Red Tide Recovery: Stock Enhancement Initiatives And Adopt-A-Snook

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Join in the Recovery

One of the most beautiful and iconic coasts in our state was devastated this October by Hurricane Michael, and our hearts are still heavy. The damage is unbelievable and the photos and video of the once pristine area is heartbreaking.

It seems as though I’ve written this message before — and it wasn’t that long ago that we were recovering from a hurricane by another name. But time heals. And teamwork goes a long way. We Floridians understand that recovery is a process, and that we’re all in this together.

As our friends and partners at Costa have shared, we are all connected by the water. And it’s our duty to help one another in tough times. Join us in helping to support affected areas. Organizations like the International Game Fish Association and many others have foundations that specifically support our industry in natural disasters, and countless others do amazing work. Find a cause that speaks to you and get involved.

We are #onecoast.

Rebuilding and Restocking

Ron Crowder
Chairman

We’ve heard from members around the state over the last several months — and even before that, that they’re seeing fewer fish — and not just one species. I’ve seen it too. It seems there are fewer redfish, snook and other inshore species.

There’s no doubt that there are many factors that have played a role — everything from water quality issues and red tide, to the loss of habitat and the impact that storms have had on our waters.

We continue to work with FWC to identify issues, and I’m excited to share that we’re doing more than ever to offer solutions. We’re partnering with FWC, Duke Energy and Mote Marine Laboratory to address the losses to the redfish and snook populations on the southwest coast, beginning this Spring.

Our redfish initiative will include the release of over 10,000 Duke Energy hatchery-reared redfish, thanks to a donation from the Duke Energy Mariculture Center. And the two-year snook initiative with FWC and Mote Marine Laboratory includes raising and releasing 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook.

We’d love to have our members involved in these programs — from supporting with financial gifts in the renewed Adopt-A-Snook program, to helping with catch and release initiatives. Read more about these efforts on ReleaseThemForTomorrow.org and join us.

Looking For A Guide?

Log on to ccaflorida.org and choose from our regionalized directory of Florida guides who support CCA’s conservation initiatives.
**PROBLEM**

Anglers in Florida all share the same concern – they’re seeing fewer redfish. And snook. And many other inshore species. Long periods of red tide, water quality issues and other factors on the west coast, along with water quality issues and habitat loss on the east coast, may have played a role in a diminished number of these iconic inshore species.

Before these events, many of our members had observed a significant decline in redfish specifically throughout Florida. CCA has followed the issues closely and FWC tells us that this decline is primarily due to low recruitment of redfish during the spawning seasons from 2011 to 2015, meaning fewer redfish are making it from egg form to a juvenile fish. But there’s more to be studied.

**SOLUTION**

Until we know more, join us in releasing them for tomorrow. And join us in our upcoming stock enhancement initiatives.

We’re partnering with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Duke Energy and Mote Marine Laboratory to address the losses to the redfish and snook populations on the southwest coast beginning this Spring, when waters are determined to be safe. And you can help.

Our redfish initiative will include the release of over 10,000 Duke Energy hatchery-reared redfish, thanks to a donation from the Duke Energy Mariculture Center. And the two-year snook initiative with FWC and Mote Marine Laboratory includes raising and releasing 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook. Help support this program and Adopt-A-Snook and be a part of the solution. adoptasnook.com

Check out the latest about the catch and release movement from Releasense, a joint effort to advance the traditional role of anglers as leaders in fisheries conservation. releasense.org
CCA FLORIDA LEADS EFFORTS TO SUPPORT RECOVERY IN RED TIDE AFFECTED SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Nonprofit-corporate partnerships expand to stock the redfish and snook populations on Florida’s southwest coast. This fall, CCA Florida announced partnerships with Duke Energy, Mote Marine Laboratory and FWC to address the loss to the redfish and snook populations as a result of red tide devastation.

THE REDFISH INITIATIVE
CCA Florida has historically partnered with Duke Energy and FWC on initiatives to enhance Florida’s fisheries, and we are again joining forces to address the loss to the redfish population on the southwest coast as a result of red tide. Together with Duke Energy and FWC, we will be releasing over 10,000 Duke Energy hatchery-reared redfish following the Florida red tide bloom and when waters are determined to be safe, thanks to a donation from the Duke Energy Mariculture Center.

The initiative will take place when the waters are determined to be clear of red tide and will include the release of 200-300 tagged adult (25”-30”) redfish and 10,000+ juvenile (4”-6”) redfish into the waters of Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties.

THE SNOOK INITIATIVE AND ADOPT-A-SNOOK
We’re partnering with the FWC and Mote Marine Laboratory to also address the loss to the snook population on the southwest coast as a result of the red tide event.

The two-year initiative includes raising and releasing 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook along Florida’s southwest coast and will launch in April 2019 following the Florida red tide bloom and when waters are determined to be safe. Fundraising for the program, a cost of over $440,000, will include outreach to the community through the renewed Adopt-A-Snook program (adoptasnook.com) and the formation of additional private-nonprofit partnerships.

“We’re all aware of the devastation the red tide has caused our fisheries and we’re thrilled to partner with Duke Energy for this amazing redfish stock enhancement initiative. We’ve asked our members and anglers throughout the state to catch and release, but there’s more that needs to be done, and this partnership – as with our ongoing relationship with Duke - will help to repopulate a fishery that’s iconic to our state.”

—Brian Gorski, CCA Florida Executive Director

“We appreciate the valuable support from CCA Florida and Duke Energy in helping enhance our world class redfish fishery. This team effort will benefit conservation, outdoor recreation and the state’s economy in many ways.”

—Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director
Don Ray, Bob Stewart, Howard Wells, The Snook Foundation and Mote, CCA Florida is now leading the initiative to once again restore the snook population in affected areas.

With support and partnership from CCA Florida and FWC, Mote will locate and restock juvenile snook to specific tidal-creek “nurseries” that would usually be supplied by spawning aggregations hit hard by the bloom. Each of the hatchery-reared snook will be tagged with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags to allow Mote scientists to monitor and track the progress of the juveniles throughout the study, which includes monthly stocking efforts designed to elevate the system towards its carrying capacity. Decades of intensive snook aquaculture and sustainable stock enhancement research provides the ability for the State of Florida to rapidly respond through this partnership effort to a significant impact from red tide.

Mote’s experimental work has shown that the abundance of juvenile snook can nearly double in underutilized nursery habitats through stocking 10-month-old juveniles. In addition, ongoing Mote studies in Sarasota County suggest that tagged, juvenile snook find some degree of refuge from red tide in tidal creek and riverine environments with fresher water less conducive to the red tide alga, Karenia brevis.

Governor Scott said, “As our communities continue to be impacted by this year’s red tide, we have provided all available resources for response and recovery. I’ve directed $9 million in grant funding for local communities as well as funding for Mote Marine Laboratory to assist in animal rescue efforts and funding for VISIT FLORIDA to help businesses recover. We will continue to do everything we can to support our coastal communities that are being impacted.”

“Fish mortalities associated with the current red tide bloom in southwest Florida have broad impacts, both to our state’s interconnected biological systems and to the people that make a living from and enjoy our natural resources. We are proud to play a small part in the solution by restocking fish that will contribute to the overall restoration of the affected areas.”

—Eric Latimer, Duke Energy Florida Mariculture Center Manager

In addition to the stock enhancement initiatives, CCA Florida, FWC and Mote Marine Laboratory are encouraging anglers to help the snook and other inshore populations by releasing their catch. This summer, CCA Florida launched the “Release Them For Tomorrow” campaign as a way to support several species’ growth through catch and release, including snook. “It is going to take everyone doing their part to get our fisheries back to health,” stated Gorski. Anglers are encouraged to share the message by tagging their social media photos, comments and messages with #ReleaseThemForTomorrow to show their support. Anglers can become engaged by joining CCA Florida at JoinCCA.org. For more information, visit ReleaseThemForTomorrow.org.

“The continuing impacts of red tide in southwest Florida are evident to all of us who call these communities our home. One of the potentially most devastating and highly visible impacts around Charlotte Harbor was to the spawning snook population. Many of the dead snook were laden with eggs to produce the next generation. Governor Scott and our partners at FWC quickly called on Mote and provided our fisheries scientist with the resources to conduct a rapid snook population impacts assessment, but much more needs to be done to ensure the recovery of this iconic species. That is why we are proud to partner with our colleagues at CCA Florida and FWC to launch the renewed Adopt-A-Snook partnership for red tide recovery.”

—Dr. Michael P. Crosby, President & CEO of Mote Marine Laboratory
A REEL SOLUTION
Adopt-A-Snook and Support Red Tide Recovery

We’re partnering to address the loss to the snook population on the southwest coast and you can help.

With your support, we’ll raise and release 10,000 hatchery-reared juvenile snook, beginning in April 2019. You’ll receive an adoption certificate including a tag number, release location and updates from data collected through 2021.

Join us in the renewed Adopt-A-Snook program and help create more amazing fishing experiences for generations to come.

100% of proceeds will benefit the snook stock enhancement program.

Join us today by visiting AdoptASnook.com.
Gov. Scott: Additional $1.2 Million for Redfish Hatchery Will Help Mitigate Impacts from Red Tide

In September, Governor Rick Scott announced that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is providing $1.2 million to enhance research and production of redfish at the FWC Stock Enhancement Research Facility at Port Manatee. This funding will help the FWC to address impacts of naturally occurring red tide on redfish populations in coastal marine fisheries. With this additional funding, the facility is anticipated to produce six times the amount of redfish for stocking in Southwest Florida, providing a significant boost to the population of this important species. Governor Scott has also directed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to provide $9 million in grant funding to assist local communities.

Governor Scott said, “Today, as we continue to do everything possible to help our communities impacted by red tide, I am directing $1.2 million from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to enhance the redfish population. Along the Gulf Coast, businesses and fishermen rely on the robust health of Florida’s world-class fisheries. With this investment we are not only supporting our environment, but also these Floridians who make their living on the water. Together, the state and our partners along the Gulf Coast will keep fighting to support our impacted communities as we battle red tide.”

FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton said, “Florida is the Fishing Capital of the World. Not only are our fisheries robust, but they are also incredibly resilient to the impacts of natural events, like red tide. We will continue to enhance our management efforts of this world-class fishery for future generations.”

Brian Gorski, Coastal Conservation Association Florida Executive Director, said, “We’re pleased to see the increased and continued support from Governor Scott to address the devastation to the redfish population in our southwest coastal waters. We’ve asked our members and anglers throughout the state to catch and release, but there’s more that needs to be done, and this effort – along with other stocking initiatives by organizations like CCA Florida, FWC, Duke Energy and others - will help to repopulate a fishery that’s iconic to our state.”

The FWC’s Stock Enhancement Research Facility (SERF) in Port Manatee, Florida, spawns and raises hatchery fish for stock enhancement in Florida waters. By acquiring additional equipment and supplies necessary to expand hatchery operations, the FWC can effectively increase the capacity at which the SERF currently functions. This stocking effort will support and sustain local redfish populations and address concerns regarding impact of red tide on marine fisheries along the coast of Southwest Florida.
NOAA and Florida Keys fishing guides partner to support sustainable recreational fishing

By Kennedy Gullatte

Reprinted from National Marine Sanctuaries, September 2018

Long considered an angler’s paradise, the sandbars, flats, channels, and reefs in the Florida Keys provide year-round opportunities for anglers who dream of catching a “fish of a lifetime.” These lush habitats support charter fishing captains and guides whose livelihoods depend on a healthy, productive ecosystem.

The Blue Star Fishing Guide program recognizes charter fishing captains who are committed to sustainable fishing practices and educating their customers about resource protection in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The voluntary training and compliance program seeks to increase fishing guides’ knowledge and, ultimately, that of their clients, to conserve the mangroves, seagrass meadows, and reefs that are the foundation for world-class fishing in the Florida Keys.

“Becoming a Blue Star Fishing Guide is not only a step towards conserving the Florida Keys, but also protects the fisheries we rely on each day for charters,” says Tony Young, owner of Forever Young Charters on Ramrod Key. “It is in each operator’s best interest to go Blue Star and educate their clients on sustainable fishing practices.”

In 2017, 41 percent of visitors participated in recreational sport fishing, according to the Monroe County Tourist Development Council’s visitor profile survey. Florida Bay, edged by the inner curve of the Keys and the Florida mainland, is referred to locally as the backcountry. It is home to five of the most sought-after game fish among recreational anglers: bonefish, tarpon, permit, redfish (red drum, and snook. Off the Keys’ outer curve and the nearby Gulf Stream lies the Atlantic Ocean. Blue and white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish inhabit these deep-sea areas.

Debi Gabriel, of Boneafide Charter Company in Islamorada, “We pick up trash on every trip,” Gabriel says. “It’s important to keep the bays and the oceans clean and to not teach their trash to swim. Especially the bait boxes. I pick up a lot of those every week.” Adds Young: “We see a lot of people anchoring on the coral in shallow reefs, fishing in areas they are not supposed to, and taking fish that are undersized or out of season. Some visitors do not know, but many simply ignore the regulations and laws that are set in place to protect the Florida Keys.”

In addition to pollution and poor boating practices, guides say many visitors lack basic awareness about the sanctuary and its surroundings. “Most clients are from outside the local area and really don’t have sanctuaries in their backyard or even realize they’re fishing in one until you tell them,” says Jim Loftus, owner of Mile Marker 27 Fishing Charters on Ramrod Key.

Young and other Blue Star guides say they are committed to helping the Keys remain a world-class fishery for current and future generations. “The Florida Keys are a year-round fishing destination,” says Young. “The fishing is consistent, easily accessible, and inviting for every experience level. We are truly blessed to have the fisheries we do in

THE END
Congratulations to Dave Bulthuis, Vice President of Industry Relations and Government Affairs for Costa Sunglasses, who was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) during the organization’s annual summit in October.

Bulthuis has served on ASA’s board of directors for eight years, including two as Chairman of the Board from 2015 to 2016. He was recognized for his extraordinary leadership and lifelong commitment to recreational fishing and the sportfishing industry.

Bulthuis has been with Costa since 2003, where he began his career with the organization as Vice President of Sales. Prior to joining Costa, Bulthuis served as Director of Sales for several brands in the outdoor industry, including Cape Fear Rod Company, Jones and Company and various independent rep groups.

FWC EXPANDS FISHERY MANAGEMENT MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO RED TIDE

At its September meeting in Tallahassee, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) directed staff to expand a recent catch-and-release only measure for snook and redfish to include Tampa Bay (including all of Manatee and Hillsborough counties) as well as all of Pinellas and Pasco counties starting Friday, Sept. 28.

The FWC also directed staff to extend these measures through May 10, 2019, in these and other areas previously made catch-and-release for redfish and snook.

CONGRATULATIONS TO GUY HARVEY CONSERVATION AWARD WINNER

Congratulations Commissioner Alligator Ron Bergeron. We’re honored to take part in an amazing night in Fort Lauderdale to celebrate conservation with Guy Harvey and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, one of our partners in habitat projects.

Congratulations to Ron Bergeron and thank you to Guy Harvey!

If you’re planning a fishing trip to Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, consider a Blue Star Fishing Guide when making your charter reservations, so that you, too, can contribute to a sanctuary that will thrive and support sustainable sportfishing for generations to come. Fishing guides interested in becoming a Blue Star operator should contact the coordinator at bluestar.fishing@noaa.gov.

Kennedy Gullatte is a volunteer communications intern for NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and a sophomore at Florida A&M University.

The Blue Star Fishing Guide program was created by Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Keep Florida Fishing, American Sportfishing Association, Coastal Conservation Association Florida, and Bonefish and Tarpon Trust.

If you’re planning a fishing trip to Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, consider a Blue Star Fishing Guide when making your charter reservations, so that you, too, can contribute to a sanctuary that will thrive and support sustainable sportfishing for generations to come. Fishing guides interested in becoming a Blue Star operator should contact the coordinator at bluestar.fishing@noaa.gov.

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Decision Delivers Victory for Conservation and Anglers

The recreational fishing and boating community applauded the decision by NOAA Fisheries to deny an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) that would have allowed pelagic longline (PLL) vessels into the East Florida Coast Pelagic Longline Closed Area back in September.

“Angler conservationists can breathe a sigh of relief that the longline EFP application is no longer a threat to the conservation gains in the E. Florida Closed Zone,” said Jeff Angers, president of the Center for Sportfishing Policy. “We will remain vigilant in protecting both this conservation zone we fought so hard for two decades ago as well as this amazing catch-and-release sailfish fishery that has grown off the east coast of Florida.”

On March 6, 2018, leading recreational fishing and boating organizations submitted public comment to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in opposition to the misguided EFP.

More than two decades ago, swordfish in the Western Atlantic were in serious trouble due to overfishing. The public responded forcefully to the plight of swordfish, and as a result, nursery areas were identified and closed to the United States PLL fleet in 2001. Today, anglers point to the recovery with pride as a significant conservation victory.

“We greatly appreciate NOAA’s decision to keep the conservation zone off-limits to this destructive gear,” said Patrick Murray, president of Coastal Conservation Association. “Clearly the voices of recreational anglers and marine conservationists were heard. This is a great victory.”

An unintended benefit of the East Florida Coast PLL Closed Area has been the establishment in the region of the nation’s best sailfish fishery. The direct economic benefit to coastal recreational fishing-related businesses and coastal economies has been remarkable.

“Saltwater recreational fishing along the East Coast of Florida supports 35,523 jobs and has a sales impact of over $4 billion annually,” said Glenn Hughes, president of the American Sportfishing Association. “Much of this economic activity is attributed to the tremendous sailfish fishery that has been supported in large part by the East Florida Coast Pelagic Longline Closed Area. The recreational fishing industry is relieved by NOAA’s announcement to not put this conservation success at risk by allowing longlining back into the area.”

Ever since the fishery was deemed recovered, there have been ill-conceived attempts to reopen the closed areas to commercial harvest and expose it to the types of intense commercial fishing pressure that drove it into an overfished condition in the first place. The permit denied by NOAA Fisheries would have authorized PLL vessels to make thousands of sets in the conservation zone for up to three years and sell all the legal fish caught.
The Beat Goes On ... From CCA National

From dissing descending devices and artificial reefs to opening the red drum commercial fishery and defending screwy models that make no sense, it’s business as usual for federal management.

A common piece of gallows humor among veteran observers of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is that you can skip a decade of meetings and walk right back into almost the exact same conversations. True to its form as a meeting that has never been particularly receptive to recreational anglers, the Gulf Council met last month and produced a familiar litany of discussions ranging from the convoluted to the alarming.

NOAA representatives again went on the record diminishing the value of artificial reefs in their belief that they have made fishing too great—high catch rates of big fish allowing anglers to reach their quotas too fast. NOAA seemingly gives no credit to those artificial reefs as valuable centers of production that add to the overall population, and laments how these mere “fishing spots” screw up the red snapper fishery. From NOAA’s perspective, if all the artificial reefs were gone the fishing would be much poorer and more difficult, and that would be a good thing because the seasons would be longer. You may not catch anything anymore, but you could try for a really long time. In contrast, thankfully the Department of Interior has announced no desire to fill in prairie potholes or bulldoze marsh to make fewer ducks and longer duck seasons... (And people wonder why I’m so negative and jaded about federal fisheries management.)

There was not as much discussion as there could have been about the recalibration of NOAA’s historical recreational catch data showing the potential for massive shifts in allocation of many species important to the recreational sector. No one wants to talk too much about that yet because the implications sort of redefine reality for many species, particularly red snapper, and not in a way that NOAA is inclined to accept gracefully. Therefore, no one should be surprised if there are systemic efforts underway behind the scenes to downplay the new data. This is one issue that is going to need a lot of sunshine to keep on track.

NOAA representatives again went on the record opposing requirements for descending devices in the reef fishery and successfully guided the Council to remove them from consideration as a management tool. This opposition to a tool that has proven to be successful in releasing alive a deep-dwelling fish is just baffling from a conservation standpoint. The only explanation is that while such a tool would be embraced by recreational anglers, any similar requirement for the commercial or charter/for-hire sector would be highly disruptive to their fishing practices, and NOAA apparently isn’t willing to impose that on them for the sake of conservation. Additionally, widespread adoption of descending devices in the private angler sector would inevitably open a Pandora’s Box of scrutiny into release mortality in all sectors, and NOAA’s track record on that significant management component, and even any real data on discards, is embarrassingly meager.

There was a very long, technical discussion that attempted to explain why NOAA data for the gray snapper fishery indicates it has been undergoing overfishing for 40 years, but somehow the stock still isn’t classified as overfished. That much effort to explain something that makes no sense in the first place should shake the confidence of anyone who still has faith in NOAA’s models.

Finally, efforts are again brewing to open the red drum fishery in federal waters to harvest. The Gulf red drum fishery is a perfect example of how wildlife resources should be managed and so any effort to unravel it should always be regarded with alarm. The brood stock of mature fish that spawn offshore has been off limits to all harvest since the 1980s and that protection fuels a massive, sustainable inshore fishery on juvenile redfish that is an economic powerhouse for the Gulf states. Opening federal waters jeopardizes the entire system, and yet calls to do so emanate occasionally from the commercial sector. At the October Council meeting, requests to target the brood stock came from quarters as varied as Scott Hickman, president of the Galveston Professional Boatman’s Association/charter operator/commercial fisherman, to Ed Swindell, commercial Council member from Louisiana with a long history in the menhaden industry.

Why anyone would knowingly want to target an oversized breeder redfish that is critical to the future of the species, and oh, by the way, is probably filled with worms and potentially high mercury and other toxins, isn’t clear. However, given NOAA’s unabashed bias and support of for-profit harvest of any kind, there is a danger that someone somewhere in the agency is now feverishly trying to figure out how to allow it. That should send shivers down the spine of anyone who has ever held a fishing rod on the Gulf Coast.

It has been said that anyone who enjoys a meeting shouldn’t be in charge of anything, and nowhere is that more applicable than the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The recurring beat from one or 100 Gulf Council meetings is that the less control federal management has over the fish and the habitat, the better it is likely to be for everyone.
Port St. Joe Trash Tour Clean Up

Held at Frank Pate Park in Port St. Joe, the CCA Trash Tour was a huge success. Over 45 volunteers came out to clean up the coast line and water ways. We nearly filled an industrial size dumpster full of garbage from St. Joseph’s Bay. Volunteers found everything from rain drums to toilet seats floating in the water. After lunch was served (from Krazy Fish Grill), awards were presented and raffle items like Costa Sunglasses and Power Pole certificates were given away! To learn more about this free event, visit trashtourfl.com.

CCA Forgotten Coast Chapter

The Forgotten Coast Chapter recently held a booth at the Mexico Beach Artificial Reef Association Kingfish Tournament. We were able to speak to anglers about CCA Florida, our STAR competition and current habitat projects. The information was well received and the anglers had a great day of fishing!

Panama City Art and Wine Cruise

Panama City artist Joyful Enriquez had her work on display at the Sheraton Bay Point from September-November. Some of her original pieces will be sold to benefit local conservation groups…one of them being CCA Florida! To kick off the exhibit, the Sheraton Bay Point Resort invited guests on an art and wine cruise. Guests were given a presentation about CCA Florida, a glass of wine, and then headed to the dock for a sunset cruise on one of the Sheraton's boats. All proceeds were donated to CCA Florida.
Engel Coolers and CCA Florida Partner with Feeding Florida to Help Support Hurricane Michael Affected Communities

Hurricane Michael caused mass destruction to communities and neighbors in the Panhandle, and our partners at Engel Coolers stepped up to join us, along with Feeding Florida, to support residents most affected by the devastation.

The partnership included the donation and distribution of pallets of high-performance coolers which were used in recovery efforts for residents in several affected communities and were distributed through Feeding Florida’s network. To help join the effort, donate today to Feeding Florida.

“While our partnership with CCA is based on being responsible environmental stewards, Floridians are our primary concern. We are proud to be part of an effort to help those in a time of need and beginning the rebuilding process.”

—Rob Bowie, Vice President of Engel Coolers

New Venues

The spring Martin County Banquet and Auction will have a new venue for the first time in 20 years this March. Join us March 21st at the Hutchinson Island Resort and Spa! Get more information on CCAFlorida.org under the Martin Chapter tab.

The Homestead Banquet in May is also moving to an exciting new venue - the Homestead International Speedway! Get the details on CCAFlorida.org under the Homestead Chapter tab.

Thanks to the South Palm community for their help in supporting the renewed Adopt-A-Snook program, $2,500 was raised for the program at the recent banquet!
In October, we were honored to partner with Ocean Aid 360 to complete the first of six Ghost Trap Rodeo events in Pinellas County. With the help of 37 participants, 25 abandoned crab traps were removed from Tampa Bay along with over 400 pounds of other marine debris. Congressman Charlie Crist joined the event to express his support for this ghost fishing/marine debris intervention and to serve as our Ghost Trap Rodeo Grand Marshall.

By pulling these 25 traps, local angler-volunteers limited the cycle of ghost fishing in Pinellas County waters resulting in reduced mortality of marine life by-caught in the lost traps, and improved the estuarine habitat for future generations of marine life. Volunteers also won a lot of great industry-sponsored prizes valued at nearly $5,000 in retail value!

There are four more Ghost Trap Rodeo events scheduled around Tampa Bay, one per month until March 23, with $25,000 in prizes over the 6 event series. Join us for future events. Get the details online at oceanaid360.org.
33rd Annual CCA Tampa Digital Photo All-Release Challenge Fishing Tournament

The Tampa Chapter recently held their 33rd Annual Digital All-Release Challenge Fishing Tournament in September at the Tampa Bay Watch Marine and Education Center in Tierra Verde. On display were hundreds of items available in the evening raffle, almost all of them donated by the tournament sponsor, T.A. Mahoney Co. of Tampa.

Catches of Mention (aka 1st Place) are as follows:
- **Youth Longest Fish:** Parker Gallant – 17 ½ inches – Spanish Mackerel
- **Ladies Snook:** Evelyn Peabody – 20 inches
- **Ladies Trout:** Marion Clark – 16 ½ inches
- **Men’s Redfish:** Frank Weber – 24 ¾ inches
- **Men’s Snook:** Patrick McConachie – 25 ¼ inches
- **Men’s Trout:** Richard Moore – 19 ¼ inches

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you can catch a wave at the beach, a rocket launch and a much-needed break. And that’s just the beginning! **Stay here and you’ll find that there’s no shortage of opportunities to reel one in.**

CatchSpaceCoast.com
CCA/UF Tailgate

There are two CCA chapters that grace Gator Nation. The Gainesville Chapter has about 500 members and holds an annual banquet in the Touchdown Terrace of the UF stadium in September each year. The other is the CCA Gators Chapter, specifically for current college students! More than just another collegiate fishing club, this chapter gives college students an opportunity to help in CCA fundraising efforts while providing them valuable leadership opportunities and business experiences.

In early November, CCA hosted its first ever social event to join the two chapters together. We set up a tailgate spot in the Bull Gators tailgate lawn and invited all members to come out for a good time and a good cause. Free beer was provided to attendees of age from Swamp Head Brewery, Island Coastal Lager and Sweetwater Brewery! Former CCA Gainesville Chapter President and longtime Bull Gator Wiley Horton, was kind enough to host. Horton prepared homemade paella and Kelleigh Gorski prepared Momma Gorski’s famous Shrimp Creole for guests to enjoy. Members joined from Chapters including Palm Beach, Gainesville, Hernando County, Orlando, Manatee County, Lake County, Martin County, Naples and more.

Gainesville CCA Social at Swamp Head Brewery

The CCA Gainesville chapter held a free informational event at Swamp Head Brewery in July. A presentation about CCA Florida was complimented with free beer. Guests were able to ask questions to CCA Regional Directors, buy raffle tickets, take home CCA informational materials and purchase our new ladies shirts!
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ALWAYS IN THE GAME: CONTENDER AND CCA FLORIDA

“The Contender name is synonymous with performance, and the partnership we share, and the dedication we have with Contender is overwhelming. We’re humbled by the support we’re given each year, and we’re so thankful to Joe Neber and the entire team for their continuous support.”

—Brian Gorski, CCA Florida Executive Director
For years, Contender Boats - one of the industry’s premier boat manufacturers - has partnered with CCA Florida, and the company’s support is larger than ever.

Joe Neber, President and Owner, and CCA Florida Legacy Member, founded the company in 1984 and his love and passion for saltwater fishing fuel his efforts to support the industry and those who help to protect it. Contender and CCA have partnered for years and the company’s dedication to CCA Florida and has grown ever since.

In 2014, Joe and Contender joined CCA to partner in creating one of the nonprofit’s most notable fundraisers, the CCA Florida Contender Boat Raffle. The raffle gives anglers their shot at winning a 28 Tournament for no more than a $100 raffle ticket, and since beginning the program, five anglers have walked away extremely happy with brand new boats. Contender donates a rig annually, completely outfitted and ready for the water, thanks to other partners including Yamaha Outboards. Since the donations began, CCA Florida has raffled five boats and raised over $750,000 in total, including over $170,000 in the 2018 raffle this past October.

Contender also donates a second boat annually for the CCA Florida STAR competition, a 22 Sport, which has been a highly sought-after prize in the event’s signature Tagged Redfish Division. Looking forward, Neber and the brand have once again committed to the donations in 2019 as well.

The successes achieved and work led by CCA Florida depends on partnerships with the community and members – all working together for a common goal. The generous support of Contender Boats and other CCA Florida partners helps to ensure that positive outcomes will continue to grow and create opportunities for generations to come to enjoy Florida’s marine resources.
STAR 2018: IT’S A WRAP

We are excited to call CCA Florida’s 2018 STAR, presented by Yamaha, a tremendous success! The statewide, 101-day event concluded with the annual Awards Ceremony and Banquet on October 20, where we hosted nearly 500 guests and winners. STAR awarded over $300,000 in prizes, leaving six major prizes unclaimed in the Tagged Redfish Division, including the GMC pickup truck from Conley Buick GMC, a Hewes Redfisher 17, a Carolina Skiff 21 Ultra and two 16ft JVX center consoles and a Cottonmouth Boat, all powered by Yamaha. The highlight of the ceremony was awarding $100,000 in scholarships to 12 youth anglers who were drawn as winners in the Academy Sports + Outdoor Youth Scholarship Division. The ceremony, presented by Discover Crystal River, was held in Crystal River at the beautiful Rock Crusher Canyon Pavilion outdoor venue. Many thanks to Sodium Fishing Gear for supplying the STAR high-performance shirts, Homosassa Marine for providing the Realtree Fishing tumblers and Plantation Inn on Crystal River for being the host resort. A good time was had by all.

CCA Florida STAR officially wrapped on Monday, September 3. All winners were drawn and STAR announced over 100 winners in the 101-day, family-friendly fishing competition shortly after. The state’s leading organization dedicated to habitat restoration
(continued on page 24)

Please take the time to support the many partners and sponsors of STAR, as we would not be able to host such a wonderful event without their support.

projects, water quality initiatives and fisheries advocacy had once again produced a competition, which since its launch in 2015, has awarded over $900,000 in prizes with $400,000 of that being youth scholarships.”

As the largest STAR to date, 2018 had over 6,200 registered anglers – 2,259 were new members and 3,941 were renewing with 1,351 youth participants. STAR had a total of 17 divisions with 19,473 catch records logged. The signature Tagged Redfish Division had two winners who took home new boat, motor and trailer packages from Pathfinder and Contender Boats with new Yamaha outboards. However, no one took home the $10,000 cash prize in the signature Tagged Dolphin Division.

The Salt Marsh Skiff Open Inshore Division featured the Atlas Jackplate Non-Tagged Redfish Division, which was the most popular with 1,583 catch entries. The Stumpnocker Spotted Trout Division was at a close second with 1,562 entries, and the Bossman Boats Snook Division had 335 catch entries. The Textron Off Road Open Offshore Division had the most popular division with 227 grouper entries, then the Cannon Kingfish Division with 162 entries and then the Non-Tagged Dolphin Division with 156. The new Humminbird Tarpon Division racked up 87 entries. The other divisions were Ladies with 541, Kayak with 524, Youth with 791, Lionfish with 620, the Power Pole Conservation Division with 12,115 submissions and the Costa Kick Plastic Trash Division with a whopping 1,383 five-gallon buckets full of trash, almost double the count from last year.

CCA Florida STAR is a fun fishing competition and it provides a large amount of data that can be used by fisheries management groups and universities for further research on stock assessment, habitat management and so much more.

2019 STAR begins May 25 and will once again provide another reason for anglers to fish and practice conservation over the summer. Start planning your fishing trips now! Brevard County (visitspacecoast.com), Citrus County (discovercrystalriver.com) and Engelwood/ Punta Gorda (pure-florida.com) are all our destination counties and will have more tagged redfish than any other counties.

For more information on STAR, visit our website at ccaflstar.com.
“STAR continues to be a tremendous tool for CCA to bring awareness to our organization and to encourage anglers to implement conservation practices while enjoying a really cool fishing competition that has friends and families planning their summer around our event.”

—STAR Director Leiza Fitzgerald
In 2016, CCA Florida began recognizing our members who have gone above and beyond with regard to habitat restoration in each publication of Sea Watch Magazine. In this edition, we are recognizing John Lindsley, Vice President of the CCA Mid-Coast chapter as the next Habitat Hero. John is 4th generation Floridian originally from south Florida where he grew up. John has been hunting and fishing since he was a young child. He was inspired by his father who loved boating and his mother who loved hunting and fishing. He moved from Miami to Volusia County in 2005 and went to Stetson University.

In addition to his Vice President role with the Mid-Coast chapter, John also serves on the CCA state government relations committee and the water quality committee. He got involved with CCA over six years ago because of the declining environmental conditions along coastline where he lives and in South Florida and the Everglades. When he moved to the Volusia area in 2005, he saw healthy seagrass in Mosquito Lagoon along with great red-fishing. However, following the devastating Indian River Lagoon (IRL) algae superbloom in 2011, John realized that he needed to get involved somehow and he decided to join CCA. His active involvement in habitat restoration and water quality with CCA emanated from his understanding when he joined the organization that a healthy fishery is dependent on healthy habitat and water quality. “Habitat is the basis of it all – without habitat there is nothing else,” John said.

When CCA Florida began on its path to substantially increase the organizations impact on habitat restoration 5 years ago, John saw this as an opportunity to get CCA involved in a local Volusia County project. He first reached out to Joe Nolin, Volusia County’s Coastal Project Manager, in 2015 to partner on a project. Several projects were explored over the course of the next few years and in early 2017 a very unique artificial reef opportunity surfaced. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Miami forfeited a 150-foot steel vessel, the “M/V Lady Philomena,” and a 90-foot tugboat, the “Everglades,” after being seized with illegal contraband. The vessels became immediately available to anyone with the means to tow them and get them cleaned for reefing. John was working with the county to help quickly raise the funds to secure both vessels and he contacted CCA for assistance. CCA worked with their national habitat program, the Building Conservation Trust (BCT), on securing a $25,000 donation to Volusia County to secure the vessels. On Saturday, June 23rd, 2018 the “M/V Lady Philomena” and tug “Everglades” were deployed off the coast of Volusia County. The vessels both landed upright on Volusia County Reef Site 12 which is a permitted reef construction area located 9 miles northeast of Ponce de Leon Inlet in 75 feet of water. This prolific artificial reef provides

(continued on page 28)
Where would you like to fish today?

At Maverick, we think there are no better words to start a morning. That’s why we’ve been a proud supporter of CCA Florida from the beginning. Because we want all future fishing partners to be able to ask each other this very question.

Maverick
Fish the Legend.
access for smaller boats and for youth to fish and dive it given its proximity to land. John has also volunteered for several coastal cleanup events in Volusia and Brevard Counties over the last four years. “It’s amazing what you actually pull out of just one small area,” he said.

With regard to upcoming habitat projects and water quality issues, John expressed his concerns for our fragile inshore estuaries being at the greatest risk all around Florida as the population continues to grow. “We see it with the red tide down in southwest Florida, we see it with our algae blooms on the east coast, and we see it with the seagrass die-offs,” he said. “We need more awareness of the issues along with retrofitting of the current infrastructure in Florida.” Other concerns of his include the need for better wastewater management, stoppage of the constant sewage spills, and more investment into infrastructure upgrades to prevent further deterioration of our habitat. He would also like to see a bigger push in Everglades restoration and feels like we are finally starting to see more awareness which has led to legislative changes.

John asserted that every chapter in CCA is important on a grassroots level because of the local knowledge and local source of people that can bring it to a state or national level if necessary. The Mid-Coast area where John resides is a very diverse area that has inshore and offshore fisheries, rivers, and natural springs. John noted that these are some of the most impacted areas and include Mosquito Lagoon and further to the south the Banana River in Brevard County. “We need to stay the course and continue pushing on for future generations. I want my kids to fish in Florida and I want to see our habitat and fisheries better for them than they were for us,” he said. “I definitely think that the mindset of people have changed realizing the value of our fisheries and habitat to the economy.”

And on a lighter note, John’s favorite species of fish is without doubt, the redfish. Aside from how hard they fight, he is intrigued by the sport of stalking and hunting them. He enjoys watching them feed on shrimp and crabs on the bottom with their tails waving in the air. “It gives you a feeling unlike any other,” he emphasized, “when you target a specific fish and go after it.” As a 4th generation Floridian with 5th generation children, we sincerely thank John for all of his dedication to the restoration of our coastal resources.

In line with CCA’s objective to conserve, promote and enhance the present and future availability of those coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public, habitat restoration continues to be a major focus around the state. Over the last several years, hundreds of CCA members have volunteered countless hours on habitat restoration projects and on helping acquire the funding for those projects. Without these volunteers and the increasingly important habitat restoration efforts, both our habitat and our fisheries would suffer greatly. Based on this, CCA regularly recognizes in SeaWatch some of the people that have gone above and beyond to help protect and restore our fragile coastal resources. For more information or to recommend a CCA member as a Habitat Hero, please contact Frank Gidus at fgidus@ccaflorida.org.
OUR PURSUITS EXTEND BEYOND THE WOODS.

Official Camo of CCA Florida STAR and Proud Sponsor of a $25,000 Youth Scholarship.
Visit: www.ccaflstar.com/other-divisions/youth-scholarship-division
Rhineland Cutlery Joins CCA Florida In Conservation Initiatives

This year, CCA Florida was excited to announce a new partnership with a Florida-based brand outside of the fishing and boating industry. Rhineland Cutlery, makers of the most balanced, ergonomic and beautiful knives available, is based out of Melbourne, Florida and the newest Marlin level partner of CCA Florida – an unexpected partnership from an industry outsider that is proving to be a cut above.

With local headquarters on the east coast, Rhineland has seen the work CCA Florida is leading throughout the state as well as the hands-on initiatives happening in Brevard County, and the company’s leadership stepped up to help support the cause.

CCA Florida has substantially increased in leadership of projects including offshore and nearshore reef development as well as shoreline stabilization and oyster reef restoration projects. With other partners, the non-profit has invested more than $650,000 over the last three years in projects around the state that create new habitat or enhance existing habitat for a variety of marine species.

While habitat initiatives are important to the team at Rhineland, they also understand the benefit of CCA’s advocacy work surrounding industry issues affecting recreational anglers, and the partnership helps to support those efforts as well.

The partnership means that CCA Florida members will now have access to amazing Rhineland Cutlery products through banquets and other events. And Rhineland’s investment means that the organization can continue to lead the good work that’s happening throughout the state and create opportunities for generations to come to enjoy Florida’s marine resources.

"Among all of our corporate partners we deal with on a yearly basis, CCA has been at the top of our list. Some of our staff members are avid outdoor people who hunt and fish throughout the year, and to be part of this organization really hits home knowing that CCA consistently pursues all avenues to enhance and protect our coastal waters.”

—Brian Morell, Rhineland Cutlery

We are fortunate that our paths have crossed and proud to be a major sponsor and able to provide our services to this outstanding association now and in the future. CCA has shown us nothing less than continued respect and appreciation for this partnership and Rhineland Cutlery is honored to be the Official Cutlery and State Sponsor for CCA Florida.
“We understand the value that a brand like Rhineland Cutlery brings to CCA – both in the product exposure our members receive as well as the recognition it brings to the organization as a whole. We are extremely grateful to the entire team at Rhineland and look forward to a long-lasting partnership.”

—Brian Gorski, CCA Florida
Executive Director
Rhineland Cutlery
X50 CR MOV 15 High Carbon German Steel

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CCA
FLORIDA

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Your CCA at Work: 2018 Statewide Habitat Restoration

As an organization, we have been extremely busy in 2018, leading a record number of habitat restoration and artificial reef projects around the state. Together with the Building Conservation Trust (BCT), CCA National’s habitat program, and our many partners, we have made a positive impact on habitat restoration and water quality this year.

We remain focused on ensuring that all donated habitat funds are spent wisely on projects where the impact of poor water quality is at a minimum, and where expected positive outcomes are the highest. Read below, and find a summary of habitat-related projects completed this year.

Starship Reef
This past October, CCA Florida joined together with BCT and Shell Oil Company and deployed approximately 1,500 tons of natural rock and concrete materials on the new Starship Reef off the coast of Jacksonville (30°10.177’ N / 81°09.351’ N). The Starship Reef, now one of the largest reefs in northeast Florida, is located in 70 feet of water and 12 miles east of Mickler’s Beach. Post-dives showed that the concrete piled up nicely, providing important vertical relief on the ocean floor. It also showed that fish such as tomates, black seabass and baitfish immediately occupied the reef.

These projects wouldn’t be possible without major partnerships and financial support - this project alone had a cost of almost $200,000. Thanks to Dames Point Workboats and Lambs Yacht Center for supplying the concrete reefing materials, and a huge shout out to Shell for their financial support, as well as donating 40,000 pounds of natural rock which was hauled from San Diego to Jacksonville this past June in their new Starship concept truck. Special thanks also goes out to the City of Jacksonville and Joe Kistel with TISIRI for helping coordinate this enormous artificial reef project!

Indian River Lagoon (IRL)
Spotted Seatrout Acoustic Study
CCA Florida donated $25,000, in addition to a $57,000 in-kind match, to fund a three-year study on the declining spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus) in the IRL, with the broad objective to determine spotted seatrout population spawning status and vulnerability to human and natural disturbance in the IRL.

Acoustic transects were conducted by anglers using underwater microphones (hydrophones) as trout choral displays only occur when they are spawning. Anglers recorded underwater sounds at pre-de-
The acoustic recording portion of the project successfully kicked off in April 2018 and finished in September 2018 at the close of the spawning season. A report by Dr. Grant Gilmore will be forthcoming, and the 2nd year of acoustic recording study will begin in the Spring of 2019. If you are interested in volunteering with future recordings, please contact Frank Gidus at fgidus@ccaflorida.org.

Heineken USA/CCA Florida Oyster Recycling Project
Thanks to a generous grant from Heineken USA, CCA Florida has expanded its oyster shell collection and recycling capabilities. Local Heineken representatives Courtney Maloney and Taryn Fields worked with us and funded the purchase of 240 buckets branded with our logos to be placed at restaurants for recycling oysters. Fifty of the buckets were donated to Victorio’s Oyster Bar & Grille in Longwood, Florida and they are contributing close to one ton of oyster shells per week. Our Winter Park High School Chapter members are picking up the oyster shells weekly and taking them to the Lake County Landfill to store and dry for future oyster restoration projects. Because of the importance of this volunteer work, high school CCA members are getting their required hours toward their Bright Futures Scholarships!

Heineken then organized an oyster bagging event with us at Victorio’s in September, where the restaurant provided the facility and the food and Heineken provided awesome beer and swag. Over 25 volunteers made 200 oyster bags which will be used for a future deployment event at Tomoka State Park in Ormond Beach. We’ll again team up with Heineken as well as the University of Central Florida (UCF) and the State Park Service to deploy these oyster bags at Tomoka to stabilize a historic Indian midden that is eroding into the Halifax River. Follow us on Facebook to find out more about volunteering for this and other projects.

As part of this grant from Heineken, they also started a campaign to help raise funds for CCA and BCT to recycle more oysters. If you purchase a Heineken or Heineken Light and oysters, you can upload your receipt to them and they will donate up to 1,000 oyster bags for restoration! The campaign, Great Taste for a Great Cause, and instructions on how to upload your receipts can be found online at https://hloysters.com. Thank you Heineken USA!

Centipede Bay Oyster Restoration
CCA Florida has been working with the University of Florida since 2017 on the deployment of a new oyster reef in Hernando County. We’ve donated and delivered five tons of oyster shell to Hernando County from our recycling program in Lake County. The shells from our donation were then bagged in February during a special event by all CCA volunteers! Our oyster bags were combined with others and 2,400 bags were deployed in April in the Gulf of Mexico to form the base of an oyster reef at a permitted site in Centipede Bay.

Lady Philomena and Tugboat Everglades Artificial Reef
In June, the “M/V Lady Philomena”, a 150-foot steel vessel, and the 90-foot tugboat “Everglades” were deployed off the coast of Volusia County, sunk on Volusia County Reef Site 12 which is a 5,000’ x (continued on page 36)
CATCH 'EM. RELEASE 'EM. PASS IT ON.
5,000' federally permitted reef construction area located approx. 9 miles NE of Ponce de Leon Inlet in 75 feet of water.

The Lady Philomena was forfeited to U.S. Customs in Miami after having been seized with illegal contraband. The reef started generating local excitement last fall, when Volusia County hosted a two-day viewing party that enabled visitors the opportunity to tour the ship. The deployment of these vessels will enhance this underwater community, attracting marine life such as fish, shrimp and crabs. Artificial reefs also boost local economies through an increase in tourism and patronage in small businesses. The Volusia County artificial reef system is visited by an estimated 50,000 vessels annually and experiences high visitation by recreational anglers and divers. An estimated 1,368 anglers and over 100 SCUBA divers will visit this reef annually.

This project was made possible through the funding partnerships of Volusia County, CCA Florida and BCT - BCT joined us to contribute $25,000 to Volusia County for the deployment. These meaningful partnerships are the reason we are able to do great marine habitat work in Florida and throughout the United States,” said John Carlson, chairman of the Building Conservation Trust. “The dedication of these like-minded organizations demonstrates the power of coming together to benefit marine life and the local community.”

Brevard County Reef

CCA Florida has a continuing partnership with Brevard County to support their ongoing artificial reef program, and this year we donated $1,000 toward maintaining and monitoring 24 new, five-foot high reef balls that were deployed in August. As in the past, we also wrote a grant support letter on behalf of Brevard County for an FWC artificial reef grant in which they were awarded funding. CCA Life Member Greg Harrison has been working on the Brevard artificial reef program for many years and dove the reef ball site with the county approximately one month after the deployment and observed excellent invertebrate species growth on them and observed black sea bass, juvenile red snapper, crabs, and large schools of baitfish. It’s interesting to note that not a single lionfish was observed.

Manatee County

Larry Borden Reef

In July, 575 tons of large limestone boulders were deployed on the Larry Borden Reef in Manatee County. These natural boulders were between four to six feet in size and have created a new, highly productive fishing and diving reef seven miles west of the Longboat Pass Bridge. This is the second deployment on the Larry Borden reef site, thanks to a $25,000 donation by BCT and CCA Florida, combined with a $60,000 grant from FWC to the county. CCA and BCT’s donation accounted for 170 tons of limestone boulders on the new reef.

John Michael Baker Memorial Reef

Two new artificial reef deployments were conducted this summer off the coastline of Broward County in memorial of John Michael Baker, a member, avid diver and angler who passed away in a tragic boating accident in 2015.

The projects were led by members of the Broward Chapter, who secured a five-year permit from Broward County for an area just offshore of Fort Lauderdale between Oakland Park Blvd. and Birch State Park. The initial deployment in August consisted of 665 tons of concrete materials donated by St. Lucie County. This deeper reef was deployed in approximately 160 feet of water and serves as an artificial reef for fishermen. In August, the second part of the reef project was deployed with the memorial structures in 70 feet of water. This shallower deployment serves as an underwater park for scuba divers and features a memorial structure with a plaque for John Michael Baker.

This 2-part project could not have happened without funding from the John Michael Baker Foundation and without assistance from the Broward CCA Chapter, Broward County and St. Lucie County. Special thanks to McCulley Marine Services, Robert Carmichael of Brownie’s Marine Group, U.S. Concrete Products for donating the shallow reef materials, Industrial Divers for placing all the pieces together at the bottom of the ocean and to the countless others who selflessly donated funds and volunteered.

Brause Girls Tugboat Reef

CCA Florida donated $10,000 to help fund the deployment of the new Brause Girls Tugboat Reef off the coast of Martin County this summer. This project was a partnership between CCA, MCAC Artificial Reef Fund, Inc., and SHIP, Inc. The 100’ tugboat was successfully deployed in August, 7.6 miles east of the St. Lucie Inlet in approximately 180 feet of water at 27.20742/-80.00467. Less than an hour after the tugboat was sunk, divers observed that amberjacks and baithish had already moved onto the vessel.

Lee County San Carlos Bay Oyster Restoration

This spring, CCA Florida contributed $10,000 and partnered with Lee County and FWC to help enhance and restore nine oyster reefs through the addition of large washed fossil shell and oyster shell. The restoration areas range from 0.14 acres to 0.96 acres in size. The restored oyster site in San Carlos Bay will be compared to control and natural reference sites to allow testing of goal-based hypotheses using a BACI (Before-After-Control-Impact) design. This design has a temporal component to allow statistical comparisons before and after the construction occurs. It also allows the constructed oyster reef to be compared to nearby reference sites and other similar sites which have not yet been subject to restoration efforts.

Tomoka State Park Shoreline Stabilization

CCA Florida donated $6,625 to UCF to fund Phase 1 of this new living shore-
line stabilization project. Timucuan Native Americans occupied this area for many hundreds of years and created middens - mounds of oyster, clam and other shells and bones that extended 40 feet high along the shores. The current highly eroded shorelines are all historic midden-dominated areas dating back to the Timucuans, making it extremely important to protect these shorelines and artifacts.

Phase I was successfully completed on the western shoreline of the park in March by UCF and our volunteers. The objective of this project is to implement living shoreline techniques using planted mangroves, smooth cordgrass and oyster shell as recruitment substrate, to restore an eroded area along the shoreline of Tomoka State Park.

CCA/Swamp Head Brewery
Trash Tour
CCA Florida partnered with Swamp Head Brewery again in 2018 for the second year of the Trash Tour. With four stops around the state completed this year, over 200 volunteers participated in removing more than four tons of trash from our local coastal waterways. The four locations included Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, Port St. Joe and Charlotte Harbor. Each participant in the Trash Tour filled their hands with a Swamp Head beer, freshly prepared food, tons of free goodies from our amazing sponsors and a day of competitive display of coastal conservation.

A huge thank you to our title sponsor, Costa Kick Plastic, and all our sponsors including Hydro Flask, Academy Sports + Outdoors, Power-Pole, Cheney Brothers, Publix Supermarkets, and Waste Pro. Please join us for the 2019 Trash Tour with locations and dates coming soon.

Ghost Trap Rodeo
CCA Florida and Ocean Aid 360 completed the first of six Ghost Trap Rodeo events in October at Ft. DeSoto Park in Pinellas County. With the help of 37 participants, 25 abandoned crab traps were removed from Tampa Bay along with over 400 pounds of other marine debris. Congressman Charlie Crist joined the event to express his support for this ghost fishing/marine debris intervention and to serve as our Ghost Trap Rodeo Grand Marshall.

By pulling these 25 traps, local anglers/volunteers limited the cycle of ghost fishing in Pinellas County waters resulting in reduced mortality of marine life by-caught in the lost traps and improved the estuarine habitat for future generations of marine life. Volunteers also won a lot of great industriesponsored prizes valued at nearly $5,000 in retail value! We have four more Ghost Trap Rodeo events scheduled around Tampa Bay, one per month until March 23, with $25,000 in prizes over the six events. For more information and upcoming dates, visit oceanaid360.org.

Living Shoreline and Oyster Reef Restoration in Mosquito Lagoon
CCA Florida was honored to partner with UCF and the Marine Discovery Center on a grant titled Living Shoreline and Oyster Reef Restoration in Mosquito Lagoon: Continuation of Successful Models and Successful Partnerships. The grant was awarded in June 2017 in the amount of $82,770, along with an in-kind match of $87,055. The funds are being used in 2018 to continue their highly successful oyster reef restoration and living shoreline stabilization in Mosquito Lagoon. The number of volunteers and number of volunteer hours dedicated towards Mosquito Lagoon restoration is staggering. UCF has been diligent in tracking these important statistics:

For 2018
Oyster reef restoration: 428 volunteers for 3126.5 hours.
Living shoreline stabilization: 778 volunteers for 3399.5 hours.

Life total (Since 2005)
Oyster reef restoration: 50,049 volunteers.
(Since 2010) Living shoreline stabilization: 9,850 volunteers.
Combined: 59,899 volunteers!

Sarasota Bay Watch Clam Restoration
This summer, CCA Florida donated $5,000 to Sarasota Bay Watch (SBW) to sponsor the restoration of 50,000 clams back into Sarasota Bay. SBW is working to restore clams and scallops to the bay with these important filter-feeders that play a critical role in mitigating poor water quality. They actually eat red tide and other algae, sequester carbon, filter up to 10 gallons of water per day, and provide food for other marine life. Each of the 50,000 clams is over 2-inches in size and according to Dr. Bruce Barber, Executive Director of the Gulf Shellfish Institute, a single 2-inch clam filters out 50,000,000 red tide organisms per day. That equates to 2.5 trillion organisms per day for the 50,000 clams. To date, SBW has released 143,000 clams in the bay that collectively are capable of clearing over 7 trillion (7,000,000,000,000) red tide organisms every day!

Alongside our advocacy efforts, habitat restoration initiatives play a role in our state’s water quality and the health of our fisheries. We’re proud to lead this work, and when coupled with other efforts, we know these projects will help lead to recovery. 2019 is shaping up to be even busier than 2018 with many habitat projects and artificial reefs already planned. If you have an idea for a habitat project in your area or would like more information on any of our completed projects, please contact Frank Gidus at fgidus@ccaflorida.org.
CCA Florida is proud to partner with Free Sunshields and offer an exclusive CCA design, available online for $7.99 plus free S&H!

What we’re even more proud of, is that 25 percent of the proceeds from these CCA Sunshields come back to CCA Florida to support our habitat and advocacy initiatives.

Learn about the 1-for-1 Initiative and get yours online. Visit freesunshields.com and click 1-for-1.
Small Change: Big Impact

How we helped our customers to donate over $10,000 to support stock enhancement initiatives. And you can too.

There’s a saying – “every little bit helps” – and we hear it and use it often. But when it comes to fundraising, we often feel that unless we can write a big check, our efforts and contribution won’t matter. I’m excited to share that every little bit does help, and our two Crowder Bros. Ace Hardware locations just helped to raise more than $10,000 for CCA Florida’s stock enhancement initiatives through a Round Up campaign we put on with our customers.

Anglers around the state have shared that they’re seeing fewer fish, and residents everywhere are concerned about our state’s water quality. The campaign, specifically launched to support CCA Florida’s red tide recovery efforts, will benefit the nonprofit’s stock enhancement initiatives, which include stocking west coast counties with over 20,000 snook and redfish following the red tide and when waters are determined to be safe.

It’s critical that as a community, we all support organizations and programs that will help, and this is one way our customers can make a big impact with a simple donation of their change. There are so many ways to help – for business owners and consumers alike. Get involved and get creative with how you can make a difference. I challenge other Florida-based retailers and businesses to create unique partnerships or their own round up campaign to support the cause. Our customers raised over $10,000 and we’ve received tremendous feedback, at zero cost to our business. Our state needs all the support we can give it.

For more information on the stock initiatives visit adoptasnook.com or releasethemfortomorrow.org.

NEW! SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS JUST BY DONATING YOUR CHANGE

We have partnered with a new mobile app and website that allows you to automatically donate the change from your card purchases to support our work. It’s small change for you, but a game changer for us! You can check it out at roundupapp.com, and search for “RoundUp App” in the App Store or Google Play Store to download.

Let’s toast the Coast.

Introducing Coast Vodka, grain-to-glass and handcrafted right here in Florida. Distilled 6x in small batches from the finest French wheat in copper stills using the purest waters, Coast offers mild aromas of custard and dusty grain with a satiny taste and notes of powdered sugar, lemongrass and slate.

Being a kindred Floridian spirit, sustainability is essential, which is why Coast offers a glass-free, eco-friendly, 100% recyclable packaging box. And it’s why every purchase benefits the Coastal Conservation Association Florida that does incredible conservation work in our state. Try some today.
CCA SOLIDO SUN MASK

- UPF 40 blocks 97.5% of the sun’s harmful UV rays.
- Moisture-wicking fabric keeps you calm, collected, and dry.

$5 from the sale of every CCA by AFTCO product is donated to fund CCA conservation efforts. Available now at AFTCO.com.

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Net 32 U.S. fl. oz./1 U.S. qt./946 ml

Deck Cleaner
• Cleans away ground-in dirt and stains
• Safe to use, contains no harsh chemicals
• Leaves a protective coating to help repel dirt and stains

NEW

Deck Wax
• Provides a non-slippery barrier against stains and UV exposure
• Helps restore luster to fiberglass decks
• Helps keep decks clean and stain-free

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Boat Detailing 101

Detailing the boat can seem like a daunting task. However, if you break it up into segments, it's actually pretty simple. The trick is to start with the dirtiest tasks and then progress to the easier ones. The best part is that by doing it yourself, you know the job is done right.

**Step 1: Removing Tough Dirt and Stains on Topsides**

Dirty water flows down, so begin by cleaning the topsides before you tackle the hull. There are a wide variety of cleaners on the market, but to make the job as effortless as possible, choose wisely. Dish detergent is handy and cheap, but it creates a lot of suds and requires a lot of water to rinse clean. It will also strip away wax or polish, might etch fiberglass and should not be allowed to flow into local waterways. So instead of choosing a product that cleans pots and pans, look for a product formulated to clean fiberglass and painted surfaces. Star brite’s Non-Skid Deck Cleaner utilizes chelating agents that break the bond between dirt, grime and the surface. Use a deck brush to spread it evenly over the area to be cleaned, let it work in for about 5 minutes, then use a soft or medium brush to lightly agitate the area before rinsing clean. The low-suds formula is perfect for cleaning textured deck surfaces that trap dirt, but it is also a very effective choice for cleaning all other fiberglass surfaces, as well as vinyl, polished metal, plastic and painted surfaces that may have accumulated a lot of grime over the last boating season. Use a mild boat wash and rinse well to clean Lexan, Plexiglass and other plastic windscreens or windows. Use Star brite Vinyl Clean and Vinyl Guard to keep seating surfaces and bolsters looking like new.

**Step 2: The Hull/Transom**

To deal with tough waterline stains on the hull, you’ll need more than boat soap, so we suggest Star brite Hull Cleaner; which is now available in a “gel” formula that has a longer dwell time, especially on vertical surfaces such as transoms or hulls. The formula is great at dissolving tough waterline, leaf and rust stains, but it is much safer to use than hydrochloric or phosphoric acids. Walking around the hull, apply it liberally and let it work into the stains. Rinse well and re-apply to any stubborn spots, letting the formula work for a few minutes before rinsing clean. You may need to use a non-scuffing scrub pad to add some elbow grease. If you plan to apply a fresh coat of polish as the final step in this over all process – and you should – use Hull Cleaner to remove old wax or polish, leaving a fresh, clean surface that will readily accept the new polish. (Note: a quality polymer polish will outperform any wax in terms of longevity and stain-repelling action.) As you clean the hull, take the time to inspect it for cracks or dings.

Here’s an important tip for those whose boats stay in the water and have bottom paint: do not attempt to clean bottom-painted surfaces! Bottom paint, also known as ablative paint, is designed to slough off as the boat moves through the water, taking any deposits with it. It is not supposed to be pretty; any attempts to clean it may remove it, so simply leave it alone.

As you clean the outboard/stern drive or lower unit, inspect the prop(s) for any nicks or dings and look at the sacrificial zincs to see if they are ready to be replaced.

**Step 3: Special Situations and Surfaces**

As you clean the boat, chances are you will come across rust stains “weeping” from stainless steel hardware. If you do, apply Star brite Rust Stain Remover and then seal the cleaned area (and stainless steel surface) with a Star brite polymer polish. GPS units, chart plotters and depth finders have housings that can withstand a lot of use and weathering, but the screens are probably in need a good cleaning. Star brite’s new Screen Cleaner & Protectant was formulated specifically for use on all plastic surfaces. It lifts and removes water spots, deposits and fingerprints, leaving the screen streak-free and easy to read. The protective coating will help resist UV exposure. If you find any black heel marks on the deck from guests who wore street shoes, use Star brite’s Boat Scuff Eraser to remove them quickly and easily.

**Step 4: Inspect for Oxidation/Seal the Surface**

Now that the hull and other fiberglass exterior are clean, check for oxidation. If the fiberglass and painted areas are shiny, you can skip the rest of this. The rule of thumb is that if you wipe your hand over the surface and it comes away “dusty” you need to compound the hull. If there’s no chalky dust, but the surface is slightly oxidized or hazy, a good cleaner wax can restore the shine. If you need to compound the hull, use a random orbital buffer and go slowly to avoid damaging the gel coat. In all honesty, compounding may be a task best left to the pros, but don’t let a detailer talk you into compounding a hull that doesn’t need it.

With the fiberglass and paint uniformly shiny, apply a protective coating of a good quality polymer polish. The shine we get from polishing is a happy bonus – the real reason to polish is to provide a barrier against UV exposure, stains and dirt that can make your boat look not so great. Because wax only lasts 3 months, go with a polymer polish that bonds to the treated surface for unrivalled protection against the damaging effects of sea, sun, dirt and weather. Star brite’s Premium Marine Polish is one of the best, yet easiest to use polishes available for fiberglass and painted surfaces. It is also a great way to keep your car or truck looking great. To keep non-skid decks looking good, use Star brite Non-Skid Deck Wax.

Now that the boat is looking good, keep it that way. If you have any boat detailing questions, call Star brite’s Tech Line at (800) 327-8583.
Tag! Join these Instagrammers!
Tag CCA Florida when you share your catch pics! #ccaflorida
Ghost Trap Rodeo Banquet

**Saturday, February 16**
The Ghost Trap Rodeo (GTR) event series is a community-based marine federal debris removal grant awarded to Ocean Aid 360 and CCA Florida. The purpose of this one-year project is to effect long-term quantifiable ecological habitat improvements for NOAA Trust Resources through on the ground removal of marine debris – specifically, derelict crab traps (ghost traps) and fishing gear – in nearshore benthic waters of Florida’s Tampa Bay estuary. The GTR event series is comprised of six marine debris removal competitions that are modeled after inshore fishing tournaments and participants have a great chance at winning industry sponsored prizes. For more information, visit oceanaid360.org.

**Keys Banquet Thursday, February 21**
This year’s banquet will be held at the Tavernier Elks Lodge. Not a Keys Chapter member? This could be your excuse for a Keys weekend getaway! Be sure to get your tickets early, this one will definitely sell out. For additional information, please contact Nick Pectol at (407) 401-7678 or Dianne Harbaugh at (305) 522-4868.

**Ocala Banquet Friday, February 22**
We’re at the beautiful Circle Square Commons again for 2019. Bid on exotic trips, boat items, jewelry, home décor and more! Get your tickets now before the event sells out! For additional information, please contact Amanda Krpan at (407) 401-7675.

**Manatee County Banquet Thursday, February 28**
The 20th Annual Conley Buick GMC Manatee County Banquet & Auction presented by Avid Insurance and Arctic Air Services will be held on February 28, 2019 at the Bradenton Area Convention Center. The banquet features an open bar and catered dinner by Texas Cattle Company. Doors open at 5 p.m. For additional information, please contact Amy Kuehnert at (407) 401-7680 or Ron Crowder at (941) 795-8442 ext. 101.

**March**

**Citrus Banquet Thursday, March 7**
The 32nd Annual CCA Citrus Banquet and Auction will be held at Rock Crusher Canyon in Crystal River. Tickets are $80 per person and corporate sponsor tables are $1,250 for a table of ten. For additional information, please contact Mike Friddle at (352) 697-2188 or Ben Branch at (352) 586-2007.

**Emerald Coast Banquet Thursday, March 7**
Held at the Emerald Coast Convention Center, this banquet is gearing up to be our biggest and best yet! The evening will feature a catered dinner, silent auction, raffle prizes, live auction, bar, and so much more! Get your tickets now! For additional information, please contact Amanda Krpan at (407) 401-7675.

**Ft. Myers Banquet Thursday, March 21**
Check out this year’s new venue for the 33rd Annual Banquet and Auction presented by Suncoast Beverage Sales. The banquet will be held on March 21st at the Suncoast Credit Union Arena, located at 13351 FSW Pkwy, Fort Myers, FL 33919. This event will feature an open bar with all the great Budweiser products plus great raffle and auction items. To top it all off, we will be serving a catered steak dinner by Texas Cattle Company! For additional information, please contact Adam Miller at (407) 401-7674.

**Martin Banquet Thursday, March 21**
Come on out to a beautiful NEW VENUE: Hutchinson Island Resort & Spa! Join us for the 20th Annual Martin Chapter Banquet & Auction! Get your tickets in advance this will be a sell out again this year! For additional information, please contact Ace or Jessica Tschundi at (772) 334-0401 or Nick Pectol at (407) 401-7678.

**Ghost Trap Rodeo Saturday, March 23**
The Ghost Trap Rodeo (GTR) event series is a community-based marine federal debris removal grant awarded to Ocean Aid 360 and CCA Florida. The purpose of this one-year project is to effect long-term quantifiable ecological habitat improvements for NOAA Trust Resources through on the ground removal of marine debris – specifically, derelict crab traps (ghost traps) and fishing gear – in nearshore benthic waters of Florida’s Tampa Bay estuary. The GTR event series is comprised of six marine debris removal competitions that are modeled after inshore fishing tournaments and participants have a great chance at winning industry sponsored prizes. For more information, visit oceanaid360.org.

**February**

**Naples Banquet Saturday, February 2**
New Venue, New Date, New Meal, Live Band! The 30th Annual Naples Banquet and Auction will be held on February 2nd at the Florida Sports Park. This year’s banquet will feature an open bar, great raffle and great auction items as well as a catered steak dinner by Texas Cattle Company! Doors open at 6:00 PM. For additional information, please contact Adam Miller at (407) 401-7674.
ing tournaments and participants have a great chance at winning industry sponsored prizes. For more information, visit ocean-aid360.org.

**Charlotte Banquet**
**Thursday, March 28**
Join us at the beautiful Charlotte Harbor Conference and Event Center for the Ingman Marine’s 29th Annual Charlotte County CCA Banquet presented by our friends at Peace River Distributing. For additional information, please contact Adam Miller at (407) 401-7674.

**Orlando BBQ**
**Friday, March 29**
The Orlando Chapter BBQ is moving to a new venue in 2019. Save the date and make plans to join us for an amazing catered dinner, open bar, raffle, and live and silent auctions and stay tuned for further updates regarding the new location. For sponsorship information, please contact Dan Askin at (321) 663-2588.

**April**

**Gators Banquet**
**Thursday, April 4**
The 6th annual banquet for the Gators Chapter will be held at the Gainesville Woman’s Club from 6 – 10 p.m. Join us for a fun evening filled with great items in our silent auction, raffle and live auction. A delicious catered dinner will be provided, and don’t forget about the open bar! Go Gators! For additional information, please contact Amy Kuehnert at (407) 401-7680.

**Polk Banquet**
**Thursday, April 4**
Held at the Bartow Civic Center, this 33rd annual event is one you will not want to miss. Tickets are $90 per person or $170 per couple. Corporate and reserved tables are $1,275 for a table of eight. For additional information, please contact Zack Batley at (813) 943-8993.

**Tampa Banquet**
**Thursday, April 11**
The venue for the 34th Annual Tampa Banquet will once again be held at the T. Pepin Hospital- ity Centre. Single tickets are $130, couples are $180, and sponsorships start at $900. For additional information, please contact Zack Batley at (813) 943-8993.

**Lake Banquet**
**Thursday, April 18**
The CCA Lake County Banquet and Auction will be held at Lake Receptions in Mount Dora once again this year. Please join us for a great event featuring a live auction, silent auction and extensive raffle! For additional information, please contact Adam Miller at (407) 401-7674.

**Hernando Banquet**
**Thursday, April 25**
This event will be held at the St. Anthony Catholic Church in Hern- farm Hall and is guaranteed to be a blast. Catering is from La- tam’s and there will be an open bar! We know we have your attention now! For additional information, please contact Zack Batley at (813) 943-8993.

**South Walton Kids Fishing Tournament**
**Sunday, April 28**
Last year we had 200 kids come out for our South Walton Kids Fishing Tournament at Grayton Beach! Each participant received a rod and reel combo, rod holder, t-shirt, bait, and lunch! We witnessed many kids fishing for the (continued on page 50)
First time and caught the fishing fever. Prizes are awarded for different age categories. **NEW for 2019** PRE-REGISTRATION is required for this event. Go to CCAFlorida.org to register. For additional information, please contact Amanda Krpan at (407) 401-7675.

**Knights Banquet April 2019**
The 5th annual banquet for the Knights Chapter will be held in April of 2019. Please stay tuned for further updates regarding date and location. Our events are a fun evening filled with great items in our silent auction, raffle and live auction. A delicious catered dinner will be provided, and don’t forget about the open bar! Go Knights! For additional information, please contact Amy Kuehnert at (407) 401-7680.

**May**

**Broward Banquet Thursday, May 2**
Celebrate the CCA Broward Chapter’s 30th Annual Banquet presented by Star brite! We have an exciting event planned back at an incredible venue: Hugh’s Culinary! Your local Broward chapter has been hard at work over this past year – they deployed TWO artificial reefs since the banquet last May! For additional information, please contact Mike Lambrechts at (954) 830-0133 or Nick Pectol at (321) 271-7723.

**Life Member Outing Thursday, May 2 - Sunday, May 5**
The CCA Florida 7th Annual Life Member Outing will again be held in Crystal River at the Best Western Crystal River Resort. Your $100 registration includes entry to the event, dinner on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night, adult beverages each night, breakfast each morning provided by The Best Western, fishing on Friday and Saturday, boat launch fees, and trailer storage! If you do not own a boat or if you have a boat but are not familiar with the local waters, please do not let it stop you from attending! As we will detail later, the Outing Committee will make all boat assignments for each fishing day. In doing so, this gives each of us an opportunity to fish with fellow CCA Life Members from around the state!

**Panama City Banquet Thursday, May 9**
Panama City has a HUGE fishing population and we want YOU! We have moved venues to the beautiful Sheraton Bay Point Resort, a great backdrop for our exciting event. Come to enjoy the delicious dinner, auction items, raffles and more! For additional information or to get involved, please contact Amanda Krpan at (407) 401-7675.

**Big Bend (Tallahassee) Banquet Thursday, May 16**
The Big Bend Banquet presented by the Merriman, Abbott, Squires, Guerra Group of Merrill Lynch is back at the University Center Club this year! Save $100 on tables of 10 if you buy before March 15th. Mark your calendars and join us for this epic annual affair! For additional information, please contact Amy Kuehnert at (407) 401-7680.

**Homestead Banquet Thursday, May 16**
Join us in celebrating the Homestead Chapter’s 4th Annual Banquet and Auction at Homestead Miami International Speedway! We are very excited about our new venue and we hope you’ll join us for this great event sponsored by Sportsman’s Adventures, Chevy Florida Insider Fishing Report and Contender Boats and is definitely one party you don’t want to miss! For additional information, please contact Nick Pectol at (407) 401-7678.

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

Become a Life Member Today

As a CCA Florida member, you help support Florida’s marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more. Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida’s fishing future.

Invest in a CCA Florida Life Membership and receive these amazing gifts:
- HD30 Engel Cooler
- Costa Gift Card
- Rhineland Santoku Knife with Redfish or Sailfish Etching

Go to ccaflorida.org/store to register today!
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FWC Law Enforcement Update

Safe on the Water

2017 boating accident statistics provide an opportunity for boating safety reminders

With the release of the 2017 Boating Accident Statistical Report, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) encourages boaters to focus on simple, effective steps that make boating safer.

“For 2017, the leading contributor to boating accidents was the operator’s inattention or failure to maintain a proper lookout. It is critical for operators to be diligent in observing and being aware of what is going on around them,” said Lt. Seth Wagner from the FWC’s Boating and Waterways Section.

In 2017, 261 boating accidents involved collisions and 38 percent of all collisions were due to inattention or the operator failing to maintain a proper lookout.

“It’s important that while out relaxing and enjoying Florida’s beautiful waters, boaters remember to be safe,” Wagner said.

Florida had 766 boating accidents in 2017, 52 more accidents than in 2016. However, there was no change in the number of fatalities. A total of 67 people lost their lives last year in boating accidents. Falls overboard have been the leading type of fatal accident since 2003, with drowning as the leading cause of death.

Eighty-one percent of these victims were not wearing a life jacket. Today’s boaters can choose from several models of light and comfortable inflatable belt-pack or over-the-shoulder life jackets that can be worn while fishing or enjoying the sun. Boating accident statistics support an important message: “Life Jackets Save Lives.”

The FWC is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and compiling boating accident data for the state. Its statistical report details boating accidents and their causes. The theme of accident-related messages from FWC staff is clear: Officers want to help keep Florida’s beautiful waterways a safe place to boat.

For a copy of the 2017 Boating Accident Statistical Report, visit MyFWC.com/Boating and select “Safety & Education” and “Boating Accidents.”

Mind Your Monofilament Line

With summer in full swing and many anglers enjoying time on the water, FWC wants to remind you to take advantage of the Monofilament Recovery and Recycling Program (MRRP). Keep your used monofilament out of the environment by placing it in an outdoor PVC recycling bin or an indoor cardboard bin where it can be recycled through the FWC’s partnership with Berkley Fishing.

Find a bin near you and learn more at mrrp.myfwc.com.