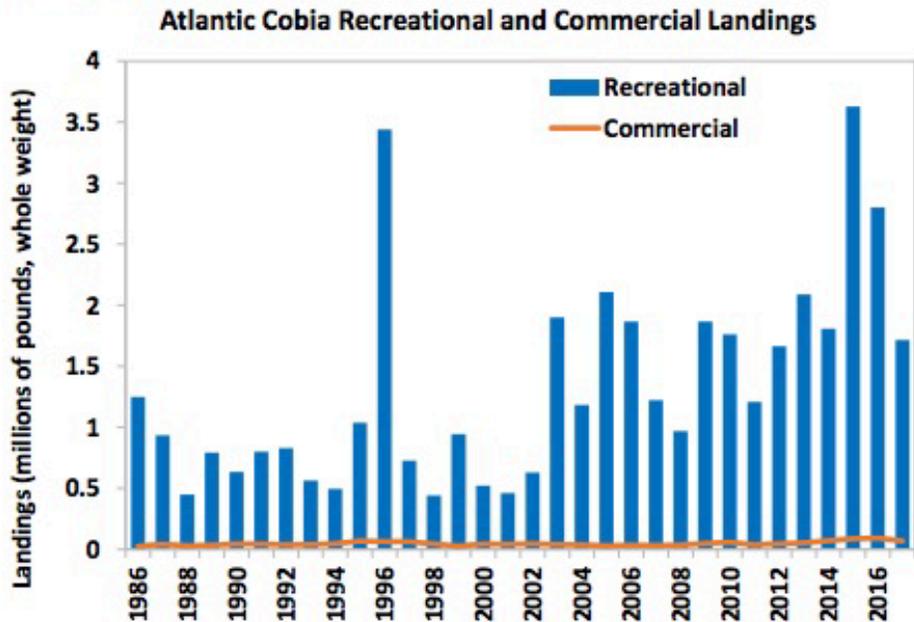
# Angler Interests

This assessment used re-calibrated recreational catch data from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). Landings of Atlantic cobia have generally increased since the 1980s, primarily driven by the recreational fishery, which accounts for about 96% of the total landings. Fishing mortality showed some increase in the most recent years, but did not approach the overfishing threshold, indicating the coastwide stock has not undergone overfishing during the assessment timeframe.



Several projections of the population under different harvest scenarios were conducted, describing predicted trends in biomass and the probability of the stock becoming overfished through 2024. The TC recommended harvest quota levels to the Board based on projections that maintained a low probability of the stock becoming overfished and did not result in consistent declines in SSB. Based on the assessment results and harvest projections, the Board approved an annual total harvest quota of 80,112 fish for the 2020-2022 fishing seasons. The Board maintained current recreational measures for 2020 while the states consider potential regulatory changes for future years.

The Board also discussed recreational/commercial allocation as established by Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia, which currently allocates 92% of the total quota to the recreational fishery and 8% to the commercial fishery. These percentages were originally based on historical harvest from each sector within a period of reference years, prior to the re-calibration of MRIP estimates.



With the re-calibration of the recreational data, the percentages of harvest in the reference period changed, resulting in the current commercial allocation percentage being higher than

# Angler Interests

## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission News Release (Continued)

its percentage of total harvest during the reference period. In response to this, the Board initiated an addendum to reevaluate allocation. The Board also noted potential regulatory inconsistencies among *de minimis* states and determined the *de minimis* measures should be reconsidered through the addendum.

The SEDAR 58 Report is available at

[http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5e3d99a3SEDAR58\\_AtlCobiaAssessment\\_PeerReviewReport.pdf](http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/5e3d99a3SEDAR58_AtlCobiaAssessment_PeerReviewReport.pdf).

An overview will be available on the Commission's website, [www.asmfc.org](http://www.asmfc.org), on the Cobia page under Stock Assessment Reports. For more information, please contact Dr. Mike Schmidtke, FMP Coordinator, at [mschmidtke@asmfc.org](mailto:mschmidtke@asmfc.org).

## VMRC February Black Sea Bass Season Reporting Requirement - Reminder



Please remember that all Black Sea Bass catch (kept or released) must be reported to the VMRC either through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal or on paper forms provided by the commission within 7 days of the trip. Only the captain or operator of the boat needs a permit and they must report the catch of all anglers on that vessel.

If you didn't catch, release, or keep any fish or if you didn't fish with your February Black Sea Bass permit this year, you must report no activity to the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal or on paper forms by March 15. Accurate and timely reporting allows us to continue this February season for you. If you have any questions, please contact us at [alexa.kretsch@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:alexa.kretsch@mrc.virginia.gov) or call (757) 247-2069 or (757) 247-2267.

## U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary: Operation Paddle Smart



Operation Paddle Smart's goal is to educate paddle-sport enthusiasts how to stay safe, be responsible boaters & help emergency responders in Search and Rescue (SAR) type situations. Its goal is to make your boating season safer & more enjoyable as well as help recover your property if lost & could help save lives. It provides a focal point for boating & paddling organizations, retailers as well as others to work together to promote paddle sport safety plus providing valuable information to all paddlers & small boaters.

When small craft such as kayaks or canoes are found adrift, typically there is no way of determining whether or not individuals may be in distress. In such situations, having timely access to some basic information can make all the difference between wasting valuable SAR resources and saving lives.

The Paddle Smart weather-proof sticker, when properly filled out using a permanent waterproof marker & appropriately applied to small craft by vessel owners, can help: save lives, recover missing property, reduce resources expended on non-emergency SAR activities related to unnecessarily deploying limited resources to search for someone who is not in danger saving tax payer dollars, sparing rescue crews from being unnecessarily put at risk or family / friends pointless anxiety.

[Editor] Thanks to the USCG Auxiliary for establishing this program. Contact your local USCG Auxiliary for stickers or come by a Norfolk Anglers Club meeting, we'll have them available.

A rectangular orange sticker with a black border. At the top, it reads "Vessel Identification Sticker for Canoe, Kayak or Rowboat". Below that, in large bold letters, it says "IF FOUND - CONTACT". There are three lines for text: "Name: \_\_\_\_\_", "Phone: \_\_\_\_\_", and "Phone: \_\_\_\_\_". At the bottom, it says "Use waterproof marker" in bold. On either side of this text are small circular logos: the US Coast Guard Auxiliary logo on the left and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission logo on the right.

# Angler Interests



**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## **MARINE SAFETY ADVISORY**

*Inspections and Compliance Directorate*

February 10, 2020  
Washington, DC

Safety Advisory 01-20

### *Potential for Positive Drug Test Result from Use of Hemp-Plant Products*

This Marine Safety Advisory is to ensure that mariners, marine employers, and sponsoring organizations are aware that some products marketed as hemp or cannabidiol (CBD) may contain enough tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) to cause a positive drug test. In accordance with 46 CFR 16.201(c), an individual who fails a chemical test for dangerous drugs must be removed from duties directly affecting the safe operation of the vessel, and is subject to suspension and revocation proceedings against his or her credential under 46 CFR part 5. Use of hemp or CBD products is not accepted as an affirmative defense (acceptable excuse) against a THC-positive drug test result. For these reasons, mariners wishing to avoid a positive THC drug test result should exercise extreme caution when considering the use of any hemp or CBD product because such use could result in the loss of their merchant mariner credential and immediate removal from safety sensitive duties aboard a vessel. This warning applies to hemp and CBD products in any form, including those that are taken by mouth and those that are applied to the skin.

THC is the primary psychoactive component of the Cannabis sativa plant. Hemp and marijuana are different strains of the Cannabis sativa plant and both contain varying concentrations of THC and CBD. THC is considered a dangerous drug because it produces an intoxicating effect on the user and poses safety-risks to vessel operations. The U.S. Coast Guard prohibits THC use by mariners because of its known debilitating effects, and all U.S. Coast Guard-required drug tests screen mariners for use of THC.

Recent changes to Federal and State laws have resulted in a surge in the availability of over-the-counter hemp products and CBD products throughout the United States. Hemp products and CBD products are marketed to the general public in several forms such as food and medicinal products, dietary supplements, oils, cosmetics, and hair products. In some cases, product manufacturers market these products as low in THC, or THC-free. Mariners should be aware that over-the-counter hemp products and CBD products have not been approved as medications by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are not regulated by the FDA. Therefore, users lack federal assurances of their ingredients, THC-content, quality, effectiveness, or safe use. As a result, mariners using these products put themselves at risk of having a THC-positive drug test result.

It remains unacceptable for any U.S Coast Guard credentialed mariner or other safety-sensitive worker working aboard a vessel that is subject to U.S Coast Guard drug testing regulations to use THC. Claimed use of hemp products or CBD products is not an acceptable defense for a THC-positive drug test result.

To learn more about the risks of hemp and CBD products visit the FDA website at <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/what-you-need-know-and-what-were-working-find-out-about-products-containing-cannabis-or-cannabis>.

This Safety Advisory was developed by the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Investigations and Analysis. Questions or comments should be sent to: [DAPI@uscg.mil](mailto:DAPI@uscg.mil).



*Norfolk  
Anglers  
Club*