

Fishing & Hunting



By Richard Seale

Coastal Recreational Fishing License fees generate funds that are used as grants to undertake various projects related to coastal access and resources. In 2014, \$1.78 million will be distributed to 14 projects along the North Carolina coast. The grant awards go to people projects such as access ramps for boats; rest room facilities; fish projects, such as studying flounder mortality and striped bass maturation and fecundity; and habitat projects, such as oyster shell collections, aquatic vegetation studies and improvement. The project that is in Carteret County will be a people project to get rest rooms for the Radio Island beach access site, which is a fishing spot on the east side of Radio Island.

There are some other 2014 fishing-related license changes that will impact folks in Carteret County. For those of you who in the past have purchased the Recreational Commercial Gear License, which is the license required to legally set five crab pots and use various types of fishing set nets, the fee for that license has increased from \$35 to \$43.75. If you are not a North Carolina legal resident, the fee for this license has gone from \$250 to \$312.50. The fee for the under-dock oyster culture permit remains free to NC legal residents. The Standard Commercial Fishing License fee has gone from \$200 to \$250. The Retired Standard Commercial Fishing License has gone from \$100 to \$125. A full copy of all fee changes can be obtained from the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), via website (<http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/coastal-joint-inland-waters>) or in person at 3441 Arendell Street in Morehead City.

The winter temperature lows in the teens and low 20s certainly have impacted inshore fishing. Our cold-blooded scale and fin neighbors do not eat much when the water temperatures drop into the low 40s and mid-30s. Of course, finding a warm and relatively calm day to go fishing has not been easy this winter. The late January sleet-and-snow storm made just walking near the water a fairly dangerous thing to do. Along our bulkhead I found ice spots that could easily have caused me to lose my balance and fall into the sound or canal. For the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the storm, I used a walking stick just to go get the mail. Thursday's walking conditions were more slippery than Tuesday's, due to the overnight freezing conditions. Slush turned to ice and the snow surface became hard, which made the surface quite slippery. I did not go out on the dock, for sure!

According to DMF field surveys, the cold temperatures in January have resulted in significant spotted sea trout cold stunning. Cold stunning occurs when the water temperature drops below certain levels; the biology of the spotted sea trout cannot cope and the fish either dies or almost dies. The largest threat is that many cold-stunned fish are unable to spawn and the sea trout population drops dramatically. The North Carolina Spotted Sea Trout Fishery Management Plan provides that field surveys be conducted. If certain levels of cold stunning are found, the sea trout open season is closed until after spawning. The sea trout season was closed by proclamation on Wednesday, February 5, and will remain closed until June 15. What the specific survey results were and what constitutes cold stunning of sufficient severity to close the sea trout fishery were not shown. Since one of the few winter recreational inshore fish worth fishing for is the spotted sea trout, this closure takes a good bit out of winter fishing adventures. Let's hope the DMF has its science right and that the closure will indeed reap better harvest benefits in terms of better fishing in the longer term.

The best fishing is being enjoyed by the Red-breasted Mergansers plying the shoals in Bogue Sound. I have been carefully watching them with my scope. They seem to harvest a small pin fish at least 40% of their dives. The gulls view this success as a source of food and harass the mergansers relentlessly.

PKA NEWS

By Amy Cox

In the spirit of spring, PKA members will begin to clean and spruce up our parks and common areas—Brock Basin, Davis Landing, Kings Corner, Ocean Park and Ramsey Park—spearheaded by Shannon Smylie. In addition to email notifications, we will set out notices at each location in advance with dates and times.

We are dedicating Thursday, May 8, from 9 a.m. to noon at Brock Basin and Thursday, May 15, from 9 a.m. to noon at Ocean Park to come out of winter hibernation and clean up for spring. Typical jobs during these park work events are basic cleanup, removal of twigs/winter debris, survey of areas for repair/restoration, checking facilities for working order and checking signage. It's a great way to meet new people, enjoy spontaneous laughter and smiles and partake of oxygen therapy provided by our green canopy. Come on out and we can find a way to use—many hands lighten any load. Watch for reminders in the coming weeks.

Ocean Park is our highest usage area and receives special attention during six months of the year by a dedicated cadre of volunteers who take a week of duty at the premier Pine Knoll Shores common area. Duties include raising and lowering the flags each day, generally checking on things, sweeping/blowing walk areas and replacing garbage bags—and you get to see some more of your neighbors and meet their guests in the process. Volunteer now by contacting Shannon Smylie at (303) 719-1343; the duty roster begins in mid-April and goes through September.

March is also the last call for volunteers and self-nominations for any of the upcoming vacancies on the Pine Knoll Association Board of Directors. The nominating committee needs names by mid-March so it can include the nominees' bios in the mailing that goes out to all association members for the June annual meeting and election. So volunteer as you can, watch out for notices and emails about cleanup events and think green. Carry spring forward and plant a tree next month for Arbor Day in April.

Senior Games Registration

Registration is open for the Carteret County Senior Games. The registration fee is \$20; register by March 17 and save \$5. The final deadline for registration is Friday, March 28, at 4:30 p.m. Visit the Carteret County Parks and Recreation website for more information and a registration form at ccpr.recdesk.com/recdeskportal/ (click on "Senior Games" on the left side of the page) or call them at 808-3301.

Pine Knoll Shores

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Our **vision** is to provide a quality environment in which our citizens are safe and secure, where individual talents flourish, and everyone enjoys the natural resources of our area.

It is the **mission** of the town of Pine Knoll Shores to provide concerted and friendly means of promoting health, safety and social well-being; develop and implement plans for the continuous improvement of the town; and encourage the participation of residents in service to the town and community.