



NOAA catch-share program threatens recreational angling

CCA questions federal program of resource giveaways

In a letter to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Special Advisor Monica Medina, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) voiced opposition to a federal fisheries management initiative that gives fixed percentages of various fisheries to commercial fishers. CCA acknowledged that the concept, known as a catch-share program, can be effective in purely commercial fisheries, but stressed that it presents serious problems when applied to fisheries that have both commercial and recreational participation.

"Catch shares are obviously a major focus for this Administration and we are concerned not only about the impact they have on recreational fisheries, but also at the pace with which they are being pushed into the management system," said Chester Brewer, chairman of the CCA National Government Relations Committee.

"As we've seen with red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, these types of programs create huge problems for recreational anglers," he added, referring to a fishery that has locked 51 percent of the total catch to a small fleet of commercial boats and 49 percent to hundreds of thousands of recreational anglers. "Based on our experience, catch share initiatives are a detriment in the management of mixed-use fisheries."

In the letter to Medina, appointed to lead the NOAA Catch Shares Task Force, CCA stated that allocating a fixed percentage of a mixed fishery to commercial fishers is unfair, not only to recreational anglers but also to the public at large. CCA endorses the concept that the federal government is the trustee of the nation's ocean resources and must manage them for the overall benefit of the public.

"Catch shares are on a fast track and we don't feel we have the luxury to 'just say no' – we've never chosen that option in any fisheries management crisis," said Brewer. "We didn't do that during the debate over marine protected areas and we

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are not going to do it now. Catch shares are a real threat to the future of a number of recreational fisheries and they are not going to just go away anytime soon. We are going to stay very active on this issue to make sure recreational anglers are not left out of the debate...and out of the fishery."

Visit the [CCA Newsroom](#) and click on the Catch Shares section to see a briefing packet that includes a review of the history of catch share programs and the granting of exclusive fishing rights, as well as the letter CCA to Monica Medina, appointed to lead the NOAA Catch Shares Task Force.

Baton Rouge group puts extra fish to good use

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GRAND ISLE — Some spent time inside the rodeo pavilion enjoying food and music, waiting for the evening's fireworks to start.

Others waited for the next big catch at the Sand Dollar Marina's weigh station. There was time spent at beaches and along La. 1, watching the traffic as if a Mardi Gras parade was set to roll.

On the land and at sea there was something for everyone at Friday's 88th Annual International Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo.

But for a select group, Friday meant more than food, music and partying.

Since 1996, members of the Baton Rouge Food Bank and **Coastal Conservation Association** have cleaned speckled trout, redfish and king mackerel at the Sand Dollar's boat docks to help feed the hungry in and around their city.

Businessman John Englesman came up with the idea when he was a board member of the food bank.

"They had a surplus of fish, and I thought we would have a good use for it at the food bank," he said. "The food bank normally doesn't get fresh fish, so it was something different for them. Over the years, it definitely worked out. It goes to the big soup kitchens because they can feed a lot of people and handle a lot of product."

Howard Cuevas of Baton Rouge, a member of the Coastal Conservation Association, said he is happy to be helping a worthy cause.

"These fish were going to waste, but Englesman got wind of it, so he called CCA and we got together and started cleaning fish for a good cause," he said. "It sounded like a great thing to do, and I am glad that I involved with it"

CCA member Rich Donaldson of Baton Rouge said many volunteers fished in the morning and cleaned fish in the afternoon. He estimated that they would have 200 pounds of fish filets by the end of the day.

Last year, the food bank collected 660 pounds of fish filets.

Donaldson said he believes they have a good chance to clean more fish at this year's rodeo.

"It all depends on how many fish are brought in by the fishermen," he said. "It's all filets. That's a lot of meat."

Donaldson said Sureway grocery store on the island plays a big role in the food bank's efforts.

Filets are stored in the grocery's freezers until the end of the rodeo. When the store receives its next shipment of refrigerated items, the fish are placed on the truck and transported to Baton Rouge.

Brian St. Cyr of Lafayette has fished the rodeo for 30 years, and he said the idea to give the fish to they food bank is a good one.

"Most of the fish we catch are redfish and trout, so when they ask for the donations, of course, we enjoy doing it," St. Cyr said. "It's good knowing that you are helping a worthy cause."

Cleaning fish, Donaldson said, can be a challenge at times. While speckled trout and king mackerel are easy to clean, the same can't be said for the black drum.

"They have giant scales that makes it a challenge," he said. "You can't use an electric knife on them. You have to use a filet knife."

Donaldson said it can also make for a long day.

"I remember last year by 8 p.m. we were wore out. It was a long day of cleaning fish," he said.

Although Friday was not considered a busy day, Donaldson and Cuevas said that will not be the case today, as many fishermen wait until the last day to bring their fish to the weigh station.

"There are usually more more people down here, but the fish we've been getting are about the same. I don't know if the weather is keeping them away or what, but we'll be packed down here (Saturday)."

The rodeo concludes today with a parade scheduled to roll at 11 a.m. from Neptune Lane to the rodeo pavilion. The weigh station scales are scheduled to close at 6 p.m. at Sand Dollar Marina.

Abandoned crab traps to be eyesore of the past in Florida

*By Trip Aukeman
CCA Florida*

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) implement six regional closed blue crab trap seasons to help identify and retrieve lost or abandon crab traps. CCA Florida applauds their new rule to aide in the cleanup of Florida waters. Until now it was very hard to have derelict crap traps removed from Florida waters because of the criminal charges that could be imposed if you were caught molesting a trap that was not yours.

The derelict traps interfere with other fishing activities, boating navigation, and usually will continue catching crabs and fish until they degrade. The degrading poses another threat to marine animals and habitat surrounding these estuaries.

The closed seasons will be for a period of up to 10 days, rotating around the state. During the closed times, harvesters will need to have all of their traps out of the water. Groups that receive authorization from the FWC will be able to go into approved areas to retrieve abandoned traps. CCA Florida chapters are already gearing up to take advantage of the new rule and will begin coordinating with the FWC to receive authorization for different regions.

During these closed times harvesters will still be allowed to take blue crabs by the use nets and fold up traps. This rule will be implemented across the board to both recreational and commercial harvesters unless the recreational trap is attached to private property.

The six proposed regional closures are as follows:

- 1) waters of the St. Johns River System, January 16-25;
- 2) all other coastal waters from the Georgia state line south through Volusia County, August 20-29;

- 3) all waters of Brevard County through Palm Beach County, August 10-19;
- 4) all waters of Broward County through Pasco County, July 10-19;
- 5) all waters of Hernando County through Wakulla County; July 20-29;
- 6) all waters of Franklin County to the Alabama state line, January 5-14;

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Salmon Recovery Plan Not Enough

Editorial

By Bryan Irwin

CCA PNW Executive Director

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It makes no sense to destroy wild salmon at the same time we're "restoring" them.

Record public and private investments to resuscitate endangered Puget Sound chinook salmon runs are being undermined by unsustainable harvest and hatchery management practices that are driving our remaining wild salmon populations closer to extinction.

While state and federal agencies often concede the need for change, they have been unwilling to reform how salmon harvests and hatcheries are managed. Their refusal to act is especially troubling when compared to the changes being made to protect and restore salmon habitat.

Puget Sound chinook salmon have been listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act for almost 10 years. During this time, federal, state and local governments have spent millions to protect and restore habitat and are instituting major restrictions on private landowners, the construction of roads, docks and bulkheads, and stormwater and septic collection in the name of endangered Puget Sound Chinook salmon recovery.

For the most part, the public has been willing to support these expenditures and restrictions in order to recover salmon. The region's residents understand that salmon are an integral part of our culture and our history.

But it's unlikely that the public will continue to support salmon recovery efforts once they understand that wild salmon will not and cannot be recovered under current harvest rates that can exceed 80 percent and with hatchery management practices endangering wild populations. Unfortunately, federal, state and tribal officials are nearing completion of a new plan that is likely to continue these unsustainable practices in spite of the dire conditions facing these populations.

In 2004, a congressionally established independent science group, the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG), provided a report to Congress that clearly stated that unless fisheries managers reduce harvest rates on wild salmon while also significantly limiting the number of hatchery fish that stray into our streams and rivers and spawn with wild fish, there is simply no chance of recovering Puget Sound

chinook salmon. They provided a similar report for the Columbia River to Congress earlier this year.

According to the HSRG – as well as a growing list of other scientific studies – excessive spawning of hatchery fish with wild fish diminishes the survival of their offspring and thereby impedes the recovery of the wild species.

Wild salmon evolved over thousands of years in the streams and rivers they inhabit. They are genetically programmed for those streams and rivers. Hatchery fish degrade the genetic fitness of wild fish and reduce the chances that their offspring will survive in these very same streams and rivers.

In short, according to the scientists, no matter how much we spend restoring and protecting salmon habitat or improving the hydropower system, we cannot recover wild salmon until we protect wild fish and reduce the number of hatchery fish reaching the spawning grounds.

There are two possible solutions to this problem. One is to drastically reduce hatchery production and salmon harvests. Another is to selectively harvest the many excess hatchery fish before they can spawn with the wild fish. Selective harvest means that fishers are able to identify hatchery salmon from wild salmon and release the wild salmon alive.

This distinction is easy since all hatchery chinook and coho salmon in Puget Sound have their adipose fin removed. Wild salmon do not.

However, under the current Puget Sound harvest- management plan approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service, neither of these options is required. Furthermore, the state and the tribes are in the final weeks of developing a new plan, which will be in effect for up to 10 years. The plan continues the same deleterious harvest and hatchery practices that scientists have repeatedly warned must stop if we are serious about salmon recovery.

The public deserves full disclosure and correction of these problems.

To date, the state, federal and tribal fisheries managers have been less than forthcoming about the need to make needed reforms. Whether it is the federal National Marine Fisheries Service, the governor or Congress, someone must provide leadership to develop a scientifically-defensible plan.

Otherwise, salmon recovery is nothing more than a slogan. We will continue to spend millions of dollars on salmon habitat and hydropower improvements. We will continue to restrict all human activities in our communities that are thought to impair salmon and their habitat; all human activities that is except hatchery and harvest management. And, sadly, salmon recovery will be doomed to fail.

Bryan Irwin is the executive director of Coastal Conservation Association (www.ccapnw.org) in the Pacific Northwest.

CCA Maryland Receives Grant for Oyster Restoration

CCA Maryland's expanding oyster restoration efforts received a boost when it became a partner in Gov. Martin O'Malley's Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) program that will provide the chapter 200 cages and spat to be used by local property owners. This will raise the number of oysters the chapter plans to plant this summer to 1.5 million.

"While we understand our work, by itself, will not restore the Chesapeake Bay's oyster population, we are having an impact not only on water quality but, perhaps more importantly, in educating local citizens about the importance of oysters and

clean water," said Scott McGuire, president of CCA Maryland's Patuxent River Chapter which is spearheading the state's oyster work.

Last summer, more than 64,000 oysters were planted in two creeks which feed the Patuxent River. With the MGO grant and an earlier \$25,000 grant from The Dominion Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Dominion Resources, up to 375 waterfront residents will work with CCA Maryland in growing oysters that will be placed on sanctuaries when they reach adult size.

CCA Maryland works with the homeowners in helping them understand the water filtering value of oysters, obtaining the cages and spat, placing them on their piers, and knowing what needs to be done to maintain the cages. CCA Maryland hopes to plant oysters in an additional six creeks feeding the Patuxent this summer.

More Funding for Flounder

The CCA Texas Executive Committee recently approved \$16,000 to the CCA/CPL Development Center in Corpus Christi for the purchase of two fiberglass broodfish tanks and fiberglass egg collection tanks to be used in the production of southern flounder.

With the help of CCA Texas, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department scientists hope to produce large numbers of juvenile flounder for release in the wild. The long-term goal at the CCA/CPL Marine Development center is to eventually produce some two million flounder eggs per year resulting in thousands of flounder to be released.

"Flounder numbers have shown a tremendous decline over the last 25 years," said CCA Texas Executive Director Robby Byers. "This equipment and the research being conducted at the CCA/CPL hatchery, combined with the work done at other facilities and laws being passed to help conserve flounder numbers, will go a long way in helping recover a once-abundant species. We owe it to future generations of Texans to do our part in reviving this Texas treasure. The members of CCA Texas, through their generosity, are more than pulling their weight."

Billy Sandifer gets well-deserved recognition for Big Shell Beach Cleanup

CCA congratulates Billy Sandifer on his selection as a finalist for the Field & Stream Hero of Conservation Award for his phenomenally successful beach cleanup program on the Padre Island National Seashore (PINS). As presented on the Field & Stream web site:

"Known as the caretaker of Padre Island National Seashore, Sandifer got fed up with the garbage that was washing up on the island's beaches, so he organized a trash cleanup 14 years ago that to date has removed 1.8 million pounds of garbage. He founded a group, the Friends of Padre Island, that has raised thousands upon thousands of dollars to help continue with the cleanups. Sandifer has also been instrumental in raising funds to study and protect the endangered Kemp's Ridley turtle, which nests on the island; and he has, in conjunction with the Texas Ornithological Association, compiled quarterly birding reports that have resulted in protection of a number of area species."

A feature about Sandifer's conservation efforts over the years will be in the August issue of Field & Stream and the winner of the 2009 Hero of Conservation Award will be announced October 21, 2009, in Washington D.C. CCA wishes Billy the best of luck.



Look for the Sept/Oct issue of TIDE magazine.

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