

Menhaden Vessel Sparks King Fishermen's Fury

BY SUSAN USHER AND DAWN ELLEN BOYD
A menhaden boat off Long Beach sparked a flurry of calls to state and local officials from sports fishermen Tuesday on the eve of the U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament at Southport.

State Rep. David Redwine said Tuesday that he had heard from a number of upset fishermen and had contacted the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries to find out if the boat had the authority to fish in that area.

On Tuesday, Hall Watters of Winnabow said the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission, of which he is a member, adopted regulations in August governing the menhaden industry. It barred pogy boats from within

15 miles of the inlets listed for specific king mackerel tournaments, including the U.S. Open, while the tournaments are in progress.

The commission also closed year-round menhaden fishing in the Cape Fear River and in the area known as the "Mudhole." It extends from the mouth of the Cape Fear River to Bald Head Lighthouse and then to the Yaupon Beach Fishing Pier.

The new regulations went into effect Tuesday, Oct. 1.

The U.S. Open officially was to begin Wednesday night with a captains' meeting, but fishing does not begin until 6:30 a.m. Thursday (today).

A single menhaden boat, owned by Beaufort Fisheries Inc. of Beaufort was spotted off the coast Tuesday morning.

According to Redwine, marine fisheries officials have been assured by Beaufort Fisheries president Jules Wheatly that the boat will be gone by the time fishing begins Thursday.

Because fishermen are upset by the pogy boat's presence, Redwine said that he has talked with Robert Mahood about a compromise that might soothe tempers. Mahood is director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

Redwine is proposing that Wheatly's fishing vessel provide the sports fishermen with the bait they need for the tournament from an open set.

"It's just bad press. Why would they even want to go in there knowing the problems there have been in the past," said Redwine.

During the 1984 U.S. Open fishermen complained they were unable to find the "flips" or young menhaden they needed for bait because the area was being heavily fished by the menhaden industry.

Resource competition in the menhaden fishery prompted the state to adopt its first regulations governing the industry this summer.

1985 THE BRUNSWICK
HARD & SONG BOOK BINDERY
12431-09
SPRINGPORT, MT 49284

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Volume 23 Number 47 Shallotte, North Carolina, Thursday, October 3, 1985 25c Per Copy 26 Pages



AS NOON APPROACHED, Ocean Isle Beach town employees T.D. Robertson, Ann Gurganus and Konnie Johnston began their exodus of the island bearing armloads of town records. Like other towns and residents along the coast, Ocean Isle braced for the worst while hoping for the best. More Hurricane Gloria coverage is inside this issue.

County Relieved Unwanted Hurricane Gloria Went North

BY SUSAN USHER
Brunswick County took seriously last week the advances of the most unwanted woman of the year as Hurricane Gloria approached from the Caribbean.

That attitude was reflected in the flurry of preparations that preceded the storm. But in the end, Brunswick County had little to worry about.

As Hurricane Gloria swept to the north toward New England, leaving at least 16 dead in her wake, Brunswick County received only about a half-inch of rain with "spotty erosion" reported at all area beaches.

Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said the erosion was less than that usually experienced by local beaches in a typical winter storm.

He said damage was actually too little to estimate in terms of dollars, but that storm preparations could cost the county \$12,000 or more.

No structural damage was reported.

'Lucky Again'
"We were lucky; we were lucky again," he stressed, referring to the landfall of Hurricane Diana in September 1984, which caused less than anticipated damage also.

While the hurricane made a sharp turn to the east that took southeastern North Carolina out of its path, local officials said Brunswick County and its residents were prepared for the worst.

"We were decisive," said Logan. "We knew what we were going to do—we'd been through Diana—and we got on with the program."

Both David Clegg, acting county manager during the emergency, and Logan said preparations for Gloria reflected valuable lessons learned a year ago from Hurricane Diana.

Officials at the municipal and county levels and local utilities such as Brunswick Electric and Atlantic Telephone membership cooperatives swung into action Wednesday, deciding how they would cope with the possible nearby landfall of a Category 5 hurricane packing winds of 130 mph to 150 mph.

"We are as ready as we can be—except for a few generators,"

Clegg said Thursday morning, and the additional generators for various shelters were en route later that day.

Clegg, county attorney, was acting as county manager as well as maintaining his role as public information officer. County Manager Billy Carter and Commissioner Frankie Rabon had left earlier in the week for a conference in Miami, Fla. Logan cut short a two-week training seminar in Las Vegas, Nev., arriving at the command center about 2:30 p.m. Thursday, pleased with the way the situation had been handled by his office manager, Dianne Richardson, and others. In his absence, Sheriff John Carr Davis had assumed the role of operations officer.

"It couldn't have gone smoother," Logan said Friday morning after shelters had been closed.

Added Clegg, "No one is panicking. They're saying, 'we've got to do this and this and we're doing it.'"

Approximately 1,780 residents took shelter from the storm at centers that began opening at 8 a.m. Thursday under the coordination of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services. Thousands of others sought the comfort of motel rooms and the homes of friends and relatives farther inland.

"They had time to do that this time," Clegg said, because the evacuation order was issued early in the day. As a result, the local shelters were less crowded and more comfortable for those who did seek them out, he acknowledged.

More Boarded
Most people, however, didn't leave home without taking a few steps to protect their property, as well as making the usual run on stores for batteries, canned food and bottled water.

County officials reported that more people boarded up or taped windows of their homes and businesses, cleared yards of furniture and other loose items and secured campers and boats.

"I believe everybody that ever owned a boat has gotten it out today. It's been double-ramp all day," said George Crisp at Ocean Isle Marina.

Logan attributed the more detailed preparations to greater public

awareness of the threat to safety posed by such a storm.

Chris Chappell, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners, said he and Clegg, Coast Guard personnel, fellow commissioners and others had talked off and on through the night Wednesday and knew what they were going to do: evacuate.

Order Issued
"If this one goes on by," he said Thursday morning, "there are going to be some people upset. But we're talking about people's lives. It's better to play it safe."

At a 6 a.m. meeting in the courthouse, commissioners ordered an evacuation of all barrier islands and an area one mile inland beginning at 8 a.m., with the goal of having all beaches evacuated by noon. By mid-afternoon, all beaches were evacuated except for about eight people who refused to leave Long Beach. The evacuation order was lifted 24 hours after it was issued.

A need for better coordination and communication between beach municipalities and the county had been one of the chief lessons learned from Diana.

Improvement was evident last week, officials agreed, when the municipalities cooperated in a simultaneous evacuation and agreed to have county deputies staffing roadblocks at bridges to the barrier islands, where town officials had experienced problems last year in controlling re-entry after the storm.

Still, one incident at Oak Island could have caused problems under different circumstances, Logan indicated. Oak Island officials opened the Oak Island Bridge to traffic around midnight without discussing it with county officials. But other towns held returning property owners back until after daylight as earlier agreed.

Lessons Applied
Also, during Diana, power failures had caused discomfort and inconvenience at a number of shelters. Thursday, the county had available one generator of its own, from Carolina Power & Light, and two from the state, with a third canceled en route.

The county also notified the N.C. National Guard that it might need assistance, and pledged towns "all

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Season Opens Day Late

Oyster season was to officially open at sunrise Wednesday, only one day later than announced earlier.

Because of the rains and extreme weather conditions associated with Hurricane Gloria along the North Carolina coast, all shellfish areas had been closed temporarily.

The shellfish sanitation section of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development collected water samples all along the coast on Monday. State Rep. David Redwine announced Tuesday afternoon that the results showed no problems with pollution.

The ban was also lifted on other shellfish in season. Marlene Varnam, spokesperson for the Dixon Chapel Methodist Church Oyster Roast, says this means the annual oyster roast is still on.

The roast will be held at the church on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. The cost is \$8 for adults and \$3.25 for children. Diners should bring their own knives.

Battle For West End Access Continues

BY SUSAN USHER
A Durham attorney hired by a group seeking to regain road access to the west end of Holden Beach says his firm believes the dirt road in question is public.

But even if the road is public, the battle for public access to the west end will not have ended, he notes, because of the recent adoption of a town ordinance that bans parking along the shoulders of Ocean Boulevard.

While compromises may be acceptable to all parties, both sides appear willing to let the courts resolve the debate if necessary.

In a Sept. 18 letter to Raymond Cope, secretary-treasurer of the informally organized group of protesters, Durham attorney James B. Maxwell wrote that based on research, "we are convinced that the road through the west end of Holden Beach is a public right-of-way and cannot be closed off by Mr. Griffin, or anyone acting on his behalf." Maxwell is senior partner in the firm of Maxwell, Freeman and Beason, which also represents the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association.

Speaking from the upstairs porch at 125 Burlington Street, Cope told the group, "It looks like things are going our way. They can't have things both ways. We can't let this thing die."

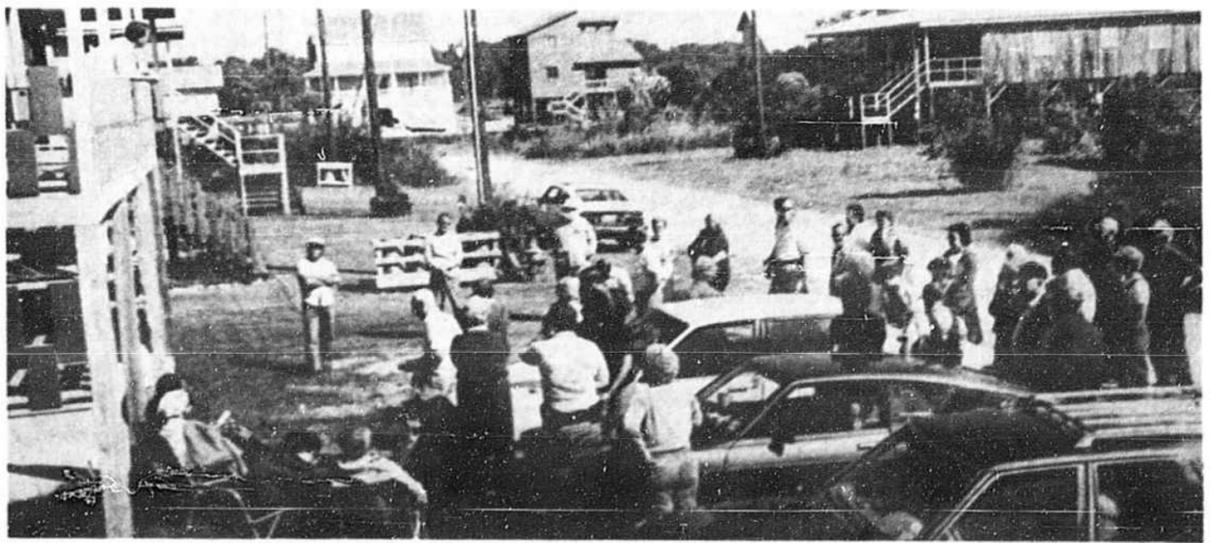
"We're that close to winning," he added, gesturing with his fingers.

But one unidentified speaker in the audience indicated that results of a telephone survey of island residents was not too encouraging so far.

While there exists some quiet support for the campaign, he said, "the majority of people down here don't want to be involved, they don't want to be identified with one side or another."

Copies of the letter, and a similar one to Jim Griffin Jr., west end developer and town commissioner, were distributed to approximately 45 people who attended a meeting at the west end situation Saturday at Holden Beach. The opinion contrasts directly with one obtained from the N.C. Attorney General's office by the town of Holden Beach. Mayor Kenner Amos says that opinion indicates the road is private, as Griffin has contended.

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APPROXIMATELY 45 individuals gathered at Holden Beach Saturday morning to discuss their continuing concern about the closing of an apparently private road on the beach's west end. At left, organizer Raymond Cope explains

the status of the West End Fund, money being collected to finance possible court action to regain use of the road.