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JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION
1594 Lakewood Rd. (Rt. 9), Ste. 13, Toms River, NJ 08755
Phone 732-506-6565 Fax 732-506-6975
Web Site <http://www.JCAA.org>
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April 2023

JCAA Annual Fluke Tournament

Saturday June 17

Fluke Tournament Awards Ceremony

Friday June 23

Jersey Coast Shark Anglers

2023 Tournament Schedule

Bluefin Fever - June 3-4
Kids Fishing Fever - July 21
Thresher Fever - TBD
Fluke Tournament - TBD
Month-Long Fluke Tournament Veterans - TBD
Tournament - TBD
Fall Striper Tournament - TBD

For information go to www.jcsa.org

Forked River Tuna Club

2023 Tournament Schedule

White Perch Tournament - April 15
Sea Bass Tournament - May 20, 21
Ladies Catch of the Day - July 8
Tuna Tournament - July 15, 16
Fluke Tournament - August 12, 13

Mark Your Calendar

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Harold Dill, Bricktown, NJ

www.drfsa.org

Bill Dolan, Waretown, NJ

Len Fantasia, Wave Dancer, Atlantic Highlands, NJ

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In Memory of Betty Henze, Lafayette Hill, PA

In Memory of Tom Ortman. A great fisherman, a great guy!

In Memory of Randy Minix, Gibbstown, NJ

Hudson River Fisherman's Association, Cresskill, NJ

L Raymond Humphreys, Jr., Pennsville, NJ

Greg & Linda Jewell, Freehold, NJ

Long Beach Island Fishing Club

Harvey Yenkinson, West Chester, Pa

Capt. Frank Tenore, Fins on Feathers Charters Leonardo State Marina

Manasquan River Marlin & Tuna Club

Manasquan Fishing Club

Ocean Beach Volunteer Fire CO 3 on behalf of William "Bronco" Bell

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Association of Surf Angling Clubs www.asaonline.org

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Women's Surf Fishing Club of NJ, www.wsfcnj.org



A Saltwater Anglers Club

New Members Welcome

Go to **www.FISHHAWKS.NJ.com**

Meetings are at 7:30 PM on the first Thursday of the month
at the Lacey Elks, Forked River, NJ



New Jersey Beach Buggy Association

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Membership Info: Ken Hollins 732-814-7021

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www.raritanbayanglersfishingclub.com

JCAA NEWSPAPER APRIL 2023

Official Newspaper of the *JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION*

(Published on March 27, 2023)

Monthly Meetings are In Person and Zoom

"WORKING FOR MARINE RECREATIONAL ANGLERS"

JCAA REGULAR MEETING

March 28th, 2023 in Person and Zoom

Starting at 7:30 PM

NEXT JCAA BOARD MEETING

Thursday, April 13th

In Person and via Zoom

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOC.

1594 Lakewood Road (Rt. 9), Victoria Plaza Ste. 13

Toms River, NJ 08755

Phone 732-506-6565 Fax 732-506-6975

JCAA Newspaper Publisher Tom Fote

JCAA Newspaper 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 908-913-0551 or Tom Fote at (732) 270-9102 before the meeting date to ask permission.**

## **2022 OFFICERS**

~~~~~  

President	Mark Taylor	732-245-9445
1st V.P.	Greg Kucharewski	732-429-9637
2nd V.P.	Don Marantz	908-347-1434
Treasurer	Doug Tegeder	732-575-2661
Rec. Sec.		
Cors. Sec.		
Mem. Sec.	John Toth	732-656-0139

Committee and Chairpersons listed on last page

IMPORTANT DATES

March 28th JCAA General Meeting

April 8th Opening Day of Trout Fishing in NJ

April 13th JCAA Board Meeting

April 19th-21st ASA Government Meeting

April 25th JCAA General Meeting

May 1st-4th ASMFC Meeting Week

May 11th JCAA Board Meeting

May 21st Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament

May 30th JCAA General Meeting

June 8th JCAA Board Meeting

June 17th JCAA Fluke Tournament

June 23rd JCAA Fluke Tournament Awards Ceremony

June 27th JCAA General Meeting

In Memoriam for Bruce Smith, Tom Siciliano and Sue Rotherme

By Tom Fote

Last year we lost two past presidents and a serving board member of JCAA. We remember past presidents Tom Siciliano and Bruce Smith and Sue Rothermel who was serving as the Recording Secretary and the JCAA Club Representative for the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. Below is Bruce Smith's obituary and an article that Mark Taylor wrote honoring Tom Siciliano. I have also included information from NJ State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs about Sue Rothermel.

Becoming an officer for JCAA means that you get on my speed dial and become part of the JCAA family. When you become vice president and then president, the contact is daily. At the end of each entry, I will add my personal recollections.

Bruce Smith

December 2, 1933 - November 23, 2022

It is with the heaviest of hearts to write that Bruce Smith of Ocean Township, our beloved Husband, Dad, and "Poppe", has passed away. He was born in Bridgeton, NJ, to Walter and Catharine Smith. He graduated from Penns Grove HS in 1951, being one of only five men left in his class. He truly wanted to be the last one standing. He attended McDonough Military Academy and served his country in the US Army... a true patriot to the end. He went on to Rutgers, graduated in 1958, and was a member of the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. An extremely smart, proud, hard-working man who always provided well for his family. He was self-employed in the flexible packaging industry for 25 years. After retirement he had a few boats that were named "MY TERN" at the Atlantic Highlands Marina and fishing became a huge passion. His favorite day of the year was the winter solstice hence the days would get longer leaving more time for his love of fishing. He was also a big part of the Sandy Hook Bay Anglers where he gave a lot of his time and knowledge. He leaves behind his wife, of 65 years, "his Becky" Betty Lou (Meinzer), his daughters, Daun Smith-Graham, Kelly Butler (Craig) and Jill Lynch (Bill) and five grandchildren Erin, Cheyenne, Chad, Karlee, and Bonnie.

Tom Fote – Bruce Smith was a great addition to JCAA. He started coming representing Sandy Hook Bay Anglers. As he became more involved, he became vice-president and then president. Since he was a geologist, Bruce added the thinking of a scientist to decisions JCAA needed to make. He was comfortable attending meetings that included scientific discussions. When we needed someone to staff a booth, Bruce was always available and would bring friends to help. He was a smart man, and he was a good sounding board for any ideas. Bruce's early years in Fortescue made him a valuable resource in understanding that part of the state.

Tom Siciliano

In case you missed the article that Mark Taylor wrote about Tom Siciliano

Passing of Tom Siciliano

As I mentioned a few articles ago, we lost a great individual named Thomas Siciliano, Jr. He was 79 when he passed away on Saturday, April 23, 2022. When I say "we", I mean all of us in the recreational

fishing community. Tom was very passionate about things he cares about. Tom is not the person to just talk about things a little; he went all the way. He would do his research on topics and investigate and verify the facts. I would say he developed this trait while serving in the United States Army and later as a chemist for Lehn and Fink. Tom was involved in many of the recreational fishing clubs here in New Jersey. He was involved with these clubs like everything else he did; all in. He served as president in so many of them and board members in all. To name a few of these they are Hudson River Fishermens Association, Bergen County Saltwater Anglers, Manasquan Fishing Club, Point Pleasant Fishing Club, Jersey Coast Anglers Association. Tom was involved in other environmental groups and children's organizations too; Clean Ocean Action, Barnegat Bay Partnership and the Sunshine Foundation. I'm sure I missed a few. There are numerous stories about Tom and what he has done in each of these groups. If you knew him, it was a great honor and if you didn't you missed out. Our prayers go out to Tom Siciliano's family for their loss. For the memory of Tom for all he has done for us, we should all get more like him to keep his spirit alive.

Tom Fote – Tom Siciliano was also a scientist, a chemist. He provided much needed insight into the workings of chemical companies. When Tom and I disagreed, I learned a great deal. Tom also was proxy for me when we were involved in the Marine Fish Conservation Network and at the Barnegat Bay Estuary Program. He was very involved in the MATES program in Ocean County serving as a judge for their contests. He received the highest JCAA honor when he was selected as the Sportsman of the Year. It was my honor to nominate him for all his hard work and his volunteering for JCAA.

Sue Rothermel

"Sue passed away over the Labor Day weekend. Her son called me with the sad news. He followed up a call that she wanted no wake or funeral ceremony. She was cremated as per her will.

Sue was invited to the State Federation as a representative of the NJ Horse Council. At that time, we were promoting the 150-foot reduction rule and Sunday bow hunting. The horse people were opposed to both of those Bills. Frank Virgilio met with the horse council and had them change their status and met Sue.

She continued to attend the state meetings as a guest and later joined the Monmouth County Federation as a club delegate from the NJ Horse Council. She soon started to attend the Federation Central Region meetings which lead her to the elected position of Central Region Board of Directors. She was the recipient of the Federations 2015 prestigious Keith Griffiths Award and the 2017 Jeannette Vreeland Award. Sue was an member and advocate of the NJOA and attended many of their functions including manning their booths at different Shows and Expos. If she wasn't at the NJOA booth you could find her at the UBNJ or Federation booths.

As a Federation member she went to as many functions, county meetings in the central region, and as many club Breakfasts and Dinners she could afford to attend. She was a weekly attendee at the Black Knights Bow Benders Thursday night shoot, she worked their food concession at their fundraisers, had many friends and tried her luck at archery. I believe that at the time of her death she was the sitting president for the NJ Horse council. "

Tom Fote – I first met Sue attending meetings of the NJSFSC and NJ Outdoor Alliance. Sue needed two crutches to get around but that never stopped her. She became NJSFSC representative to JCAA and became a valuable voice for many issues. When we needed a recording secretary, Sue volunteered. Sue would also help staff the booths in Atlantic City and at the Saltwater Expo. She was generous with her time and her thinking.

In closing, JCAA lost three valuable members who worked through their 70's and 80's. This year it has become increasingly difficult to staff a booth without them. We need younger anglers to follow their example in caring about the environment, hunting and fishing. We need you.

President's Report

By Mark Taylor

In the last newsletter, I mentioned that there was an important vote being made on March 2nd by the NJ Marine Fisheries Council on the approved options by ASMFC of Summer Flounder, Black Sea Bass and Scup. This vote would set New Jersey's seasons, size,

bag limits of those species. I didn't attend the meeting in person, but I did video conference. First, I was disappointed with the attendance of the public and stakeholders either in person or by video. Second disappointment I had was the problem with the communication system the council was using during this meeting. For those of us that couldn't attend in person it was very hard hearing any of the conversations during the meeting especially the Council members. Third disappointment was when it came time in the agenda to talk about each of the species it seemed rushed and seems there was no real discussion on the Council side of what was mentioned in public comments. The fourth and final disappointment that night was when the Chair called for a vote. The vote went the total opposite way of all the public comments that night with no real explanation. I will be putting a formal letter together and submitting it. If you have any future interest in this recreational sport, you need to get involved now.

The show season is coming to an end, and everyone is starting to get things ready for this fishing season. I saw people working on their boats the last few days and heard that some fish are already being caught. I hope to be ready for some fishing in the next few months. Make sure you take a kid out fishing, this is our future.

I would like to especially thank all those people that stepped up to volunteer their time for JCAA at flea markets, Atlantic City Boat Show and Saltwater Fishing Expo. They are Paul Haertel, Frank Macalik, Howard Rottweiler, Ron Nachmann, Bill Figley, Tim Burden, Kathy Burden, John Toth, Karen Noe, Michele Kohler, Don Marantz, Ed Baluta, Dan Miller, Eric Engard, Ryan Loughlin, Tom Fote, Steve Machalaba, Phil Simon, Mickey Sherry, Bill Brown. Sorry if I missed anyone and some of these people did multiple events and days. Without these people attending these events and talking to people, many of the public would not know what is happening with our fisheries. I would like to see more dedicated people like them volunteer their time for JCAA, their fishing clubs or any other organizations they belong to. Without participation all will fade away as we know it.

On a much brighter note, JCAA has confirmed that we will be holding our annual fluke tournament on June 17th with an awards ceremony in Resorts Casino Hotel again. The awards ceremony will be the weekend after the tournament, still working on those details. I

would like to see this tournament grow with participation, so mark your calendar for June 17th. Paperwork and applications will be coming out shortly.

As fishing club dues are coming in, Membership Chairman John Toth has scheduled for JCAA to do a presentation at some clubs already. If your club would like to have JCAA come, please reach out to John Toth at 732-656-0139 or tothjohn@verizon.net.

Our 2023 JCAA High Roller Raffle is in full swing. This is one of the JCAA fundraisers that Paul Haertel put the prize list together. If you would like to get tickets, please reach out to us at 732-506-6565. Leave your name and a number that you can be reached at, so arrangements can be made.

If you want to get involved with JCAA contact me at mtsport64@aol.com or 732-245-9445. We all need to get involved so the future of fishing as we know it will be gone.

JCAA Hi-Roller Raffle

By Paul Haertel

Once again, this year we will be having our Hi-Roller Raffle and as you can see there are some really, nice prizes. This is one of our major fundraisers so please buy some tickets. If you buy tickets, I absolutely guarantee you will have a chance to win. If you want tickets call the office at 732-506-6565 or email jcaa@jcaa.org. The prizes listed below have a **total value of \$3003**.

New Jersey Amin. Code § 13:47-8.7

Location:

**At the JCAA office located at:
1594 Lakewood Rd., Unit 13,
Toms River, NJ 08755**

Drawing Date: July 13, 2023, at 7:30 pm

NJLGCCCC Identification: #475-4-32152

Municipal Raffle License: #9471

Beneficiary: Jersey Coast Anglers Association

Price of Ticket: \$2 each, 3 for \$5, or a book of 7 for \$10

List of Prizes & Retail Values

1. Jersey Nutz Six Man Charter (6-hour, 6-man inshore weekday charter) – **\$1100**, *Donated by Captains Robert and Cody Melton*
2. \$500 Gift Certificate from Fisherman's Headquarters – **\$500**, *Donated by Fisherman's Headquarters*
3. Shimano Talavera 7' TEC70HC Boat Rod/Canyon Conv. Reel – **\$420**, *Donated by JCAA*
4. Daiwa Saltiga 6/6" SA66MFB Boat Rod/Canyon HS15L Conv. Reel – **\$400**, *Donated by Grumpys Tackle and JCAA*
5. Hatteras Outfitters 7' Custom Power Stick CP1020S/FinNor Ahab 12 Spinning Reel – **\$350**, *Donated by JCAA*
6. Shimano Tallus 7' TLC70M Conv. Rod/Montauk Cerebus CER210 – **\$233**, *Donated by JCAA*

***Note:** No substitution of the offered prize may be made and no cash will be given in lieu of the prize.*

Fisheries Management & Legislative Report

By Tom Fote

Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament: A Brief History on How it Began

What is unique about the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament? I think it is important that we all know the history of this tournament. After Governor Florio signed the Striped Bass Gamefish Bill at a JCAA meeting, I began thinking about how to get this Governor and future governors to understand the importance of recreational fishing. In having this conversation with Bruce Freeman, the director of NJ Bureau of Marine Fisheries, and Bill Vibbert, the park superintendent of Island Beach State Park, we decided to have a Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament at Island Beach State Park as a trial run for a statewide

tournament. We needed to impress the Governor and other politicians with the importance of recreational fishing. Since JCAA had just succeeded in making striped bass a no-sale fish in New Jersey and was working to at the Federal level and with other states, we wanted to have a tournament that would reflect our conservation of striped bass. We also wanted a tournament that was family friendly and allowed both seasoned anglers and new anglers to participate. Children have always been allowed to fish for free and win prizes.

I thought a partnership with the NJ Beach Buggy Association would provide us with the volunteers we needed to serve as judges along the entire 11 miles of Island Beach. This was crucial to promote catch and release on the day of the tournament. While anglers could certainly take a striped bass home to eat, we didn't want any striped bass killed unnecessarily. Having on the spot judges made that possible. These judges gave up the opportunity to participate in the tournament. They were also willing to use their personal four-wheel drive, even though we know how much gas the constant driving on the beach would consume. In the beginning there was no stipend for the judges. When gas prices jumped in 2007, we added a small stipend to cover their expenses. To keep this tournament running and maintain our conservation ethics, we need more volunteers. If you are interested in striped bass conservation and want to be part of the only surf fishing tournament that allows for catch and release, you need to volunteer. The catch and release rule applies to all fish caught in the tournament. With the increasing technology, we are able to get to you quickly and weigh in your fish. We can only do that with more judges.

The Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament has become one of the premier surf fishing tournaments along the East Coast. We have high school teams competing against each other and wounded warriors participating. The money this tournament generates does not go to the three sponsoring organizations, but it is used to promote access with big wheel wheelchairs and fishing clinics. One of our greatest accomplishments was paying for the blueprints and convincing Governor Christine Todd Whitman to have the state pay for the building of the ramp at area seven. When Sandy wiped out the ramp, the Beach Buggy Association and JCAA made rebuilding that ramp the number one priority. Paul Smith and Greg Kuchareski

took on leadership roles and made the tournament a reality. Both have gotten JCAA Sportsman Person of the Year Awards for their dedication.

Testimony for the Senate and Assembly Budget Committee

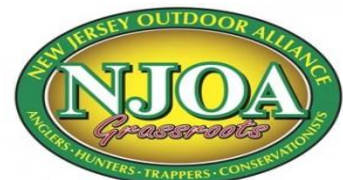
By Thomas Fote for JCAA, NJSFSC, NJOA



JERSEY COAST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION
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Phone 732-332-9800 Fax 732-332-9696
Web Site <http://www.njoutdooralliance.org>

I am speaking before you on behalf of Jersey Coast Anglers Association, New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and New Jersey Outdoor Alliance. I have been testifying before NJ Legislative Budget Committees since the mid-eighties. Things have not changed much in those years. We are still looking for a steady source of funding for the NJ Bureau Of Marine Fisheries.

I just received an updated study by the American Sportfishing Association that looks at the economic impact of recreational anglers in all the states and is broken out by the congressional legislative districts. I am providing you with all this data. Here is a breakdown by congressional districts. If you want a copy all the handouts broken down by district let me know.

- District 2&3 each have 100,000 anglers in the district and spent \$86.8 Million on fishing-related purchases in New Jersey.
- District 1, 4, 5, 7 11 and 12 each have 90,000 anglers in the district and spent \$78.1 Million on fishing-related purchases in New Jersey.
- District 6 has 80,000 anglers in the district that spent \$69.4 Million on fishing-related purchases in New Jersey.
- District 9 has 70,000 anglers in the district and spent \$60.7 Million on fishing-related purchases in New Jersey.
- District 8&10, each have 60,000 anglers in the district and spent \$52.1 Million on fishing-related purchases in New Jersey.

The 1,000,400 anglers who fished in New Jersey spent \$867.6 million and supported at least 7,410 jobs. New Jersey ranks #2 in the country in the number of trips made for recreational saltwater fishing. We rank #2 or #3 in the number of anglers. We rank #3 in the commercial landings. However, we are outspent for a Bureau of Marine Fisheries by almost every state.

With this information as a background, we need to consider the options for funding the Bureau of Marine Fisheries. These options use money already generated by anglers who fish in New Jersey. About 1/3 of the anglers counted in these statistics are from out of state. In addition to the money generated when they fish here, they also spend money in other ways.

1. The first and most obvious solution is to increase the appropriation for the Bureau of Marine Fisheries from the state budget.
2. There could be a dedication of some portion of the sales tax money generated from the sales tax on

saltwater fishing supplies that has been estimated to be over \$130,000,000 a year. If 10% of the sales tax that is generated by recreational fishing was allocated to the budget of the Bureau of Marine Fisheries, the current budget would quadruple.

3. There could be a dedication of some portion of the fuel tax money generated on recreational boats. (Remember commercial fishing boats and party and charter boats are exempted from this tax.)
4. There could be a dedication of Island Beach State Park (IBSP) four-wheel drive fishing permits to the Division of Parks and Bureau of Marine Fisheries for programs to protect the beach environment and enhance fishing opportunities for surf anglers and more fishing access. This could also fund education of the surf fishing public in marine stewardship. This fee was dramatically increased during the McGreevey administration from \$125 to \$195. All of this money goes into the general fund. With approximately 6,000 permits sold each year, this generates 1,170,000 dollars.
5. There could be a dedication of a portion of the money from the dramatic increase of boat registration fees during the McGreevey administration. A large portion goes to the General Fund. That fund was also designed to fund dredging as well. Over the years this fund has been raided and not used for the designated purpose.
6. It is also possible to explore the other options that were in a Division of Fish and Wildlife white paper that was distributed in 2003 and a couple more times over the following years.

Why do we need more money? When I was first involved with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Marine Fisheries in 1984, the only regulations we had in place were a federal regulation on bluefin tuna, a 14-inch size limit on flounder as a state regulation, and a 10 fish bag limit at 18 inches for striped bass. There were no quotas to be implemented on the recreational sector, no fisheries management plans, no technical committees. We were dealing with what was essentially an open fishery. Today we are managing every important recreational fishery in New Jersey. This involves over 20 plans. This requires a huge amount of staff time, gathering information and implementing the plans. It has also put a greater strain

on law enforcement. These requirements have limited the amount of money that is available for research and put a big strain on the employees as they struggle to find the time for everything that is required. When I first got involved, it was not unusual for people to work well past the 25 years required for retirement. Now, because of the pressure and the many jobs they are required to juggle, the most common response is 25 years and out. We are losing a great deal of experience and institutional memory.

Most of you know that I have served as the Governor's appointee to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission for 23 years and 6 years as a Legislative proxy. The state is planning on replacing me. The job has changed dramatically. When I took the job in 1990, I was required to go to 3 days of meetings a year. I have been able to do this because I am medically retired as a Captain from the Army at a young age and am now considered a 100% disabled veteran. The search began last summer and was finished by September 30th of 2022. The only candidate they could come up with is a lobbyist for the largest commercial seafood processor in New Jersey. Because this job requires 8 working weeks at meetings, public hearings and much additional time preparing and communicating, very few people can afford to spend that amount of time without pay. These meetings require travel days in addition to actual meeting days since most of ASMFC meetings are in hotels in Virginia and Joint Meetings with the federal Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council can be in hotels anywhere from North Carolina to New York.

The lack of a stipend eliminates many excellent candidates from both the commercial and recreational communities, people who could be supported by both communities. I gave DEP many names of people both commercially and recreationally who would be acceptable to both communities but none of them responded to the search. This should not be a job for only the rich or only the paid lobbyist from either the commercial or recreational industries. We need to bring younger people into this process and make it financially possible for them to serve. If a person serving in this job is beholden to the business paying their salary, there is no way to guarantee an impartial judgment. The Federal government realized this and when they set up the federal fisheries management councils, they decided to pay council members a GS15 salary for each day they were at a meeting. I would be

willing to help any legislator who wants to craft a bill that would address this problem. Understand I have never taken a salary for any of the fisheries jobs I do and if offered I would turn it down. This is an Environmental Justice issue plain and simple.

Sincerely,
Tom Fote

Release for tomorrow

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Legislative Chairman JCAA & NJ State Federation of
Sportsman's Clubs

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Toms River NJ 08753
Phone: 732-270-9102
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**AMERICAN
SPORTFISHING
ASSOCIATION**

March 6, 2022

NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear NOAA Fisheries,

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on NOAA Fisheries' Draft National Seafood Strategy. ASA is the nation's recreational fishing trade association and represents sportfishing manufacturers, retailers, wholesalers, and angler advocacy groups, as well as the interests of America's 52 million recreational anglers. ASA also safeguards and promotes the social, economic, and conservation values of sportfishing in America, which results in a \$128 billion per year impact on the nation's economy.

NOAA Fisheries’ Draft National Seafood Strategy is an important first step in recognizing the value and national importance of seafood. As a primary ocean user group, the recreational fishing community has a vested interest in fostering seafood production and consumption. In 2020, recreational anglers [harvested 353m pounds](#) of fish. Between the poundage harvested and economic impact of our industry, recreational fishing plays an important role in the seafood sector. Including us in future conversations about the seafood strategy will be essential to the success and growth of U.S. seafood.

Seafood is Good for People

Under this heading we recommend acknowledging the benefit of recreational harvest, which helps people’s [physical and mental health](#) and wellbeing. The physicality of fishing combined with the nutritional benefits of seafood protein, make recreational fishing an excellent way to harvest essential protein.

Seafood is Good for the Economy

We suggest adding that the recreational sector generates \$128 billion per year, feeding countless individuals and families in the process.

Seafood is Good for the Planet

Some seafood is good for the planet. Seafood caught with destructive gear is not. We recommend specifying in this section what “harvested responsibly” means. In our opinion, harvested responsibly means that sportfish and other marine species are not harmed through bycatch. Destructive commercial fishing gear, such as trawls and longlines indiscriminately catch target species, sportfish and other marine life. These gear types should not be part of responsible harvest. We recommend you specify this in the “harvested responsibly” definition.

The phrase “environmentally friendly” is also used in this section. Again, we note that commercial gear types associated with habitat destruction and bycatch should in no way be accepted as environmentally friendly.

Strategy Framework

To successfully implement the strategy, we remind NOAA Fisheries of the importance of collaborating with the recreational fishing community. We are a vital seafood stakeholder and hope to help advance a final

strategy that includes appropriate considerations for recreational anglers. Our input is vital for the success of this strategy and growth in U.S. seafood.

GOAL 1: Sustain or increase sustainable U.S. wild capture production

We commend the inclusion of maximizing fishing opportunities under GOAL 1, however, we worry the stated opportunities will go to unsustainable forms of fishing, like commercial fishing that employs destructive gear types. Allowing maximum commercial fishing opportunities is not compatible with sustainability. We were disappointed that in this section support for commercial fishing was mentioned, but not recreational. To correct for that error and truly foster maximum sustainable production, we suggest the following rewording under the “Fisheries Management” bullet:

“Maximize fishing opportunities **that foster conservation** and sustainable seafood production while ensuring the sustainability of fisheries through effective and efficient management. Support **sustainable fishing industries** and fishing communities in their efforts to adapt to climate change and thrive in a changing ocean economy.”

GOAL 2: Increase sustainable U.S. aquaculture production

We applaud the acknowledgement that aquaculture is needed to bolster domestic seafood production and meet demand. Below we have enclosed our aquaculture position statement. The recreational fishing community believes that aquaculture can alleviate pressure on fisheries by reducing the need for damaging forms of commercial harvest. We view aquaculture as a critical component for achieving the overall seafood strategy. Benefits considered, commercial aquaculture development needs to ensure that negative environmental impacts, such as effluent discharge, forage base depletion, and introduction of non-native species, are prevented. We recommend including this consideration under the “Marine Aquaculture Management and Regulatory Efficiency” bullet. Done in a responsible way, aquaculture has the potential to foster healthier fisheries and create more recreational fishing opportunities.

GOAL 3: Foster access to domestic and global markets for the U.S. seafood industry

We broadly support this goal and emphasize the importance of fostering a strong domestic market to compete internationally. More support for domestic recreational fishing, particularly on the regulatory front, will achieve this goal.

GOAL 4: Strengthen the entire U.S. seafood sector

Recreational fishing is not mentioned under this goal. We are a key seafood stakeholder and should be included. We strongly recommend editing the “Seafood as a Vital Part of the Blue Economy” bullet to read:

“Support the U.S. **recreational fishing**, commercial fishing, marine aquaculture, and seafood communities to adapt and thrive in a changing ocean economy and given new competing uses.”

Strengthening the entire U.S. seafood sector also means that future allocation adjustments should not default to the commercial industry. With participation [up 15%](#) since 2015, the recreational sector deserves a reasonable distribution of opportunity. Historically, the wants of the commercial industry have been prioritized over fair allocation. We suggest including an additional bullet called “**Fair Allocation.**” Under the bullet we recommend stating:

“Even distribution of fishery resources is critical for strengthening the entire U.S. seafood sector. Ensuring that allocation is distributed equitably to each sector within the seafood industry will benefit all stakeholders and increase efficiency of seafood production.”

Thank you for considering our input and please contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss our recommendations further.

Sincerely,



Mike Leonard
Vice President, Government Affairs

New Jersey's 2023 Black Sea Bass & Porgy Regs to Change, Fluke Remains the Same!

*By Jim Hutchinson, Jr., Fisherman Magazine
March 6, 2023*

The New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council (Council) met on Thursday, March 2 in Galloway Township and memorialized changes to the black sea bass and porgy regulations for 2023. As expected, summer flounder (fluke) regulations that were in effect for 2022 will stay the same for another season.

Fluke opens on May 2 with a season to run through September 27 with a three fish bag limit, two of which must be within the “slot” of 17 to 17.99 inches, and one at 18 inches or above. The same three fish bag and 17-inch minimum size limit will be in place again west of the COLREGS on Delaware Bay in 2023, with a two-fish limit at 16 inches for surfcasters at Island Beach State Park.

As per requirements passed down from NOAA Fisheries through both the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), all states along the Atlantic Coast were required to keep their same fluke regulations in place again for 2023, while also coming up with regulations to meet a 10% cutback in black sea bass and scup (porgy).

The Council voted 3-1 in favor of new black sea bass regulations for 2023 which cuts the two-fish summer limit back to just one fish while lowering the size limit from 13 inches to just 12-1/2 inches. New Jersey's black sea bass season will be open from May 17 through June 19 with a 10 fish bag limit; from July 1 through August 31 with a one fish bag limit; from October 1 through October 31 with a 10 fish bag limit; and from November 1 through December 31 with a 15 fish bag limit.

To meet the 10% cutback in porgy harvest in New Jersey, the season was essentially halved to an August 1 through December 31 season, with a 30 fish bag limit and a 10-inch size limit.

While the Council's advisors recommended the options that were ultimately voted upon by the Council, of the roughly 20 people in attendance at the Galloway Township branch of the Atlantic County Library, and

another two dozen or so struggling to listen in on the webinar (technical issues), most anglers including representatives of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association (JCAA), the Fish Hawks Saltwater Fishing Club, South Jersey Saltwater Anglers Club and a divers club from Monmouth County spoke out in favor of a separate sea bass option which would've allowed a two sea bass limit catch from July 20 through August 31.

Despite the unanimous public comment from individual anglers and club representatives in attendance who supported the additional sea bass for the second part of summer, the Council carried a motion made by recreational council member Bob Rush in favor of the one fish limit through July and August. Those voting in favor of the preferred option included Rush, at-large representative Eleanor Bochenek, and commercial rep Kevin Wark. Recreational seat-holder Pat Donnelly was the sole opposition vote, while commercial delegates Joe Rizzo and Jeff Kaelin abstained from the vote. The only other recreational seat-holder was Dick Herb, who as Chairman of the Council does not vote.

In a post at the JCAA Facebook page the day after the meeting, JCAA representative Paul Haertel spoke out against the council vote. "Once again it became apparent that public sentiment means absolutely nothing," the post stated. "Every single one of the 15 or so people who spoke, including individuals, representatives from various clubs, charter and party boat captains as well as myself on behalf of JCAA spoke in favor of option 4. Despite that, three representatives on the council voted in favor of Option 1 while one voted against it and the others abstained," Haertel added at Facebook.

As frequently reported in The Fisherman Magazine, the Council should have 11 members, with the council makeup set by statute stating it should be composed of four sports fishermen, two active commercial fin fishermen, one active fish processor, two members of the general public, and the chairman of the two sections of the Shellfisheries Council. However, for over 2 years the Council has been short one sportfishing representative and one member of the general public.

According to Jeff Brust from the Bureau of Marine Fisheries, possible Council candidates have been collected by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and forwarded along to the

Governor's office for review. According to the state statute that formed the Council all members are appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate. The statute also states that the governor also "shall appoint a Chairperson from the citizen members of the Council, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor." Other resource related council and committee seats left vacant through neglect by Governor Phil Murphy include the Fish and Game Council (one seat), Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council (one seat), the Delaware Bay Shellfish Council (one seat), and Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee (one seat).

In terms of the timing of the new regulations for sea bass and porgies, Brust said he expects the new limits to be in place sometime in late April or early May after they've officially been approved by the governor's office. "Notices are effective upon final, not upon publication but upon final, so it could take a week," Brust said, adding "As soon as these are signed and filed and therefore effective that turns off our current regulations." As of Monday morning, the new Attention Anglers notice was posted at the state website.

Also finalized at the March 2 meeting of the Council was a new regulation in the state of New Jersey which prohibits the use of gaffs in the striped bass recreational fishery. That regulation is pursuant to an ASMFC mandate as of 2022 that all states implement a prohibition on the use of gaffs in the recreational striped bass fishery under Amendment 7 to the Atlantic Striped Bass Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and aims to reduce striped bass recreational release mortality.

The Council also suspended until their next meeting a vote that's being encouraged by the New England Fishery Management Council to implement new limits in New Jersey waters aimed at conserving Georges Bank Cod. The recommendations are to close state waters to cod fishing from June 1 through August 31, with incorporation of a minimum size limit of 23 inches and a bag limit of just five cod per day.

The next meeting of the Council will take place on May 11 when members are expected to take up the regulatory cod proposal for state waters for the final time.

Governor Moore Requests Federal Fishery Disaster Declaration for Invasive Blue Catfish

March 16, 2023

Maryland Seeking Federal Assistance for Invasive Species that Threaten Chesapeake Bay's Commercial Fishing Industry



Commercial vessels in a harbor. Maryland Department of Natural Resources photo.

ANNAPOLIS, MD — [Governor Wes Moore](#) is today calling on the federal government to declare the expanding population of invasive fish species—including blue catfish, flathead catfish, and snakehead—to be an ongoing commercial fishery disaster in the Maryland waters of the Chesapeake Bay. The governor sent [a letter](#) to U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo requesting the declaration under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act.

“In recent years, the state has become increasingly concerned about the explosion in the abundance of invasive fish species in the Chesapeake Bay, including blue catfish, flathead catfish, and snakehead,” said **Governor Moore**. “It is critical to act now to mitigate the effects of the invasive species and to provide assistance to the commercial fishing industry.”

The declaration would qualify Maryland for federal fishery disaster assistance.

Since 2012, the total catch of seven of Maryland’s marquee commercial fishery species that share their habitat with invasive fish at some point in their life cycle have declined between 27% and 91%. The dockside value of these species has likewise declined between 12% and 85%. Commercial fisheries—including hard blue crab, striped bass, yellow perch, and others—have brought in an average \$64 million yearly in dockside value during that time, making declines a significant loss for Maryland’s commercial watermen and the state’s economy.

While a direct scientific link between invasive species and the declines is yet to be determined, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources has growing concerns about observed high densities of invasive species, particularly blue catfish. It is likely that negative impacts will occur as these species are known to multiply rapidly, adapt to new environments, and eat a wide variety of prey, while preying upon and competing with native species for space and for food.

Scientific indicators that have shown declines in key species include the department’s annual [Striped Bass Juvenile Index](#) and [Blue Crab Winter Dredge Survey](#), both of which are conducted in coordination with Virginia. Striped bass recruitment has been well below average for four consecutive years, while total abundance of blue crab in the Chesapeake Bay in 2022 was 227 million crabs—the lowest abundance observed since the survey began in 1990. To help protect spawning stock, both states enacted measured but stricter limits on both recreational and commercial catch.

“Maryland, Virginia and other Atlantic Coast states have made wise and measured changes to many of our fishery regulations to protect our iconic species, but we have an emerging crisis on our hands that could undermine those measures,” said **Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Josh Kurtz**. “The impact of invasive species cannot be underestimated, nor can we delay action to address the damage they are causing.”

Blue catfish were first introduced in Virginia in the 1970s to create a recreational fishery but have since spread to tributaries throughout the watershed. Blue catfish are voracious eaters that consume other fish,

including catfish, and crustaceans. They out-compete the native species for both habitats and food and pose a threat to key commercial fisheries including blue crab, striped bass, white perch, yellow perch, and American eel.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has increased monitoring programs of invasive fish and also urged recreational anglers to target them to help combat their population expansion. Reducing numbers of invasive species of fish is positive for ecosystems and, as an added bonus, both blue catfish and snakeheads are valued as a delicacy. There are no fishing limits on invasive fish, which means anglers can catch and keep any number of them, at any size, during any time of year.

The East Coast Whale Die-Offs: Unraveling the Cause

*By Andrew S. Lewis, Yale Environment 360
March 8, 2023*



A dead humpback whale in Lido Beach, New York on January 31, 2023. SETH WENIG / AP PHOTO

Activists are blaming a recent spate of humpback strandings off New York and New Jersey on seismic exploration by offshore wind companies. But scientists say the deaths are not unusual and are likely due to increased ship traffic and entanglements with fishing gear.

In early December of 2016, the carcasses of juvenile humpback whales began turning up in the busy waters around the mouth of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay. By the end of February, 10 animals had been found within

about a 200-mile stretch of coast between Virginia and North Carolina.

Though scientists did not yet know it, the spate of deaths marked the start of an "unusual mortality event" (UME) for humpback whales. Such episodes, which are codified in the Marine Mammal Protection Act, involve unexpected strandings and a "significant die-off" of any marine mammal population. (A "stranding" can describe both a live or a deceased animal.)

After a decline in strandings in 2021, a dramatic spike appears to once again be underway. Between December 1, 2022 and March 1, 2023, [16 humpbacks](#) have stranded on or near shorelines from North Carolina to New York, the highest number ever recorded during that particular three-month period. Ten of the whales have been found on beaches in, or just offshore from, New Jersey and New York. (Other whale species, including four critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, have also stranded along the U.S. East Coast since January.)

Scientists who study whale behavior say it is impossible to definitively link the strandings to a single cause.

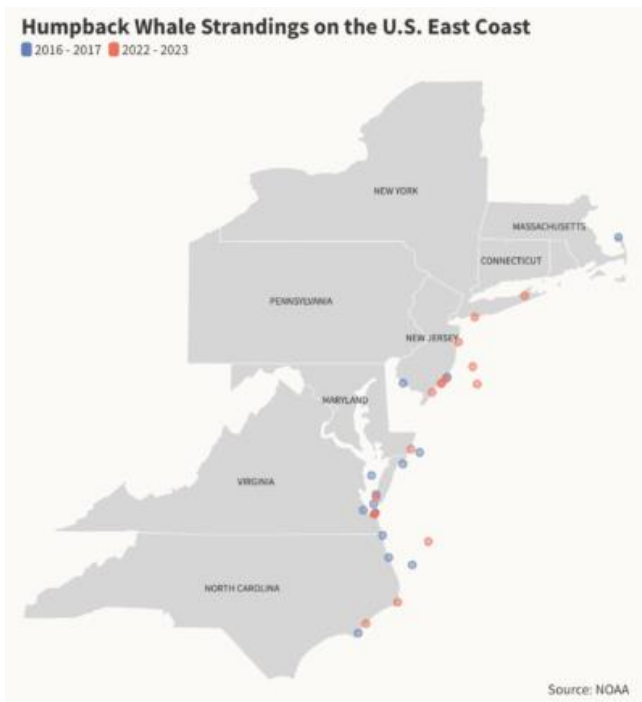
This winter's humpback strandings in New York and New Jersey look strikingly similar to those that occurred from December 2016 through February 2017 in Virginia and North Carolina, in terms of number of animals, geographic radius, and average number of days between strandings. And yet activist groups, politicians, and the media are [falsely framing](#) the New York and New Jersey strandings as unprecedented. The claim was first made in January, after the states experienced five humpback strandings, and the allegation has since engulfed coastal towns in New Jersey, where construction of the largest offshore wind farm in the U.S. is set to begin as early as next year.

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Building wind farms off the Eastern Seaboard has been discussed for decades. However, the Biden Administration, with the support of 11 coastal states, has moved quickly to carve out huge swaths of ocean for development. New Jersey has been the most ambitious, setting a goal to power more than 3.2 million

homes with offshore wind energy by 2035. Last year, the energy companies Ørsted and Atlantic Shores began conducting seafloor surveys off the coast of southern New Jersey for their respective lease areas, which have space for hundreds of turbines.

That work drew little attention. But after the January strandings, groups opposed to offshore wind development began blaming the deaths on the surveying, some of which uses pulses of sound to map the seafloor surface and subsurface. Since then, 30 mayors of coastal New Jersey municipalities, along with several of the region's state and federal representatives, have called on both New Jersey's governor and President Biden to pause all activity by offshore wind companies until an investigation determines the cause of the strandings.



“The work related to offshore wind projects is the primary difference in our waters,” New Jersey state senator Vince Polistina said in January, referring to recent changes in the ocean that might be drastic enough to trigger whale strandings. “And it’s hard to believe that the death of [these] whales on our beaches is just a coincidence.”

However, the Marine Mammal Commission, an independent government agency that oversees the conservation of marine mammals and their environment, said in February that “there is no

evidence to link these strandings to offshore wind energy development.” It added, “Although these strandings have generated media interest and public scrutiny, this is not an unusually large number of whales to strand during winter.” Indeed, since the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared the start of the UME in 2016, both New Jersey and New York have seen high numbers of strandings — New York alone has had 36 in the past seven years — though they have occurred more often in the spring and summer.

While certain types of sound have been shown to harm cetaceans, the scientists who study the impact of sound on marine mammals say the types recently used by Ørsted and Atlantic Shores operate at frequencies that pose little risk to baleen whales like the humpback. And scientists who study whale behavior in general say it is impossible to definitively link the strandings to a single cause given the complexity of the ocean, the dramatic changes the North Atlantic has experienced in recent decades, and how much is still unknown about how these changes might be affecting baleen whales.

Warming in the Gulf of Maine, a key feeding ground for humpbacks, may be influencing shifts in whale migration.

“If we’re being honest here, this isn’t just about humpback whales,” says Alex Costidis, who leads the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center’s Stranding Response Program and is also a member of the National Marine Fisheries Service’s working group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events. “This is about a pretty stressed marine environment that we are continuing to stress at increasing rates, while really having a very poor understanding of what the ultimate impact

Because there are no large-scale wind farms off the U.S. East Coast, the only way to achieve the best possible understanding of their impacts on marine life, Costidis and other scientists say, is to have a better understanding of the marine environment now — not after turbines have been constructed. Indeed, last year the state of New Jersey mandated Ørsted and Atlantic Shores to dedicate **\$26 million** to baseline research, like using seafloor-anchored listening devices to monitor marine mammal presence and analyzing environmental DNA to track the movements of fish species. Some of

that work has started. Some will begin this year. Already, though, there are clear signs of the stressors to the marine environment that worry Costidis.

The North Atlantic has warmed dramatically in recent decades. In 2022, its “ocean heat content” — a measure of the amount of heat stored by the ocean — reached its [highest point](#) since record-keeping began in the 1950s. The Gulf of Maine, a key feeding ground for humpback and other baleen whales, is warming even faster. This may be influencing seasonal changes in the whales’ distributions that scientists have noticed in the last few decades — changes that mirror those that are occurring among their prey, which include krill and Atlantic menhaden.



A humpback whale with her calf. NATURE PICTURE LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Historically, humpbacks largely remained in northern waters between the Gulf of Maine and Norway from spring through summer, then migrated south to the tropics to calve and mate in the winter. But recently, their distribution has been wider. “What we’ve seen in the past two decades is humpback whales in different areas to the south, most of them seeming to be juveniles, feeding off the Mid-Atlantic states in winter when most of the population would be migrating to the Caribbean,” says Jooke Robbins, a senior scientist with the Center for Coastal Studies’ Humpback Whale Studies Program. “In the past decade, we’ve started to see whales popping up in summer in the waters off New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, which seems to be an extension of the normal feeding season.”

Kevin Wark, a commercial fisherman who has spent his life and career working the waters off New Jersey, also says that predator-prey dynamics in the New York

Bight — as the waters off New York and New Jersey are known — have shifted significantly in recent years. “The menhaden population is strong and the whales have learned that they’re an easy target,” says Wark, who has worked as Atlantic Shores’ “fisheries liaison officer” since 2019. Recalling the past year, he continues, “I’ve never seen so many humpbacks in the ocean — just crazy amounts of whales.”

Over the past decade, the volume of goods handled by ports up and down the coast — but especially in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware — has grown rapidly. During the coronavirus pandemic, shipping traffic exploded. The number of containers handled at the Port of New York and New Jersey increased by [27 percent](#) between 2019 and 2022. Just to the south, the Port of Philadelphia is now the fastest growing port in the nation.

[Almost all the humpback strandings that occurred in New York and New Jersey this winter had clear signs of a vessel strike.](#)

This confluence of more whales and more ships in a new area presents an unfortunate but logical clue to the UME. Researchers conducted partial or full necropsies on about half of the stranded whales since the UME began in 2016, and about 40 percent of those examined had signs of injury at the hands of humans. “We continue to see evidence suggesting similar causes at play, namely vessel collisions and fishing gear entanglement,” Costidis says. “We can speculate all we want, but that’s what the evidence is currently showing us.”

Warming waters challenge Atlantic salmon, both wild and farmed. [Read more.](#)

Indeed, almost all of the humpback strandings that have occurred in New York and New Jersey this winter had clear signs of vessel strike, though it is unknown if the collisions occurred before or after the whales died. (Most of the full necropsy results are still pending.)

Even before the pandemic, vessel strikes and gear entanglement were among the main causes of anthropogenic mortality among large whales globally, and among North Atlantic humpbacks in particular. The species has been called “cosmopolitan” for its ability to seemingly tolerate the urbanized waters of the

New York Bight. A [study](#) published in 2021 found that humpbacks foraging in the nearshore waters of this region between 2018 and 2020 “were exclusively juveniles that were surface feeding,” and that 93 percent of humpbacks struck were juveniles.



A dead humpback whale washed up on Kure Beach, North Carolina in January 2016. KEN BLEVINS / THE STAR-NEWS VIA AP

“I don’t want to say there are only juveniles in the New York Bight,” says Lesley Thorne, a co-author of the 2021 study and an associate professor in Stony Brook University’s School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences. “But certainly” — compared to adults — “they are the animals occurring close to shore and [are] potentially more vulnerable because of that difference in habitat use.” Thorne says scientists are not yet sure why juveniles are more prevalent closer to shore, though Robbins pointed out that young humpbacks seem to chase Atlantic menhaden more than adults do.

In 2008, NOAA [established](#) speed restrictions to help reduce the risk of vessel strikes for large whales, particularly North Atlantic right whales. But the rule is difficult to enforce, especially as shipping channels become more crowded with more ships and whales. “We’ve been documenting vessel strikes and entanglements in large whales for decades, but it’s also becoming more prevalent as vessels get faster and fishing rope gets stronger,” says Michael Moore, a senior scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute who has spent his 40-plus-year career studying marine mammals, with a focus on North Atlantic right whales. “So the tools for trauma are there, and they’re well defined in terms of what is causing mortality. At what point does an unusual event become usual?”

Not only are vessels crowding the water’s surface, where humpbacks feed. They are also making it loud down below. The New York Bight’s submarine environment is constantly subjected to sounds from shipping and other sources, including the pinging of sonar from government activities, which may include nautical charting and geologic mapping; from academic institutions conducting historical geological studies; and from beach replenishment operations searching for suitable sand deposits.

“We’re fighting this battle against Cousteau’s silent world,” says an ocean researcher. “It’s not quiet down there.”

“We’re fighting this battle against Cousteau’s silent world,” says Doug Nowacek, who heads the Nowacek Acoustics and Engineering Lab at Duke University, which is currently researching how sound from the development of offshore wind sites might impact marine mammals. “It’s not quiet down there.”

Understanding this level of din is important when trying to assess the impact of other sources of sound — like the seafloor surveys conducted by Ørsted and Atlantic Shores — on whales such as humpbacks. The companies have used several types of survey equipment that use high frequency sound waves to map the seafloor within their lease areas. High frequency sounds are harder for baleen whales to hear, Nowacek says, and have not been shown to impact them beyond behavioral disturbances. Additionally, says Nowacek, these high frequency pulses quickly lose intensity as they spread from their target area on the seafloor.

The types of sounds that baleen whales are most sensitive to are low frequency and meant to travel long distances. The most well-known uses of low frequency sound are military sonar and seismic surveying conducted by the oil and gas industry, which uses huge arrays equipped with dozens of air guns to pulse sound waves kilometers below the seafloor. Both Ørsted and Atlantic Shores did conduct surveys that utilize lower frequencies, but because they only need to penetrate about 100 feet into the seafloor, the equipment is much smaller and emits far less sound-intensive pulses. (While military sonar has been directly linked to baleen whale strandings, seismic surveying has not.)



A fin whale spotted in the Gulf of Maine. FRANCOIS GOHIER / VWPICS VIA AP IMAGES

According to an Ørsted spokesperson, the company has not conducted those tests “offshore of South Jersey since the summer of 2022.” It is unclear when Atlantic Shores last used lower frequency surveying. Nevertheless, for a humpback to be disoriented enough by Ørsted’s surveying — even its lowest frequency activity — “it would have to be basically right next to it,” says Nowacek. Such a close encounter is unlikely, given that all offshore wind survey ships are required to have trained observers onboard whose job is to ensure that marine mammals are avoided and that sonar work is stopped when they are nearby.

Nowacek stressed that the impact of noise on marine mammals “is not something to be trifled with.” He and other scientists also emphasize that they are concerned by how little is still known about how the North Atlantic is changing, how marine mammal behavior might shift as a result of those changes, and how hundreds of wind turbines in the marine environment might further exacerbate all this change.

At sea and in court, the fight to save right whales intensifies. [Read more.](#)

“We’re trying to understand why these whales are here, to look at the resources they’re depending on,” says Robbins, of the Center for Coastal Studies. “There’s whole teams of people working under really terrible conditions, conducting necropsies, trying to look at each death carefully.” The questions are challenging, she adds, and they continue to mount. “But to draw a conclusion before a very complicated question has been sorted out is actually just drawing resources and attention away from the thing it might really be.”

Why 23 Dead Whales have Washed Up on the East Coast Since December

*By Tracey Tully and Winston Choi-Schagrin
New York Today Newsletter, February 28, 2023*

Another humpback whale was spotted dead late Monday, floating near a shipping channel between New York and New Jersey, the 13th whale found in the two states in three months.



Whales wash ashore every year. But a recent uptick in deaths, including a humpback found in late January on Lido Beach in New York, concerns scientists. Credit Justin Lane/EPA, via Shutterstock

First a North Atlantic right whale, a critically endangered species, washed ashore in Virginia. Then a humpback floated onto a beach in New Jersey. Not long afterward, a minke whale, swept in on the morning tide, landed on the Rockaway Peninsula in New York City. And that was in just a single week this month.

In all, 23 dead whales have washed ashore along the East Coast since early December, including 12 in New Jersey and New York, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The pace of the deaths is worrisome to federal scientists, even if the total numbers are below some prior years.

Late Monday, the Coast Guard spotted another whale floating south of the Ambrose shipping channel, between New York and New Jersey; two teams from New York located the animal and determined that it was a humpback, but it was not clear where it might wash ashore.

Most of the fatalities have been humpbacks, and post-mortem examinations have suggested that ship strikes are likely the cause of many of the deaths.

Scientists believe the mortality rate may be tied to an unlikely confluence of factors.

The [population of humpbacks](#), hunted legally until 1985, has rebounded, thanks in part to decades of efforts to clean the Atlantic Ocean and heavily polluted tributaries like the [Hudson River](#). As the climate changes and [oceans warm](#), whales and a favored prey, [menhaden](#), are migrating and feeding in new locations, often closer to shore.

Online pandemic buying habits are also fueling a record-setting surge in cargo shipments that last year made ports in New York and New Jersey the [nation's busiest](#). Much of the merchandise is now toted on far bigger ships — some of which have altered their routes to help alleviate the supply-chain chaos that last year left some [store shelves bare](#).

As a result, more whales appear to have found themselves in the direct path of more ships.

“When the whales are in these channels,” said Paul Sieswerda, executive director of Gotham Whale, a New York City-based whale research group, “you have to cross your fingers and hope there are no collisions.



A cargo ship glided toward the Bayonne Bridge in 2021, headed into port. Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

This winter's quick succession of stranded whales also coincides with work being done in advance of the installation of roughly a dozen large [offshore wind farms](#) from Massachusetts to Virginia. Opponents of offshore wind have said that the sonar used by energy companies to map the ocean floor or the noise from seabed rock sampling might be contributing to the whale deaths, though NOAA and the Marine Mammal Commission say there is [that this is true](#).

The humpback whale found on Feb. 13 in Manasquan, N.J., had been spotted about a month earlier feeding in the Raritan Bay, 30 miles from where it washed ashore.

Sheila Dean's phone at the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine, N.J., rang that day, as

it often does when dead whales turn up. It had been an exceptionally busy few weeks for Ms. Dean, who joined the center in 1978 after years working as a sea lion and dolphin trainer on Atlantic City's famed Steel Pier.

She and a team of 10 volunteers arrived on the beach the next morning and found a whale known by her markings as NYC0298.

There is no way to X-ray a creature as large as a school bus on a beach, so researchers check for injuries manually, pulling back thick layers of blubber and reaching up to a foot into the body cavity to look for parasites, scarring or bruises, a telltale sign of a vessel strike. The work is strenuous, and the smell is foul.

“Our job is to find out what is killing them,” Ms. Dean said.

On Feb. 17, another volunteer necropsy team was called to the Rockaways, in Queens, to investigate the death of the minke found with deep propeller gashes in its side.

Harry Wallace, chief of the Unkechaug Nation, a Native American tribe from Long Island, was there, too. He performed a burial service after the whale sleuths had finished their work. After the prayer, a front-end loader pushed the minke into a deep hole in the beach and covered the carcass with sand — the method used to dispose of most beached whales. The animals are buried deep enough to avoid a stench; over time, extra sand is often needed to fill in the divot as the whale decomposes and the grave settles. “It's our responsibility to recognize and remind that all living things have a spirit,” Chief Wallace said after the ceremony.



Members of the Unkechaug Nation tribe on Long Island performed a burial ceremony before a front-end loader pushed a minke whale into a deep sand grave. Credit...Andrew Seng for The New York Times

For more than half of all whales found stranded, investigators are not able to determine a definitive cause of death. Most of the animals are too decomposed; others may have died of infections that are impossible to detect or differentiate from the bacteria that quickly begins to form on dead tissue.

Sixteen of the whales stranded in the last three months have been humpbacks, nearly half as many as washed ashore in all of 2017, a peak year for deaths of both humpbacks and right whales. That year, [humpbacks](#), [right whales](#) and [minkes](#) were all found to be experiencing what NOAA calls an “unusual mortality event,” which has led to extra resources from the federal government for inquiry into the deaths.

Since then, at least 335 of these three species have washed ashore along the East Coast. Still, this winter’s quick succession of deaths over a short period is unusual, NOAA officials say. Investigators found evidence of vessel strikes in all three of the whales that washed ashore during the week of Valentine’s Day.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic fueled a surge in online shopping — and shipping — local cargo ports had undergone a significant change. Starting in 2017, ports near New York opened for the first time to the world’s biggest ships after the Bayonne Bridge was lifted, an [engineering feat](#) that raised the waterway clearance by 64 feet.

Last year, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey moved more cargo at its ports than ever before, representing a 27 percent increase in volume from 2019.

In the last six months, ships that typically traveled only south before returning to international ports have also begun making northbound return trips to retrieve empty cargo containers, said Amanda Kwan, a Port Authority spokeswoman. The round-trip routes reduce the number of empty shipping containers that accumulate in port — one of several factors that contributed to last year’s [supply-chain havoc](#) — but have also added to [shipping traffic](#) up and down the seaboard.

Last summer, NOAA [proposed enforcing a 10-knot speed limit](#) farther from port and applying it to boats as small as 35 feet, a rule thought to limit injuries if a collision occurs and to give whales time to get out of the way.

“We’re extremely careful,” said Capt. Timothy J. Ferrie, a president of the Sandy Hook Pilots Association who has steered ships in and out of New

York Harbor for more than 43 years. “If the bait is there,” he added, “the whales are there.”



Researchers completed a necropsy just before sunset on a Rockaway beach. Credit...Andrew Seng for The New York Times

Some of the loudest voices drawing attention to the uptick in whale deaths are [longtime opponents of offshore wind energy](#), who have found in the gruesome images of rotting whale carcasses a new 40-ton mascot.

Several local groups have found common cause with national organizations that have accepted funding from the fossil fuel industry, including the Caesar Rodney Institute, a right-leaning nonprofit that David T. Stevenson helps to lead. Mr. Stevenson, who opposes offshore wind farms, said Tuesday that he believed greenhouse gases may be causing Earth to warm at a slow rate, but that there is no climate crisis, contradicting [settled science](#). He believes offshore wind energy will be too expensive, and he recently founded the American Coalition for Ocean Protection, which now has chapters in coastal communities in New Jersey and New York.

“If an emotional response is what it takes,” he said about concern for the whales, “I’m not going to turn them down.”

Over the last month, [Republican congressmen](#), [conservative talk-show hosts](#) and dozens of Jersey Shore mayors have called for an immediate [moratorium on wind-energy projects](#).

“It’s not reasonable that it’s not going to cause real ecological damage,” said Cindy Zipf, director of Clean Ocean Action in New Jersey, which is calling for additional study before offshore wind projects receive final authorization.

But environmental protection organizations have largely supported wind energy. Thirteen [such groups](#) in New Jersey have reiterated support for offshore wind, a pillar of President Biden's [ambitious goals for reducing carbon emissions](#) and combating climate change.

"The organizations that are serious about protecting marine life recognize there are trade-offs," said Matthew B. Eisenson, who runs a legal defense initiative at the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University. "Climate change can impact marine life — and we need renewable energy to mitigate climate impacts."

JCAA Membership Report

By John Toth

Our Office Manager, **Karen Noe**, sent out invoices for JCAA club dues and we have received a number of checks from: Seaside Heights Fishing Club, the Fish Hawks, Surf Kings Fishing Club, the Beach Buggy Fishing Club (NJBBA) and the Hudson River Fishermen's Association (HRFA) Bay Head Shores, Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association, Newark Bait & Fly Casting Club, Berkley Striper Club, NJ Shark Anglers Club, and the Hi-Mar Striper Club **with a \$500 Sponsorship**, Saltwater Anglers of Bergen County, Bradley Beach Surf Casters, Barrington Rod & Gun Club, Jersey Coast Shark Anglers, Forked River Tuna Club, Manasquan Fishing Club **with a \$250 Sponsorship**, and Sandy Hook Bay Anglers **with a \$500 Sponsorship**.

Please let me know if I have missed your club with a dues payment or if I need to make a correction to your club's payment.

The Schuyler Fishing Club used to be a member of the JCAA but has decided to join us once again. **Welcome Back** and we are glad that you are a member club again!

The Staten Island Fishing Club is a new member club of the JCAA and we are glad to have this club as a new member of our association!

Visits to fishing clubs are planned by both Mark Taylor and me during 2023 to present our PowerPoint presentation on what the JCAA is all about. During January, we gave an in-person meeting to the Salt

Water Anglers of Bergen County and followed it by a ZOOM presentation to the Coastal Fly Rodders Club. We have scheduled presentations on April 4th to the Newark Bait & Fly Casting Club, April 14th to the Village Harbor Fishing Club, and the Surf Kings Fishing Club on May 3rd. Our presentation to the Sunrise Rod & Gun Club is scheduled for May 5th.

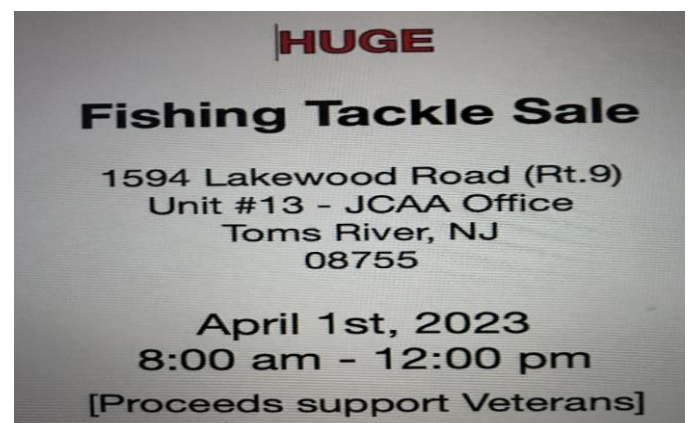
Our JCAA presentation can be customized to fit into your club meeting schedule either by in-person or by ZOOM. We have done it in about 20 minutes or about 45 minutes. We cover a lot of ground starting with the beginning of the JCAA, what the JCAA has accomplished, what it is working on today and the fishing challenges all of us anglers face in the future. We also take questions and provide answers to them to the best of our ability.

To schedule this JCAA PowerPoint presentation, I need to know the date when your club has its meeting, the time of it, the address of the meeting location and the contact person to arrange your meeting with me. I have been contacting clubs to schedule this PowerPoint presentation and I would appreciate your getting back to me at your earliest convenience so that I can arrange our meeting with you.

Also, I would like to have updated emails of your club representatives so that we can send you the agendas of our General membership meeting and also contact you on important issues that may quickly come up about our fisheries.

Our next JCAA General Membership meeting is on **March 28th** and it will be done both as an in-person meeting and also by ZOOM at the Shark Anglers building in Herbertsville 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 YOUTH EDUCATION

Learn about how you can help protect recreational fishing. Become a member volunteer or an associate member to support the voice of recreational anglers. Is recreational marine fishing getting better or worse? Let us know so we can do something about making saltwater fishing better for the future of fishing. Become a JCAA [associate member](#) today.

32nd ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S SURF FISHING TOURNAMENT

The 32nd Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament (GSFT) will be held at Island Beach State Park on Sunday, May 21, 2023. 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 [here](#).



We would like to remind our physically challenged anglers that there is an area at OBA 1 with beach

wheelchairs available. Anglers that are not able to 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. Downs Ford, Toms River, NJ, will assist physically challenged anglers with a NEW 2023 4x4 VIP vehicle to transport anglers that will be fishing 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. If you know a disabled veteran or angler that would like to fish the tournament, please phone Greg K at 732-840-9197 or email gkucharews@jcaa.org.

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 32nd 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.

Please visit the JCAA Website for updates and don't forget to [register](#) for the Free NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program.

EXPLORE THE SALT MARSH

NJ Fish & Wildlife's Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center is offering two overnight programs this summer for students interested in exploring the salt marsh through hands-on activities.

- Sedge Island Field Experience, July 17-19, 2023, is open for students going into 7 - 9 grade in September 2023. Application deadline is March 31.
- Sedge Island Field and Research Experience, July 20-22, 2023, is for students going into 10 - 12 grade in September 2023. Application deadline is May 1.

BECOME A CERTIFIED NJ HOFNOD INSTRUCTOR

Hooked on Fishing Team Leader Training is set for the weekend of April 21-23, 2023, at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education located in Waretown, NJ 08758 from Friday 6PM- Sunday 3PM.

There is a \$60 non-refundable fee which covers meals, lodging, materials/supplies, and helps offset training costs. Please do not register if you cannot commit to the entire weekend.

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.

4x4 VOLUNTEER JUDGES NEEDED AT ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK

The State of New Jersey 32nd Annual Surf Fishing Tournament at IBSP is looking for volunteer judges to ride the beach during the tournament and verify the length of fish caught by contestants.

Volunteers that would like to be a part of the tournament and measure fish will receive a 2023 Judges hat and compensation for fuel on the beach. We already have some Play HOOK-e from PTSD veteran volunteers signed up to judge.

For details, please contact Ken Hollins, Judge Chairman to become a volunteer judge rugburnsbleed55@optimum.net or phone Gary Conk @ 1-609-556-9241.

RIVER RANGERS SUPPORT

We received a request to support the River Rangers, Navesink Maritime Heritage Association with a presentation during the summer of 2023. If your club members are interested in volunteering to present a program about saltwater fishing. Please contact: Greg @ gkucharews@jcaa.org.

NBFCC KID'S FISHING NIGHT



Newark Bait and Fly Casting Club Kid's Fishing Night. Liz Jackson from NJ "Hooked On Fishing Not On Drugs" was their guest speaker for the night. Visit their [website](#) to view details about kids fishing and annual veteran fishing trip on the Mi-Jo.

37TH ANNUAL HOOKED ON THE HUDSON

Saturday, April 22, 2023, FREE Fishing Contest from 9:00am to 1:30pm. The HRFA will supply all equipment and bait free 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 20, 2023. Fishing and the day's events will be held at Atlantic Highlands Municipal Marina, 2 Simon Lake Drive Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716. For more information visit their [website](#).

HOFNOD YOUTH FISHING CHALLENGE

Will be held on the weekend of June 3-4. [Register here](#).

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- **Jersey Nutz Sportfishing** – jerseynutzsportfishing.com
- **Liberty Landing Marina** – www.libertylandingmarina.com
- **Pure Fishing** – www.purefishing.com
- **Sea Owl Sportfishing** – (see on FB)
- **South Harbor Marina** – 116 Oregon Ave, Waretown, NY (609) 693-3658

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- **Aqua Traction of the Mid-Atlantic** – www.aquattractionmidatl.com
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Bronze Sponsors (\$200+)

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- **Jersey Coast Shark Anglers** – Brick, NJ (see on FB)
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- **Hudson River Fishermen's Association** – www.hrfa.org
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COMMITTEES & CHAIRPERSONS

Legislative	Tom Fote	732-270-9102 tfote@jcaa.org
Office Manager	Paul Turi	732-506-6565 jcaa@jcaa.org
Access: (North)	George Browne	732-674-7060
Access: (South)	George Browne	732-674-7060
Blackfish	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Blue claw Crab	Bill Browne	732-504-9344
Blue Fish	Al Marantz	732-859-0020
Habitat	Paul Eidman	732-614-3373
Fluke	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Forage Fish	Paul Eidman	732-614-3373
Highly Migratory Species	Eric Engard	609-913-2281
Science & Research	Bruce Freeman	732-793-7871
Seabass	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Sponsorship	Frank Richetti	732-477-3120
Striped Bass	Paul Haertel	973-943-8201
Ways & Means	Don Marantz	908-347-1434
Webmaster	Phil V. Celmer	philipc@highlandstech.net
Youth Education	Greg Kucharewski	732-840-9197

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 Web and subscribe from there.

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