



Tag & Release

A newsletter following the South Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Series



January 2021

Vol. 26 No. 1

Supporting the conservation of billfish, ocean resources, billfish tournaments and coastal tourism

Since 1989, the Cup has promoted the catch and release of billfish, resulting in a shift from a 90% landing rate to a 99% release rate in the billfishing industry in the Palmetto State!

33rd Annual SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series 2021 Tournament Schedule

May 5 - 8



Bohicket Marina Invitational Billfish Tournament

Contact: Beau Anderson
1880 Andell Bluff Blvd.
Johns Island, SC 29455
(843) 768-1280
marinamanager@bohicket.com

May 26 - 29



54th Annual Georgetown Blue Marlin Tournament

Contact: Ed Keelin
P.O. Box 1704
Georgetown SC 29442
(843) 546-1776 Fax (843) 546-7832
ed@georgetownlandingmarina.com

June 23 - 26



Carolina Billfish Classic

Contact: Deidre Menefee
20 Patriots Point Road
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
(843) 345-0369
dm@fishcbc.com

July 14 - 17



Megadock Billfishing Tournament

Contact: Robbie Freeman
P.O. Box 759
Charleston, SC 29402
(843) 577-7702
rffreeman@shmarinas.com

July 21 - 24



Edisto Invitational Billfish Tournament

Contact: Brian Bell
3702 Docksites Road
Edisto Beach, SC 29438
(843) 631-5055 Fax (843) 631-5065
bkbell2009@gmail.com

For more information, contact:

Amy Dukes, SC Governor's Cup Tournament Coordinator
DukesA@dnr.sc.gov • govcup.dnr.sc.gov • (843) 953-9365
PO Box 12559 • Charleston, SC 29422

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Series Reflections

Well, once again you have not heard from me directly in over 4 months. Part of the delay has been intentional as we have been working with a contractor to update and revamp the Memorial Reef website in preparation for a 2021 fundraising push for deployment of the Highway 21 Bridge superstructure that I wrote about in the last newsletter. After much work, the website is ready to go live and we can get back to business. To those of you who have donated in the interim, I think you will be pleased with the changes made and our efforts to acknowledge the contributions in memory of your friends and loved ones. I am confident we can reach our goal of \$325,000 in the coming months. Simply log in to www.scmemorialreef.com and help make this project a reality by creating more deep-water habitat for those species you love to pursue.

In December, I attended a virtual meeting of the Highly Migratory Species Panel, it was our third such meeting this year. Much of the initial discussion centered around shark management and depredation by sharks on both recreational and commercial catch of various finfish species. To summarize, I think NMFS is moving in the right direction to better utilize and fill shark landings quotas including potentially removing linkages between some species that usually result in premature closing of various management groups

(e.g. Small Coastal/ Large Coastal/ Pelagic) of sharks before the quotas for individual species are met. In addition, there were discussions related to the ongoing trend in prohibiting the sale of shark fins and how it is negatively effecting landings, in general. Finally, there was a good discussion on how to deal with the trend in increased landings of Blue Marlin, White Marlin and Roundscale Spearfish which led to the in-season closure on recreational landings in the North Atlantic Ocean in late September, because we were precariously close to the 250 total. HMS suggested perhaps increasing minimum sizes for these fish might be the best approach but after much discussion it was suggested by many on the panel, including me, that HMS should allow the tournaments to self-regulate by modifying their rules to keep landings from exceeding the quota in a given year. As you all know, that is basically what the SC Governor's Cup Billfishing Series has done for years by having a larger minimum size for Blue Marlin and a prohibition to land White Marlin, Sailfish, and Roundscale Spearfish. Hopefully, this approach will be successful as there is an ICCAT clause that requires any overage from the current year be removed from the quota the following year. This would be particularly problematic for tournaments that occur later in the season like the White Marlin Open and the Mid Atlantic, both of which landed a large number of fish.

Unfortunately, an already bad year ended even worse with the untimely passing of our friend, former Advisory Board member, and owner of HOUDINI, Jim Shannon on Dec 21 at age 62. I am not the wordsmith that my colleague Cameron is (see her SCGC Facebook post) but he was a gregarious, fun loving generous person and a great fisherman. I used to enjoy watching him get down in his football stance on the docks to playfully take on the young bucks. I considered him a friend and will miss his always smiling face. I offer my condolences to his wife Leigh and the boys Blake, Cole and Clint.

I want to close out the year by providing some happy news that many of you perhaps have already seen on Facebook. At the risk of being redundant, I belatedly congratulate my colleague Kayla Rudnay and her husband Andrew on the birth of a daughter Emory Lane on November 18, tipping the scales at 7 lbs, 8.8 ounces

and 20 inches total length. I think she's a keeper! In recent days I also learned of the birth of Captain Jay Weaver and his bride Kelly's first son Quinn, on January 5, tipping the scales at 8 lbs, 15.4 ounces and 21.25 inches total length. It is great to welcome these new additions to our Governor's Cup Family. I know there have been many babies born into the Governor's Cup family during this trying year with more on the way and I am sorry I could not mention them all. It is a shame that we as a group did not get to celebrate with them during these times and give the respective family's the attention and pampering they deserved leading up to these births. However, I am optimistic that this is a sign that life goes on and that our future is bright. Until next time, keep living and hug the ones you are with.

~ Wally Jenkins



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Security & Technology

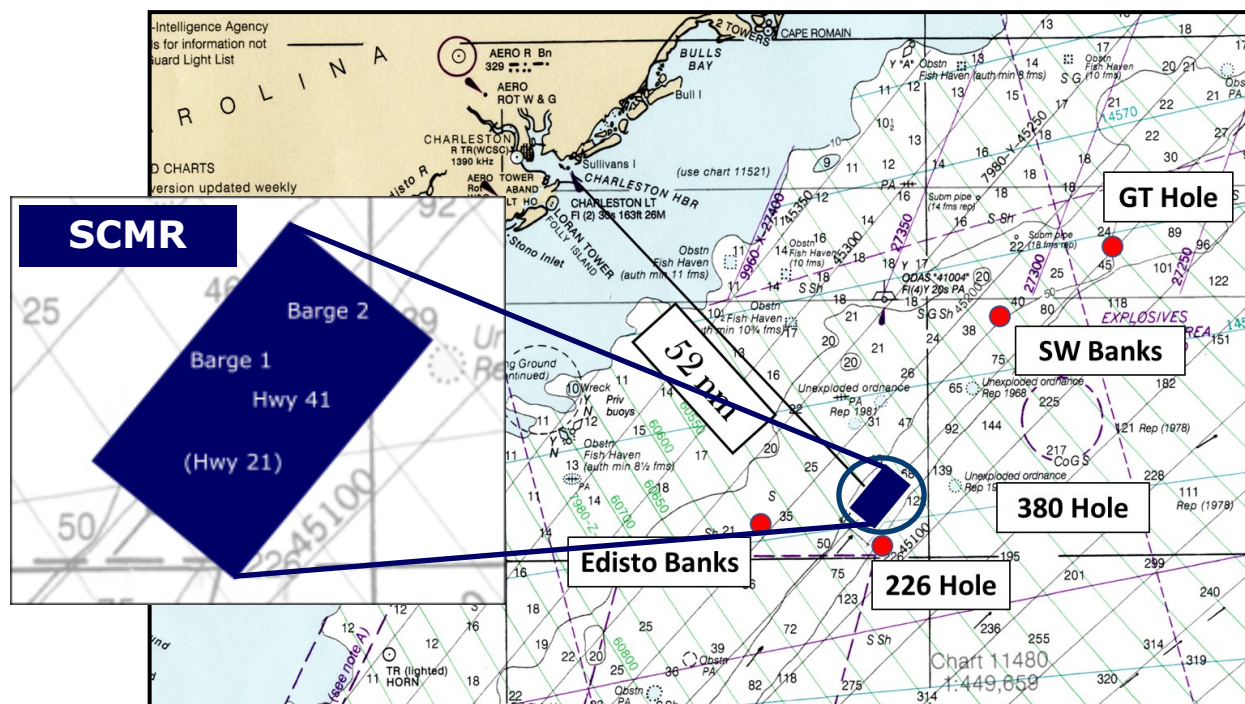


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We'll see you in October 2021

THE SC MEMORIAL REEF



The SC Memorial Reef, part of the Charleston Deep Reef, is located about 52 nautical miles southeast of Charleston Harbor, surrounded by other popular fishing locations. In an area that was previously void of any hard substrate, the structures are providing critical habitat for imperiled deepwater snapper and grouper species, while also attracting pelagics like billfish, tuna and dolphin to the area. Designated as a Type II MPA (Marine Protected Area), bottom fishing is prohibited, but trolling over the area is permitted. Therefore, we have provided a place for bottom fish to live and spawn, while enhancing the sport of billfishing we love so much.

ACT NOW! WE NEED YOUR HELP!



The Hwy. 21 bridge that connects Hilton Head with the mainland is set to be demolished, and staff and friends have been hard at work to sequester as much of the structure as possible to add to the Charleston Deep Reef site. There are 3 options on the table of varying degrees of complexity, and the more money we're able to raise, the more structure we'll be able to sink! Demolition has also been pushed up to next March, almost a year ahead of schedule, so the time is NOW to donate! With many of the Governor's Cup and Harry Hampton events cancelled during 2020, we are calling upon YOU help spread the word for this great cause! Please look throughout this newsletter to learn more about what we've accomplished so far!

How to donate:

- * Make checks payable to: Harry Hampton Fund - The SC Memorial Reef, C/O Amy Dukes, PO Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29422
- * Donate Online:
 - <https://www.scmemorialreef.com/> (Check it out - it's our NEW website!)
 - <http://www.hamptonwildlifefund.org/> - write "SC Memorial Reef" in the instructions box to ensure it's accredited to the appropriate project.

A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for both sources!



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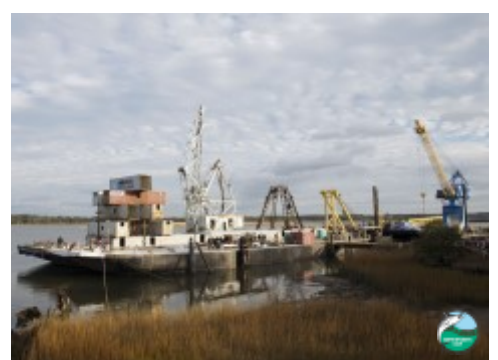


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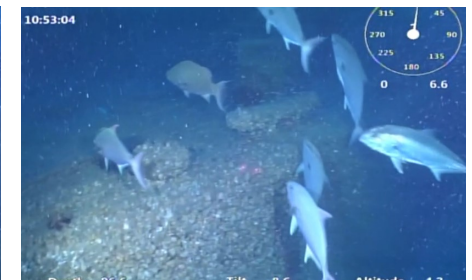
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Check out all the life on the reef structures! This is actual ROV (Remotely Operated under water Vehicle) footage taken by NOAA vessel *Pisces* in 2016 (left) and 2019 (above/below). Also, the ROV is named *Mohawk*, and we think that's pretty great! Before the reef was here, this was nothing but a sandy bottom. Now, it's a sanctuary for snapper & grouper species in great need of a home and spawning ground, while attracting billfish and other pelagics to the area as well!



Welcome to Maximum Uptime

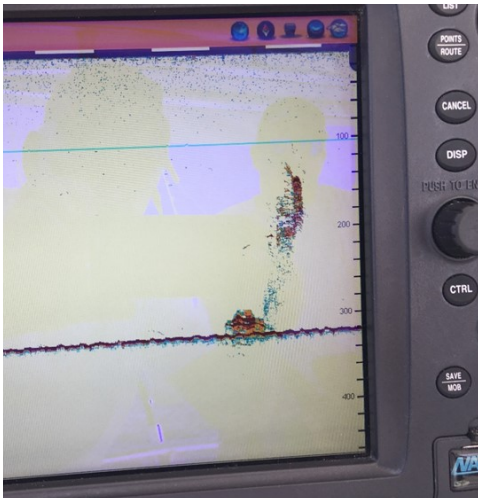
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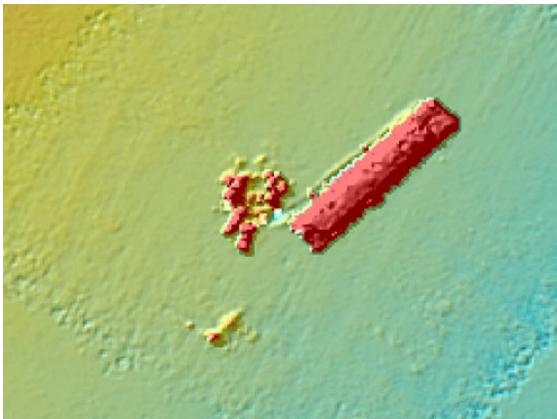
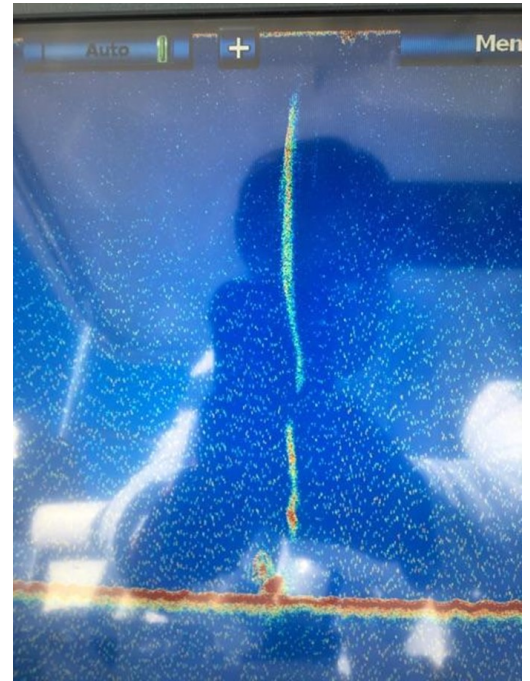
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Reef in action!

Here are some shots from fishermen showing the vertical relief and upwelling action the structures are producing from the sea floor! The upwelling and ecosystem on the bottom is what draws in our billfish and other pelagics we love to chase. It's so great to see the fruits of our efforts paying off just as we had hoped for!



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The S.C. Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Division reminds the public of Coast Watch, which was developed to better help citizens report violations of saltwater recreational and commercial fishing laws, as well as marine environmental laws. **The Coast Watch hotline number (1-800-922-5431) is toll-free and available 24 hours a day.**

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, gender, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, PO Box 167, Columbia, South Carolina, 29202.