

ON THE LINE

The Newsletter for Members of CCA Maine

Spring 2007

SAVE THE DATE!

March 15th - Native Kennebec Stripers. A talk by DMR biologist Jason Bartlett about recent research on our local striped bass, the department's plans for the 2007 season, and how anglers can help. At the Kennebec Tavern's newly renovated conference room, 7 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided.

March 29th - Casco Bay Banquet. At the Italian Heritage Center in Portland. The doors open at 5:30. Tickets are \$45 and include dinner and a year's membership. To order call 624-1073 or e-mail ccamaine@gmail.com. To preview auction items visit www.cca-maine.org.

May 18th - Surf Clamming. 6:00 a.m. at the Hurd Park parking lot on Pine Point in Scarborough. Take advantage of the season's lowest tides to fill your bucket and catch up with friends. RSVP with Dick Anderson at richardban@suscom-maine.net.

June 24th-25th - York Harbor Marine Service Catch and Release Stripper Tournament. The captain's party kicks off at 5 p.m., Sunday, June 24, and fishing starts at 8 p.m. Anglers will turn in digital camera cards or Polaroid photos to the judges, and the winners for all categories will be announced at the tournament dinner Monday evening. For more information, contact Ian Burnes at 624-1073 or ccamaine@gmail.com.



Striper at sunrise - photo by David Sherwood

State launches Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries

by *Duncan Barnes*

The Baldacci Administration has proposed a new Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries and Habitat (BSRFH) that would be responsible for the management in Maine waters of striped bass, Atlantic salmon, river herring (including alewives), smelt, shad, and eels.

Keliher in Spotlight

As an integral part of the Department of Marine Resources (DMR), the new bureau would comprise the DMR's Stock Enhancement Division and the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission, bringing those two organizations under one roof. The Atlantic Salmon Board would continue to make all decisions affecting Atlantic salmon in Maine waters.

Pat Keliher, a former executive director of CCA Maine and currently the head

of the Maine Salmon Commission, is expected to become the director of the BSRFH.

"Single-species management for fish is not always the best approach," says Keliher. "The creation of the BSRFH makes biological and administrative sense. It will provide a more holistic approach to fisheries management in Maine's tidal rivers and allow us to concentrate more intensively on game and forage species, which means that the State of Maine will have a lot more clout in decisions that affect saltwater anglers."

CCA Testimony

Testifying in January on the proposed BSRFH at a hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations

■ See *Bureau*, page 3

CCA Maine: Ready to face the challenges

I AM PROUD AND EXCITED TO BE THE NEW executive director of the Coastal Conservation Association of Maine. This state has a strong history of conservation and a population of dynamic, civic-minded, fun-loving anglers. We face important challenges like rebuilding baitfish stocks in the Gulf of Maine, improving public access to the coastline, and fighting for better management of stripers throughout their range. We also have incredible opportunities to grow our own population of native Kennebec stripers and restore a world-class shad fishery on our major rivers. CCA Maine can be the vehicle for providing future generations with better fishing than we have today, and for leaving the resource in a better condition than we inherited it.

With so many important issues to tackle, a question I'm often asked is, "Why haven't I heard from Maine CCA in the last two years?" It's a question that deserves an answer.

After some great years with state membership numbering as high as 1,200, CCA Maine came upon a rough patch. Coming in after the fact, I have the impression that the organization wasn't involving enough new people with

■ See *Executive*, page 3

The new winter bass fishery in North Carolina and Virginia

by Richen Brame

CCA Atlantic States Fisheries Director

There has been a lot of concern about the relatively new striped bass fishery that has developed off of NC and VA. The fishery typically occurs from about Christmas through February. It is important to remember that these are not "new" fish, but rather part of the coastal striped bass population that everyone has access to.

The fish winter off NC in cold winters and remain further north, off VA and MD, in warmer winters. Presumably they have always done this and only recently have become the target of recreational fishermen during the cold winter months.

The real concern is whether or not we have good estimates of the harvest for management and stock assessment purposes. The recreational fishery is sampled via the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS), which is funded primarily by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), although some states add on funding to better sample the catch.

Lack of Funding

The survey was started in 1980 as an attempt to estimate recreational catch on a coastwide basis. Back then there was little or no fishing done in January and February, so no sampling occurred. That is the problem we face now with the striped bass fishery off the mid-Atlantic – a lack of funding to sample the catch during January and February. Incidentally, it has also become a problem with black sea bass and tautog, which have also developed fisheries in the winter. North Carolina started sampling the catch in January and February of 2004 to sample the burgeoning fishery off of Oregon Inlet. Below is a quote from the 2005 stock assessment:

"Estimates of Wave 1 (January-February) recreational harvest in North Carolina and Virginia from 1996-2004 were included in the catch at age for the first time this year. The estimates ranged from 7,544 in 2000 to 177,288 fish during 2004 in North Carolina and 5,985 fish in 1996 to 155,616 fish in 2004 in Virginia. These Wave 1 harvest estimates represented between 2% and 14% of the total coast-wide recreational harvest during those years."

The Virginia harvest was estimated using North Carolina effort estimates combined with tag returns, but it was not a direct sample.

75% of Removals

First a little background on the harvest. The recreational fishery accounts for about 75% of the total removals.

The graph and text below come from the 2005 stock assessment report: "Catch: Total catch in numbers including landings and discards in-

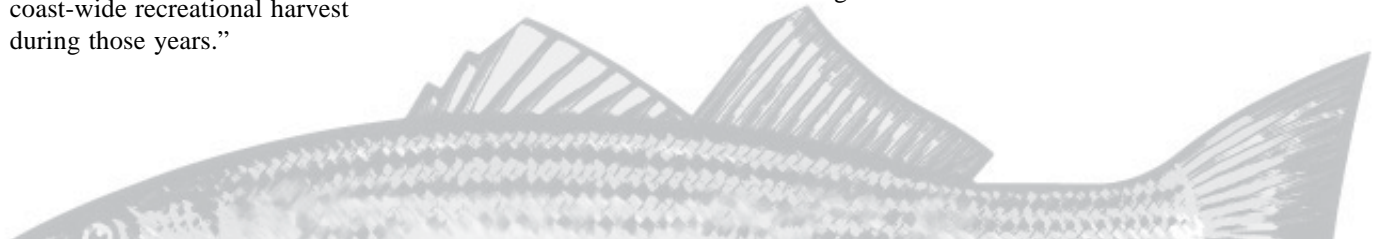
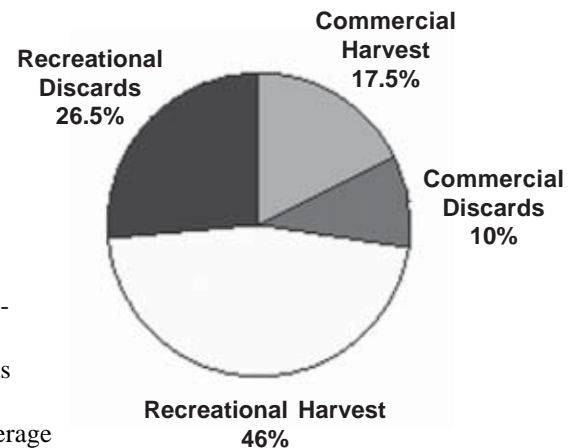
creased from 3.9 million fish in 2002 to 5.2 million fish in 2004, a 33.3 % increase in losses since implementation of Amendment 6. The 2004 catch was also above the 1997-2003 average of 4.36 million fish.

Ages 3 to 7 represented 59%, and ages 8+ represented 36% of the total catch in 2004. The strong 1996, 2000, and 2001 year-classes dominated the catch, accounting for 41% of total catch. Total catch of age 8+ fish increased from 1.4 million fish in 2002 to 1.8 million fish in 2004 (the highest level recorded in the time series) and the proportion of 8+ fish in the catch increased to 36% in 2004 from 30% in 2003.

"Recreational harvest (2.4 million fish) and discards (17.2 million fish) accounted for 72.5% of the total 2004 catch. Virginia recreational fisheries harvested 19.6% of total recreational landings, followed by New Jersey (17.7%), Massachusetts (17.1%), Maryland (13.2%), North Carolina (13.2%), and NY (10.2%). The remaining states each landed 5% or less of the total recreational landings.

"Commercial harvest (0.91 million fish) and discards (0.51 million fish) accounted for 27.5% of the total 2004 catch. Maryland commercial fisheries harvested 50.8% of the total commercial landings, followed by VA (16.3%), PRFC (10.1%), NY (7.8%), and MA (6.7%). The remaining states each landed 4% or less of the total commercial landings."

As of this writing, VA and MD do not sample striped bass harvest during Wave 1. Additional funding will have to be procured in order to better sample the catch. It is a critical data need; CCA will be exploring every avenue available to get better estimates of the catch.



Executive Director

Continued from Page 1



fresh ideas and energy. As a result, fewer and fewer people were doing more and more of the work. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that folks (including, sadly, many of those to whom CCA Maine owes the most) lost their motivation or simply had to attend to other things in their lives. Without new people prepared and waiting in the wings to take the lead, the number of people actively working on CCA business decreased.

After going through three executive directors in a three-year span, the organization bottomed out with the resignation of the Maine board in the summer of 2006. I feel this was a situation in which things had to get worse before they could get better.

The key, I believe, is to start fresh and involve plenty of new people, and we are already doing that. New volunteers are stepping up across the state. In Portland, the Casco Bay chapter is hosting a banquet in March and continuing its work of improving fish passage on the Presumpscot River. In York, volunteers are organizing a strip-er tournament with York Harbor Marine Service. In Bath, the Kennebec chapter is

learning about the native Kennebec strip-er, assisting DMR with its important research, and planning a tournament for the early fall. A group of volunteers is watching the legislature for bills that could affect saltwater anglers. And, in cooperation with other states, CCA Maine is monitoring the regional management councils. When I step back and look at the volunteer effort already underway, I know CCA Maine will be a strong organized voice for recreational anglers with local roots and national reach.

Some of our areas of concern are bigger than Casco Bay or the Gulf of Maine. The depletion of menhaden in the Chesapeake and the policies set at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council will have profound effects on the fishing in our backyard.

CCA Maine is ready as an organization to get involved, and it needs even more individuals to join and get active. I'm using my inaugural column to assure everyone that this organization is not just poised for a revival; it's already back, and it's gaining momentum every week. The hard times have taught us a lot about what it means to be volunteer-driven. I could not be more excited or more confident about our future.

If you would like to be a part of CCA Maine as we continue our mission to conserve and restore our marine resources, please contact me at 207-624-1073 or iburnes@gmail.com.

Ian Burnes

Executive Director, CCA Maine

Bureau

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and Financial Affairs, Ian Burnes, CCA Maine Executive Director, made the following remarks:

"Up and down the Atlantic Coast, sea run fish are in trouble. Massachusetts has shut down all harvest of river herring and North Carolina is about to do the same. Shad runs are in decline on major rivers like the Delaware and Potomac. In the Chesapeake Bay, where menhaden have become scarce, striped

bass weakened with hunger are suffering from bacterial infections.

"Here in Maine, we are bucking that trend. Just look at the Kennebec River, where river herring stocks are rebuilding and where seining by DMR has produced significant numbers of small striped bass that are native to the river. Spawning runs of American shad are also on the increase.

"But Maine's recreational fishermen know that in order to have more and bigger striped bass, we need to have more and bigger bait. A Bureau of

Association of Charter Captains begins operations in Maine

Captain Dave Pecci of Bath, a longtime CCA Maine member and tireless worker for the cause, has joined with many of the state's top licensed saltwater guides and charter boat operators to launch the Maine Association of Charter Boat Captains, or MACC.

The new organization opposes the levying of a recreational tax on services provided by guides, and Pecci and his fellow professionals share many of the goals advocated by CCA Maine.

In particular, MACC strongly endorses the use of circle hooks and opposes the use of treble hooks for bait fishing, supports efforts to reduce the depletion of forage species, and advocates for public access to Maine's coastal waters.

For more information, including a list of members, see www.mainechartercaptains.org.

Sea Run Fisheries and Habitat could ensure that these efforts continue on the Kennebec and are extended to all of Maine's tidal rivers."

If passed by the Appropriations Committee, the BSRFH would start operating officially in July 2007. That would be very good news indeed. Pat Keliher is a longtime advocate for striped bass and forage species in Maine's tidal waters, as well as an expert on Atlantic salmon. We think the BSRFH is right for Maine and that Keliher is the right man to head it up.



On the Line

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In this issue ... New State Bureau of Sea Run Fisheries
... Winter Striped Bass Fishery in North Carolina and Virginia
... Calendar of Upcoming Events
... Banquet Ticket Order Form

Casco Bay Chapter Banquet & Auction

ITALIAN HERITAGE CENTER

40 Westland Avenue, Portland, ME

Thursday, March 13, 2007 - Doors open @ 5:30 p.m.

Cocktails, silent auction and preview of live auction items start at 5:30 p.m.

\$45 ticket includes dinner and your CCA membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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_____ New Member
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