

Commercial Fishermen Seek Help From Local Legislators

BY DOUG RUTTER
Legislators David Redwine, Dewey Hill and R.C. Soles Jr. will head back to Raleigh next month with a greater knowledge of the plight of local commercial fishermen.

The three men who represent Brunswick County in the N.C. General Assembly met with more than 100 anglers last Wednesday at a session hosted by the newly-formed Carolinas Commercial Fishermen's Association.

Fishermen pleaded for relief from the steady stream of state and federal regulations and a sportfishing association that they claim is trying to bring an end to commercial fishing.

The group also asked the local lawmakers to take measures to control water pollution that they say is being caused by rapid coastal development and golf course construction.

"Gentlemen, we are really what you might say begging for our jobs, a lot like you do when you run for re-election," said Lloyd Ward, president of the association.

Ward showed the lawmakers a bumper sticker describing commercial fishermen as an endangered species. "It's a fact that we are, and it's a fact that many people don't know," he said.

Ward said regulations are "killing" the commercial fishermen. "We just feel every time legislation comes out we get the worst of it," he said.

The specific legislation on the minds of many fishermen last week was the one requiring all commercial anglers to buy special licenses in order to sell fish to dealers.

As co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture, Rep. Redwine introduced the bill that led to the "endorsement to sell" license.

The license is required for each boat engaged in commercial fishing and costs between \$25 and \$36 per year, depending on the boat size. Fishermen said the license should be required for each person, but not each boat.

Redwine, who said changes in the license are a possibility, explained that it was proposed as a means of collecting data on how much commercial fishing gear is used and how many fish are landed.

Without the data, he said federal quotas and other regulations are set using arbitrary figures that might not reflect what has been harvested in the past.

"We need the data in order to



STATE REP. DAVID REDWINE says he is in a position to help commercial fishermen as co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Commission on Seafood and Aquaculture.

our children besides a cesspool in the waterways and ocean," Ward told the lawmakers.

"Look at them. I don't believe there's a one of them who wants to go on welfare. They're working people. All they want is for you to give them a chance to work."

Christine Doshier of Varnamtown said water pollution is being caused by over-development on the beaches, chemicals used on golf course, CP&L's Brunswick Nuclear Plant and landfills.

"It's not the shrimpers that's destroying the fish and shrimp. It's the pollution," she said. "It's not the shrimpers. I don't see why everything is laid on them and the net fishermen."

Doshier said nothing is being done to control pollution. "We've been promised and promised from Charlie Rose on down to do something about pollution and nothing is done."

Jim Culpepper of Gause Landing said people should focus less attention on saving rain forests in South America and put more emphasis on protecting the local environment.

"What in the name of God about ours right here where these damn golf courses is destroying everything we got?" he said.

Culpepper said the marshes in



LLOYD WARD, president of the Carolinas Commercial Fishermen's Association, says water pollution and too many regulations are preventing fishermen from making a living.

Gause Landing Creek "stay dark green year-round and it ain't nothing but nitrogen running in there."

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Also discussed was the ongoing conflict between commercial and recreational fishermen. Several fishermen said they think it can be resolved because there is enough water and fish for everyone.

However, Ward said the Atlantic Coast Conservation Association, which has a North Carolina chapter based in Wilmington, is trying to end commercial fishing.

He cited comments made in a recent letter from the group's executive director, Richen Brame, seeking support in preserving and restoring marine resources.

The letter blames "wasteful commercial fishing practices" for reducing fish like gray trout, croaker and red snapper to less than 20 percent of their former levels.

It also says that for every pound of shrimp caught in North Carolina, more than 10 pounds of young fish are killed in nets and discarded.

Redwine invited fishermen to attend an upcoming meeting of the

joint legislative commission at UNC-Wilmington's University Center. The meeting will be April 28 at 3 p.m.

Redwine, Hill and Soles, all Democrats, are seeking re-election this year. Redwine and Hill are unopposed for their N.C. House seats, while Soles has two Democratic challengers in the N.C. Senate race.

One of them, Ron Taylor, attended last week's meeting. The other challenger is Claude Spivey.

Also attending were district court judge candidate Wayne Long, school board candidate Thurman Gause and county commission candidate Randy Stanley.

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North Carolina Fish Commission Seeks Moratorium On Licenses

The N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission recently passed two resolutions that could result in a two-year moratorium on the issuance of new commercial fishing licenses.

Commission Chairman Bob Lucas said he hopes the resolutions will be approved by the N.C. General Assembly during the upcoming legislative session that starts May 24.

"We've got to go in a new direction. We have got to be bold. The old system will not work and we have got to find a better one," Lucas said in an N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries news release.

One of the resolutions, passed at a recent business meeting in Manteo, asks the General Assembly to place a two-year freeze on the issuance of shellfish and crab licenses.

The other resolution requests that a moratorium be placed on the issuance of vessel licenses, endorse-

ment to sell licenses, shellfish and crab licenses and non-resident licenses.

N.C. Fisheries Director Bill Hogarth says the proposed freeze would not affect commercial fishermen who already have valid licenses. They would be exempt from the moratorium.

"This move will enable the division to look at the amount of gear in the water and the number of people involved in different fisheries," Hogarth said in the release.

During the moratorium, the commission and the division would conduct a study of licensing, status of the stocks and fisheries and developments in other states and by the federal government that affect North Carolina's commercial fisheries.

A review committee would be established to look at hardship cases for other exceptions to the moratorium.

For more information on the resolutions and proposed moratorium, contact Jess Hawkins at 919-946-6481.

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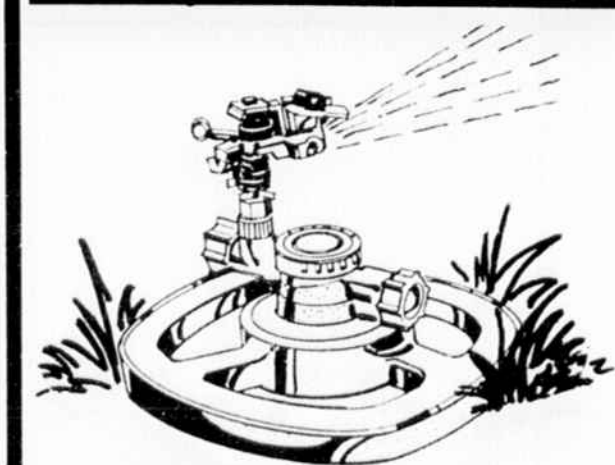
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