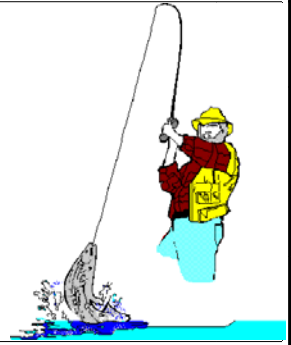


Portsmouth Anglers Club Inc.

THE ANGLER

Volume 207

January 2012



January Speaker

Trailering a boat can open up a whole new world of places to cruise and fish. However, trailer problems can ruin the trip for everyone. A little maintenance beforehand and a little common sense can prevent 90% of the headaches. Come to the January meeting where Renee Cooper from Portsmouth Trailer will speak on basic trailer maintenance and Max Allen from Bay Propeller will speak on propeller maintenance and repair. Renee and Max will be providing door prizes and discount coupons. Please come to this very informative seminar.

2012 PAC Membership

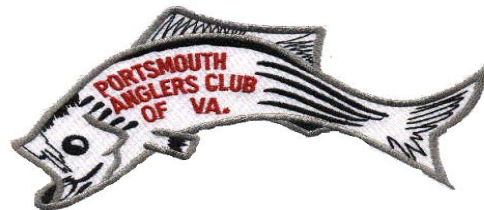
2012 PAC Membership dues were due on January 1st. Remember, to participate in club tournaments and be eligible for club awards, your dues must be paid before you go fishing. PAC Membership also includes The Angler, our monthly newsletter, and the free fish fry dinners held twice a year. Please either mail your dues to the PAC post office box or bring them to the January meeting. Also, include your email address so The Angler can be emailed to you. Emailing the newsletter saves PAC money, you will receive your newsletter several days sooner, and all pictures will be in "living color".

Up Coming Events

January 16, 7PM..... PAC Meeting, Simonsdale Civic Center
February 7, 7PM..... PAC Board Meeting, Simonsdale Civic Center
March 24, 2012..... PAC Banquet

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The Angler
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Portsmouth Anglers' Club, Inc.

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Circulation Tom Scott 757-966-7569

We encourage all members to submit articles and pictures for publication in the PAC Newsletter. Send your pictures and articles, your favorite recipes, or anything that may be newsworthy and informative to rtjordan@verizon.net .

2011 Club Officers

President: Denise Harrell
Vice-President Bill Sugg
Secretary Gary Hill
Treasurer Ray Hollowell

Please visit the PAC website.....
www.portsmouthanglersclub.net

January 2012
MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership dues for 2012 were due January 1st. Family memberships are only \$30 and single memberships are \$20. The cost of a family membership includes all household members under 18, the PAC monthly newsletter and two fish fry's each year. Renewals and applications can be mailed to the PAC post office box or bring them to the January meeting. Remember, to participate in club tournaments and be eligible for club awards, your dues must be paid before you go fishing. Please renew so we can continue to support the youth programs and tournaments that we currently sponsor. Contact Membership Chairman Rob Jordan, 488-9305, for more info.

IN CLUB FISHING TOURNAMENTS

The 1st quarter club tournament species will be announced at the January meeting. The tournament runs through the end of March. Please turn in all entries to the Prize Fish Committee by the 5th of the month following your catch. The entry fee is only \$4.00 and the winner will receive one of PAC's newest club jackets. See Bob Lee at the January meeting for information on the 1st quarter species and to sign up for the tournament. Remember, dues must be paid for 2012 to participate in the club tournaments.

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FISHING REPORT

January, 2012
By: Dr. Julie Ball

Saltwater fishing for the year 2011 was very good, and now anglers are hopeful that 2012 will also bring good fishing opportunities. With slowly dropping water temperatures along the Mid Atlantic region, the promise of a decent winter fishery is becoming a reality. Temperate weather and substantial pods of bait are holding cooler water species in Virginia waters. But folks are watching the recent cold blast with crossed fingers,

hoping the water temperatures stay put.

With the closure of the Bay rockfish season on the 1st, boats are turning to trolling coastal waters with good results. Although some days are better than others, plenty of big fish ranging from 25 to 40-pounds are filling limits for boats targeting waters off the Virginia coastline this week. The area spanning from Cape Henry to Rudee Inlet is providing the most consistent action. Anglers can keep two fish each at 28-inches or larger. Boats trying their luck with drifting with live eels off the ocean side of Fisherman's Island are also bringing in large fish, with many weighing in at over 40-pounds this week.

But over the New Year's weekend, another species demanded the attention of local striper anglers, and the expression "demanded" is not an understatement. The striper fleet experienced an unusual surprise assault by undetected schools of big bluefin tuna within 3-miles of the beach. Although the pairing of a big bluefin tuna with comparably undersized striper gear implies an obvious advantage for the massive tuna, a few boats have managed to beat the odds. Most of these tuna are weighing in at round 150 to 300-pounds. On some days, the tuna fishing is actually better than the striper fishing. Now many boats are beefing up their rockfish spreads in hopes of conquering a bluefin giant of their own. Be sure to review the bluefin tuna regulations and guidelines before each trip, as they change quickly. And an illegal bluefin tuna is no joke to law enforcement officials.

Although the Bay fishery is closed, catch and release within Bay waters can still earn anglers a release state citation for rockfish if the length meets the 44-inch minimum size requirement. Drifting with eels at various depths from buoys Plantation Light to Kiptopeke State Park is the most productive area lately for the big Bay rockfish. Eeling along the High Rise span of the CBBT is also giving up big fish up to around 46-inches. School-sized rockfish are also active within Bay waters. Schoolies are available for catch and release under working birds and near the CBBT and the HRBT. Boats are finding good action casting top water plugs and trolling Stretch 25's from the 1st island of the CBBT, and south to the small boat channel.

Some boats are finding some decent catches of tautog on lower Bay structures and along the Bridge Tunnel proper. Remember that the regulations now allow only three fish per angler, with the minimum size at 16-inches. Tog fishing can also be good on offshore wrecks if anglers turn their interest to this fishery, but the more restrictive guidelines will likely discourage the long trips.

Good speckled trout action continues to draw anglers to the Elizabeth River where fish pushing to over 8-pounds are responding this week. According to the folks at **Ocean's East 2**, keeper fish are coming from near the Hot Ditch and the Cove, with live bait and cut bait working well. Most fish are ranging from 22 to 27-inches. The bigger fish are coming from casting lures in deeper water, with a very slow retrieve. Reports from the discharge area indicate the bite is slow lately. **The Virginia Beach Fishing Center** reports that a few nice fish are still responding in Rudee Inlet for anglers who put in their time.

Deep dropping species await anglers when the weather allows. Blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, blackbellied rosefish, and a variety of grouper are available along the edges of the Norfolk Canyon. Jumbo seabass will provide a by-catch, but remember to release these fish since the season is closed. Swordfishing can also be good this time of year, and there is still a chance at some yellowfin tuna if boats want to leave the bluefin to run out to find them.

One of the most anticipated tournaments of the year kicked off last weekend. The famous **Mid Atlantic Rockfish Shootout** drew the typical huge crowd hoping to have a chance at the huge cash awards and eye-catching trophies. The tournament ran for three days, Thursday through Saturday.

Go to midatlanticrockfishshootout.com for complete results.

RFA ASKS VA GOVERNOR TO GIVE BACK THE CASH

Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell recently raised the ire of approximately 352,000 saltwater anglers in Virginia by announcing his plans to suspend the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament, a state-run program funded primarily through the purchase of state fishing licenses.

As reported by Lee Tolliver in the *Virginian-Pilot*, the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament averages about 5,000 awards certificates or plaques each year for anglers who catch a variety of saltwater species meeting length or weight minimums, and is staffed by two employees with an annual budget of approximately \$200,000 funded solely through the sale of state saltwater fishing licenses.

Under a new 2013-14 budget proposal being considered by Governor McDonnell, eliminating the 55-year-old statewide fishing tournament would mean that license revenues could be reallocated towards other fisheries management programs currently being funded through the state's general fund.

In a letter to Governor McDonnell on behalf of its members, the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has encouraged the Virginia governor to reconsider the proposal to kill the longstanding fishing tournament, which they said has contributed greatly to the state's tourism revenue through increased angler effort and participation.

"RFA and its members know full well that these are tough economic times which require difficult fiscal decisions on how to best spend taxpayer dollars, however, suspending a money-making state program like the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament will ultimately lead to lost tourism receipts, decreasing tax revenues, and more private sector unemployment," wrote RFA executive director Jim Donofrio, while calling recreational fishing "a jobs creator" for Virginia.

A national non-profit political action organization dedicated to protecting the rights of saltwater anglers on every coast, RFA has staunchly opposed state and national efforts to enact a fee to fish in saltwater, referring to such money-making license programs as little more than taxes and tariffs which place undue economic burdens on coastal anglers while creating an obstacle for many citizens to access our natural public resources.

"License proponents would argue that a fee to fish leads to enhanced fishery programs, improved access to coastal fish stocks, and increased political clout for our saltwater angling community," said Donofrio in his letter to McDonnell, adding "the recent proposal put forth by your office to terminate the 55th annual Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament is a perfect example of why RFA remains adamantly opposed to these fees."

The Peninsula Salt Water Sport Fisherman's Association of Virginia recently echoed RFA's long-time criticism of angler license programs in saltwater, noting how state anglers had originally been assured by the state government that license proceeds would be deposited into a "*a dedicated fund that would be used to pump additional dollars into the enhancement of Virginia's recreational fishery*," explaining that promises were made "*these funds would not be taken to pay for programs currently funded by the general fund.*"

"*Well that promise was broken almost as soon as it was made,*" the PSWSFA said in the news update. According to the writer, Virginia had previously cut funding to the statewide tournament, forcing anglers to agree to support reallocation of funding from saltwater license proceeds towards the annual contest. "*Later governors continued to violate the agreement with the recreational angling community by taking more and more of the license fund to replace general funds,*" the PSWSFA update reads, noting further how license monies are also misdirected away from the state's artificial reef program.

"These are the two most popular programs we fund with our license money. If we are not funding them, why have a license at all? The answer is that we should not, other than the politicians in Richmond now see this as free money that we anglers stupidly gave them. Can they really not see how they have violated their constituents' trust? How did we ever give them that trust? It is now up to the General Assembly to make things right with Virginia's anglers," the PSWSFA said.

See **RFA** Continued on page 5

RFA Continued from page 4.....

RFA said that just after Christmas, Virginia State Senator Ralph S. Northam announced his plans to introduce an amendment to McDonnell's budget when the General Assembly convenes this month that would restore enough funds to keep the awards program active. "The Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament is a huge part of why recreational angling contributes so much to Virginia's economy," Sen. Northam said in a release. "The well-run citation, Expert and Master Angler, and annual species swards programs greatly enhance the draw of fishing in Virginia for natives and visitors alike. That means tourism revenue and jobs, two things that we should be looking to create, not destroy."

"Eliminating this funding is pennywise and pound foolish now and in the long run," the senator added.

While RFA would love to see Virginia's legislature respond to the license fiasco the same way as states like New York which repealed the saltwater fishing license entirely in 2011, Donofrio said he's hopeful that some gentle pressure by the recreational fishing community in Virginia could help keep the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament in place through 2013 and beyond.

"The angler fee has not had a positive impact on our freedom to fish in Virginia, and the plan to suspend the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament while reallocating user fees to supporting programs once covered under the state's general funding program will not sit well with our 352,000 Virginia saltwater anglers," Donofrio said in his letter, citing a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2006 survey which shows that approximately \$304 million was spent by some 352,000 anglers on saltwater tackle in Virginia alone that year.

"These are significant financial numbers which represent a boon to the state in terms of tax base and revenue. The suspension of the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament, which has contributed greatly to the state's tourism revenue through increased angler effort and participation, is a prime example of why RFA remains opposed to angler fees."

Sample Letter:

January , 2012

Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Bldg., 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

As a recreational fisherman, I am writing to express my strong opposition to your budget proposal which would delete funding of the Salt Water Fishing Tournament or the Artificial Reef Program.

The Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament was started in the late 1950's with the goal of generating more awareness of Virginia's excellent salt water fishing. It has been highly successful and recreational fishermen from Virginia and many other states travel to Virginia to experience this fishery. The revenues generated from our sport fishing bring millions of tourism dollars to our coastal communities, not to mention the dollars generated by additional sport fishing for marinas, tackle shops, boat dealers, etc. Additionally, the data generated by the Saltwater Fishing Tournament provides much valuable information for Fishery scientists and management organizations as well.

When the legislation to establish the saltwater fishing license was passed, we were promised that the funds from the license fees would be held in a dedicated account, managed by the Recreational Fishing Advisory Board, to be used to enhance fisheries management and access to fishing. I feel that this promise regarding use of license fees has been broken numerous times and that our license monies have been used to fund services that were formerly funded from the general fund.

For the reasons stated, please be aware that I strongly oppose your proposal to take dedicated fishing license money for other purposes, and I urge you to amend your budget to restore funding to the Saltwater Fishing Tournament and the Artificial Reef Program.

Sincerely,

CC: Doug Domenech, Office of Secretary of Natural Resources
Rep. Johnny Joannou, VA General Assembly

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Ask for PAC member Mr. Robert Salas

Pictures of Recent Catches

Each month I will try to publish pictures from PAC members of recent catches. Please email pictures to rtjordan@verizon.net, with a brief description of who, where, what and when, and I will try to include it in the next issue of **The Angler**.



Justin Milteer



Warren Brooks 53lbs 8oz, 50" length Striper (Kiptopeke)



Justin Milteer 7lb 14oz citation Trout (Hot Ditch)



Tommy Milteer 6lb citation Trout (Western branch)

PORTSMOUTH ANGLERS CLUB 2012 AWARDS BANQUET

This year's banquet is being held on Saturday, March 24, 2012, at the Elizabeth Manor Golf & Country Club. The club features very nice views of the Elizabeth River from its expansive deck.

The cash bar opens at 6 p.m., with dinner being served at 7 p.m. The adult menu includes:

*Roast Beef
Country Fried Chicken
Red Potatoes in Butter Sauce
Freshly Baked Rolls
Fresh Tossed Salad w/ choice of Dressing
Dessert
Coffee or Hot or Iced Tea*

The children's menu (12 years and under) features:

*Chicken Fingers
French Fries
Green Beans
Dessert
Soda*

For proper planning, it is necessary to make reservations and pay in advance. Please see Linda Baker at the January meeting to sign up.

The banquet will once again feature a raffle with very nice prizes. Any members or advertisers wishing to help in the form of prize donations, soliciting prizes, or sponsoring plaques and trophies should contact Linda Baker at 237-5554. Any and all help will be appreciated.

This is a non-smoking banquet; however there is a smoking area outside.

USCG Vessel Examination

Even if you pay careful attention to safety, dangerous mechanical problems can crop up on the best-maintained boat. That's why the U.S Coast Guard recommends that all recreational boaters (including personal watercraft users) take advantage of the free Vessel Safety Check (VSC) program every year.

VSCs are offered by experienced members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons, two of the nation's premier volunteer boating safety organizations. A VSC is your best way of learning about problems that might put you in violation of state or federal laws or, worse, create danger for you or your passengers on the water.

Sarah Bremer, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 53 and PAC member, will be glad to provide you with a courtesy inspection. Call Sarah on 397-3659, and she will set up an appointment to come to you and provide a free USCG Vessel Safety Check.

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Buddy List

Do you have a boat and no one to fish with? Do you want to go fishing, but have no boat? We have many PAC members that want to fish, but unable to go it alone. If you would like to go fishing with another PAC member, send me an email and indicate if you have a boat and would like to take a member fishing or if you don't have a boat and would like to go with a PAC member that has a boat. I will publish a list in the newsletter so you can contact each other. We will also try to post it on our web page.

John and/or Faye Meagher would like to fish but have no boat. Contact them at 399-4673.

Liz Venton would like to fish but does not have a boat. Contact Liz at 634-6368.

Michael Phelps would like to fish but has no boat. Contact Michael at 393-7782.

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Signature _____

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Mail to P.O. Box 7842, Portsmouth, VA 23707

Flounder Proposals

The recreational summer flounder ad hoc committee met on January 9 at VMRC to discuss 2012 management measures . While landings in Virginia were 53% under target in 2011, we are still held to an 18% decrease in our 2012 target (quota) due to coast-wide issues with overfishing. The good news is that the population's spawning stock biomass has reached the restored target of 132.4 million pounds. The 2012 target has been established as 466,000 summer flounder. Because the 2011 landings are estimated at 268,684 fish, we are able to liberalize our landings by 74% in order to attain the 2012 quota. In 2011, Virginia's recreational management measures included a 17 ½" minimum size limit, a 4 fish possession limit, and no closed season.

At last night's meeting, attendees expressed their concern that Virginia landings continue to fall short of our targets (2011 marked the fourth consecutive year of being under quota). While the group understands that paybacks will occur beginning in 2013, should the coast-wide ACL (annual catch limit) be exceeded, everyone was in agreement that perhaps being less conservative than in the past can serve Virginia well in 2012. Effort trends were also an important topic of this meeting.

The four options recommended by the ad hoc committee members to go forward are as follows, with the most support for the 16 ½" option:

- 16 ½" min. size, 4 fish possession limit
- 17" min. size, 5 fish
- 17" min. size, 4 fish
- 17 ½" min. size, 5 fish

All options assume no closed season in 2012.

State draft proposals are due to ASMFC technical committee on the 18th of January. The Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) will meet on January 23rd, and these options will be explained to that group for their input as well. On the 24th, a request for public hearing will be made at the VMRC Commission meeting. The proposal will be presented to the ASMFC technical committee at its meeting on the 25th in Baltimore. The ASMFC Management Board will review the TC recommendations at its Alexandria meeting on February 8th, and the final option(s) will be presented to the VMRC Commission at a public hearing on February 24th.

We will continue to seek any additional input or advice from the ad hoc group leading up to the ASMFC meeting, as discussions continue. Thank you to everyone who came out last night or sent a proxy.

Allison Watts
Fisheries Management Division
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
757-247-2069

The Angler

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