

Wildlife group calls for fishing changes

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

A former director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries asked a local wildlife group last week to seek state lawmakers' support for three proposed fishing regulations aimed at rebuilding depleted fish stocks.

Louis Daniel, who spent more than two decades with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries and was director of the division for 10 years, told the Albemarle Conservation and Wildlife Chapter in Elizabeth City Thursday that current regulations have not done enough to protect fish species such as southern flounder.

Daniel said the 1997 N.C. Fisheries Reform Act "has been a monumental failure to replenish our fish stocks, and the reason for that is politics." Rules are adopted that "nibble around the edges" of what needs to be done but the changes that could really make a difference are never approved, he said.

"Does anybody think they're seeing more fish than they did 22 years ago?" Daniel asked those attending the meeting at the Villa Restaurant. "Anybody even close to seeing the same amount of fish that you saw 22 years ago?"

When no hands went up, Daniel said that was what he had expected.

Daniel said the N.C. Wildlife Federation — the organization he works for as a contractor and that Albemarle Conservation and Wildlife is part of — does not take the side of recreational fishermen or commercial fishermen but rather seeks to protect the state's fish resources for the benefit of the public.

"That's why I now work for the N.C. Wildlife Federation — because they are committed to protecting the resource," Daniel said.

In his more than two decades as a biologist with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, Daniel said, "We haven't rebuilt — restored — one fish. Not one."

"We've got a problem and it's just going downhill," Daniel said. "We're not seeing any improvement in these resources."

Daniel said it's now rare to see a flounder in North Carolina waters that's over 2 years old. He said he used to see flounder in the state's catch that were 5, 6 or 7 years old.

Southern flounder mature at 22 inches but the size limit in North Carolina is 15 inches, Daniel said. The limit doesn't allow a flounder to have a chance to spawn at least once before it's harvested, he said.

Farmers who raise chickens to sell eggs realize that some eggs have to hatch chickens if they're going to stay in business, Daniel

said. He repeatedly returned to the theme of fish not being allowed to reproduce and how that decimates fish stocks. The river herring fishery was destroyed by the commercial sale of herring roe, he said.

Currently, overfishing of flounder is preventing flounder from spawning, according to Daniel.

Daniel said the Wildlife Federation is seeking support in the N.C. General Assembly for three pieces of legislation. One bill would restrict issuance of commercial fishing licenses to only "bonafide commercial fishermen" and effectively end recreational use of commercial fishing gear, he said.

A second "let 'em spawn bill" would set size limits for fish species that are caught, Daniel said. The limits would give the fish an opportunity to spawn before they are harvested.

The third bill would limit shrimp trawling, Daniel said. It would limit trawling to three days a week and impose a ban on nighttime trawling.

Daniel said shrimp trawlers bring in significantly more pounds of "bycatch" — fish caught unintentionally in the process of catching shrimp — than they do shrimp. Most of the bycatch consists of fish that haven't yet matured, he said.

"It's not a shrimp fishery," Dan-

iel said. "It's a juvenile fish fishery with shrimp as a bycatch."

Asked about the N.C. Wildlife Federation proposals, N.C. Fisheries Association Executive Director Glenn Skinner said Friday that the association agrees with the goal of reducing bycatch. However, he believes the federation plan would be detrimental to the shrimping industry without effectively reducing bycatch.

"These measures, although they sound great on paper, there's no way to show they would do what the Wildlife Federation says they would do," Skinner said.

Significant portions of the state's waters have already been closed to shrimping and the state has adopted requirements for bycatch-reduction devices, he said.

"We have already reduced bycatch significantly, and if we need to reduce it more just give us time and we'll figure out a way to do it," Skinner said.

Skinner also questioned the wisdom of increasing size limits for fish before they can be harvested. He said raising size limits on southern flounder will backfire because the females grow larger than the males and the harvest will end up consisting entirely of females.

"That's one of the stupidest things you could do," Skinner said.

The N.C. Fisheries Association also opposes preventing people from being able to get licenses to use commercial gear, according to Skinner.

"We've always opposed taking away the right for folks to use this commercial gear," he said.

Daniel, however, says ending recreational netting of fish is important.

"We've got to have these licenses in the hands of people who know what they're doing," he said.

But Daniel acknowledged "there are going to be people that don't like" the restriction.

Daniel said the license reform proposal from the Wildlife Federation would also require a license for recreational harvesting of blue crab, shrimp and oysters.

"We are not anti-commercial fishing," Daniel said, noting the federation is not proposing a net ban or trying to get anything designated as a game fish.

He said he does support the local shrimp trawlers, though he added "I don't give a damn about out-of-state trawlers."

Daniel said the statewide organization needs strong support from its chapters, such as the Albemarle Conservation and Wildlife group.

"These chapters are critically important to what we're trying to do," Daniel said.

COURT REPORT

Judge Edgar L. Barnes Feb. 6

JUDGMENTS

■ William Chayton Culver, resisting public officer, pay \$100 fine and cost of court.

■ Richard Adam Russell, assault and battery, 30 days suspended, 12 months unsupervised probation, pay \$100 fine and

cost of court.
■ Dashawn Riley Whidbee, defraud drug/alcohol test, 47 days active.

DISMISSALS

■ Kurkus Lamar Downing, possession of marijuana paraphernalia.

■ Bryan Meritt Miller, simple assault.

■ Stephen D. Thompson, simple possession

of Schedule VI controlled substance and simple possession of Schedule III controlled substance.

Judge Edgar L. Barnes Feb. 13

JUDGMENTS

■ Karen Padrick Hofer, W/C closed account, 90 days suspended, 12 months unsupervised pro-

bation, pay cost of court and restitution.

■ Heather Phillips, possession of marijuana up to one half ounce, pay \$100 fine and cost of court.

■ Heather N. Williams, simple assault, 60 days suspended, 12 months supervised probation, pay \$100 fine and cost of court.

DISMISSALS

■ William Lovingood, use unplugged shotgun.

■ Chass Michael O'Rourke, assault on a female and communicating threats.

■ Heather N. Williams, resisting public officer.

NOT GUILTY

■ Marion Leary, obstruct-

ing justice.
■ Quentin Jackson, obstructing justice.

Judge Edgar L. Barnes Feb. 20

DISMISSALS

■ Leon Hardy, second-degree trespass and harassing phone calls.

■ Jade Marie Ruffin, simple assault.

AWARDS

Continued from 1

Advance, Perquimans Weekly and Chowan Herald.

"She works hard for her accounts and always goes the extra mile to help them get the most from their advertising," Goodman said. "She has always been a high-performing, caring sales representative. She works hard for her accounts and always goes the extra mile to help them get the most

from their advertising."

"Bev has been a vital part to our team," said Sean O'Brien, advertising and marketing director for The Daily Advance, Chowan Herald and Perquimans Weekly. "She has always kept the best interest of the businesses she represents in mind and her being recognized by the NC Press Association validates that."

For The Perquimans Weekly, Alexander won first place for a "Salute to Our Veterans" ad in the

best community service signature. She also shared a third place for a "Remember Mom" ad.

For The Daily Advance, she won first place for a Vaughn's Jewelry annual estate sale ad.

For The Chowan Herald, Alexander won first place for an ad for W.E. Nixon Welding & Hardware in the Best Retail Ad category. She won a second place for a Halsey's Lawn & Garden ad in the same category.

In the small ad category

she swept with a first for one for Brock's Buddies and a second place Olde Towne Auto, and third for Wilbur R. Bunch's Produce Stand.

She shared a third place for a Carpet and Appliance Homestyle ad in the best furnishings ad.

In the institutional ad category, she won second place for an ad for the Edenton Historical Commission.

Alexander shared some of the credit with the creative staff at the newspaper chain.

JACKSON

Continued from 1

stop and he said he was not. Court records show he was on probation from a case in Dare County.

Jackson's court appointed attorney Preston Tyndall asked Superior Court Judge Alma Hinton asked for the delay and it was granted. Jackson is also looking for the trial to be moved outside the First Prosecutorial District because he doesn't think he can get a fair trial there.

"I am looking forward to being exonerated, but I don't think you can do that in Hertford or this district," Jackson said Monday afternoon after the hearing.

Before the trial will be moved, the state will have to conduct a poll to see if people in the district who may be called for a jury have already formed an opinion on the case.

The first district includes Dare, Gates, Pasquotank, Camden, Currituck, Perquimans, and Chowan counties.

Tyndall, who was ap-

pointed as Jackson's lawyer late last year, also wants to get Jackson's cell phone back.

The phone was taken by the State Bureau of Investigation after a parole officer's search of a room Jackson uses at his mother's house. The SBI still has custody of the phone and Jackson maintains it contains text messages between him and a Perquimans Sheriff's Office deputy over the parole issue.

Assistant District Attorney Holley Metzger objected continuing the case until May. The court had already called more than 50 potential jury members who stood ready to hear Jackson's case as well as others.

"How much longer we give him (Jackson) to do what he has to do?" Metzger asked Judge Hinton.

Among those who would have been called as witnesses for the state in the Jackson case are Clerk of Superior Court Todd Tilley, Sheriff Shelby White and DA investigator John Young.

The next administrative session for Superior Court is May 9 in Hertford.

EXHIBIT

Continued from 1

around 1730, but there is growing evidence of houses there long before then.

Non-evasive scans were made last summer in the area around the historic house. John Ernst said they discovered short brick walls

on radar.

"It looks like it might be the old kitchen," he said. "There also might be a grave just outside of where we have the cemetery is designated."

Nobody can know for sure until a proper archeological dig can be mounted, and that will cost money.

"We can strip soil below

the plow zone to get a better idea of where to dig."

Old homes may have no foundation, but walls created around posts. While the posts may be gone, there may still be traces that can be found.

A wine and cheese reception will mark the kickoff on Saturday from 5-7 p.m. To RSVP, call Ernst at 370-

0859.

The display features six panels, each 7.5 feet tall by 2.75 feet wide.

Wanda Lassiter of the Museum of the Albemarle, said the panels have already visited Dare, Camden, Currituck counties as well as Edenton, Plymouth, Somerset and Merchants Millpond State Park.

BILLING

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had some turnover and they didn't pick up the billing procedure properly."

Heath said county officials noticed the monthly billing charges during the nine-month period appeared to be unusual, but

they were not consistently off that much.

The annual budget to operate the sanitation department in Perquimans is about \$946,000. That pays both for the operation of convenience sites as well as pay the landfill fees.

The county commission agreed this month to direct Chairman Wallace

Nelson and Heath to look into how to resolve the situation.

All three counties carry some of their trash directly to the Bertie landfill because it's cheaper and faster than hauling the trash to the Perquimans transfer station on Perry's Bridge Road. But all three use the transfer station as

well.

Nelson and Heath plan to meet with Battle Betts, the director of Albemarle Regional Health Services. PCG is managed by the Albemarle Regional Solid Waste Authority will falls under ARHS.

The transfer station is owned jointly by the three counties.

PROBE

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involved are still in law enforcement, but when asked if any were still on the Hertford police force, Jackson said he couldn't comment.

He said some of the weapons didn't belong on the streets of Hertford, but when asked if he was talking about surplus military weapons, he said he couldn't answer.

He said there have been issues with the police department's evidence room,

but newly appointed Chief Dennis Brown has corrected those issues.

In his letter to Womble, Jackson said the town is not trying to hinder any DA investigation.

"We do not have all the facts of the case and we are trying to make sure false

statements are not made or misleading information is not transferred," Jackson wrote in a letter to Womble. "Also we do not want to hinder or demean your investigation in any way."

As of last weekend, Womble had not seen the letter.

FIRE

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fighters cutting a hole, so water was sprayed through small points where the fire broke through.

Another seed fire happened at the same business about 20 years. Firefighters said it took three days to contain. In the end, as in this case, it took cutting a hole

through the side of the building to finally get to the fire.

Roach said he's not sure how much water was used on the blaze. Pumpers can go through 1,600 gallons a minute.

The seed can be pressed for oil and what's left over can be used for animal seed. Roach said an insurance adjuster can determine the monetary value of the damage seed and the building.



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