Last fall, Hurricane Floyd brushed the South Carolina coast, then plowed into the North Carolina coastline, damaging boats and property in its path. Although our state escaped with relatively minor impact, several of Charleston Harbor Marina’s docks were severely damaged and many of the North Carolina Governor’s Cup boats were either moved because of or damaged by the storm, prompting the cancellation of the 1999 8th Annual Carolinas Shootout.

S.C. and N.C., together with Georgia, who were to compete for the first time by invitation after the successful completion of its first Governor’s Cup, opted to postpone rather than call off the Shootout. The three states decided to fish the event April 27-29, 2000 at Charleston Harbor.

The annual Shootout, a tag and release only event, has become a great tradition to determine the best anglers in the Carolinas, and is enhanced this year by the addition of Georgia’s best.
FROM THE CHAIR...

Welcome...

Welcome to the 2000 Governor’s Cup Billfish Series and our first newsletter.

In ‘99, South Carolina anglers released over 95 percent of billfish caught. Most of those were tagged, as were many tuna, dolphin and wahoo. In short, South Carolina anglers are at the forefront of today’s catch and release ethic...and my hat’s off to these great sportsmen.

My hat’s also off to a group of business leaders who’ve pledged not only support, but a lot of dollars to the Governor’s Cup Billfish Series. Our sponsors remain at the core of our program, funding it so our anglers can participate in what’s become one of the prestigious billfishing events in the world.

Cummins Marine and Cummins Atlantic, Williams Detroit Diesel and Caro- lina First are Corporate level sponsors. HMY Yachts became a Benefactor this year and Gamble Givens and Moody came aboard as a Patron. We all should take the time to thank these outstanding corporations for their support, and not forget those past sponsors who’ve helped us achieve so many goals over the past eleven years.

Thanks are also in order to our newsletter sponsors, represented by their advertisements in this issue. Without them, we couldn’t print and mail the Tag & Release.

Charleston Harbor Marina withdrew from the regular Series due to dock damage, but the Carolinas Shootout will kick off our 2000 season there with a bang, especially with Georgia joining the battle. Our first event is Edisto May 3-7 and we finish the year at Dock Holidays July 12-16, which is a change from our usual north to south progression. I can’t wait...and I hope to see many of you this season on the docks!

Bill Cox, Jr., Chairman
SCGCBS, Orangeburg
bicox@coxwood.com

DIRECT LINES...

A Promise Kept...

It’s hard to believe that the Marine Recreational Fisheries Stamp program is in its eighth year. This program plays an important role in DNR’s efforts to conserve and manage the state’s marine recreational fisheries, providing information and funding. The stamp provides a means to count and survey boat and shell fish anglers. It is a way to generate revenues that are used for programs, operations and activities that benefit the recreational saltwater angler and the resources they target.

Since it’s effective date of July 1, 1992, the program has sold approximately 630,232 stamps to fishermen and 42,213 to collectors. Art collectors and conservationists have purchased approximately 11,380 limited edition and medallion prints by artists such as Randy McGovern, Diane Peebles, Mark Susinno and South Carolina’s own Barnie Slice and Matt Constantine. The program has generated $3.9M in net revenues with approximately 85% ($3.3M) from the sale of stamps, $294,773 from print sales and the remainder from the sale of annual permits ($263,110), art contest fees ($4,025) and other activities ($795).

One of the main concerns voiced by anglers back in the late 80’s and early 90’s was the fear that funds generated from the stamp would be lost in the black hole of state bureaucracy. Most were more than willing to purchase a stamp if they knew the funds would be used for programs and activities that benefited them and the resources they cherish. And benefit them it has.

During the past year these funds have been used to fund the marine game fish tagging program which supplies anglers and tournaments with free tagging kits; six artificial reef construction projects were completed on six different permitted sites since July; seven tournaments were surveyed last fall documenting the number of vessel trips and number of fish being caught; the billfish monitoring program documented a record catch of 524 billfish during tournament and non-tournament fishing with the majority released alive and tagged; a study to determine the monetary value of selected finfish for use in litigation and in determining fines involving environmental accidents and illegal activities is being conducted in cooperation with Clemson University; the fish carcass collection program successfully collected wrecks from 37 anglers, which were measured for total, fork, and standard lengths, examined to determine sex and maturity, and aged by sectioned otoliths; all 20 public shellfish grounds were inspected and signs were replaced on grounds as needed; shellfish maps were made available to the public free; popular natural history publications, the Sea Science Series, maps, rules and regulations and fish rulers are but a few of materials made available to the angling public and the list goes on.

All of these activities were funded totally or in part with saltwater stamp revenues. In addition, 20% of the funds support coastal law enforcement activities. The administrative overhead to accomplish all this? 5% or less!

As an added bonus, the charter vessel permit and logbook program has provided a wealth of information. This year South Carolina will take part in a comparative study looking at three ways to collect catch and effort information from charter and head boats. The historical methods used to collect this information have been questioned mainly because of the data we have generated using our vessel logbooks. The results of the study could have far reaching impacts on how future data is collected from the for-hire fleet up and down the entire east coast and Gulf of Mexico.

As other states struggle with saltwater licensing issues, South Carolina continues to play a lead role in marine conservation and effective management through the use of the Marine Recreational Fisheries Stamp program. Not a bad track record.

Wayne Waltz
Office of Fisheries Management
email: waltzw@mrd.dnr.state.sc.us
1999 GOVERNOR’S CUP...
Boats Participating: 164
Billfish Hooked: 350+
Billfish Caught: 187
Billfish Weighed: 7
Tag and Release Rate: 96%
Number of Tuna, Dolphin, Wahoo Tagged and Released: 115

TOP TEN BOATS TOTAL
ROOKIE IV 2,091.4
HIGH COTTON 1,900
MAR JEN 1,750
TROUBLEMAKER 1,750
BIG GAME 1,400
BIG KAHUNA 1,222.6
PISCES IV 1,200
BLUE WATER 1,175
OVERTIME 1,050
RISKY BUSINESS 1,037.5

TOP BOAT
POINTS: 2,091.4
BOAT: ROOKIE IV
OWNER: EDDIE BUCK SR.
CAPTAIN: BOBBY GARMANY

LARGEST BILLFISH
FISH: 479.0 lbs. Blue Marlin
BOAT: ROOKIE IV
OWNER: EDDIE BUCK Sr.
ANGLER: EDDIE BUCK Sr.
CAPTAIN: BOBBY GARMANY

BILLFISH CONSERVATIONIST
POINTS: 1,900
BOAT: HIGH COTTON
OWNER: ED NORRIS
CAPTAIN: BUSTER MELTON

BLUE WATER CONSERVATION
POINTS: 1,175
BOAT: LUCKY DEVIL
OWNER: LIN SMITH
CAPTAIN: JIM CLINE

Y2K RULE CHANGES...
Striking fish and appeals process...
In November 1999, the SCGCBS Board of Directors unanimously voted to require anglers to strike their own fish in order to qualify for Series points. This is identical to the IGFA rule concerning striking of fish, but the Board stopped short of requiring full IGFA compliance, deferring to the individual tournaments to govern their participants according to each individual event’s rules. The rule was adopted to avoid confusion if participating tournaments allowed anyone other than the angler to strike the fish.

The Board also voted to restrict their appeals process to only those appeals which concerned Series points and awards, again deferring to individual tournaments to settle disputes arising solely within their events and not involving Governor’s Cup points.

NEW BILLFISH CERTIFICATES...
For many years, the Billfish Monitoring Program has awarded certificates to anglers who land, tag, or release billfish in South Carolina waters. In the winter months, a large number of you folks go to other geographical (read that as warmer) areas to fish. As participants in the South Carolina Marine Game Fish Tagging Program, you tag many billfish using tags supplied by the SCDNR, but, until now, you’ve received little recognition for your valuable efforts. Due to numerous requests, a new certificate has been developed and will be issued to anglers who use SCDNR tags when tagging and releasing billfish outside of SC waters. Please fill out your tag cards completely and accurately and mail them in promptly. A certificate will be mailed to the angler upon receipt of the tag card. We appreciate and thank you for the efforts that all of you make for conservation and research.

Kay Davy
SC Game Fish Tagging Program
Tom DuPré
Billfish Monitoring Program
Marine Resources Division

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