

From the President's Desk

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Newsletter and the Menhaden AP meeting

THIS NEWS MAGAZINE

You probably noticed when you picked it up. This February issue of our newsletter is a little smaller than usual. We did a slightly smaller issue this month to save some of the cost because the March issue will be larger with hundreds of extra copies printed to hand out at our New England Saltwater Fishing Show.

Several of you have told me recently that we should change how we refer to this publication. Rather than calling it a newsletter, it's really more of a news magazine. I suppose that's true and I've changed the front page top header to indicate that.

Others have said that the content of each issue is more valuable than some publications on the newsstand.

I guess when I apologize because this issue is "only 40 pages", instead of the usual 50 pages, it's not just a newsletter.

FISHING LICENSE OVERRIDE

A few of us spent several intense and hectic days at the end of December in an attempt to fix the recreational saltwater license mess. In the end it was all worth it. The effort means we won't have to spend another year working on a Rhode Island program and can now devote our energies to other important issues (like public access) this year.

I received many calls and e-mails from other fishing clubs, even in other states, congratulating RISAA on pulling off the veto override. I always give credit to our many members who take the time to get involved in the process by sending e-mails or making phone calls when we ask them for help.

A special thanks goes to every member who has made a contribution to the RISAA PAC. Those contributions have enabled us to attend many, *many* political fund-raisers over the past several years. Because of that we have become well-known to the very people in charge who are responsible for creating the laws that can affect public access, fisheries regulations and marine conservation.

This week I received a call from a recreational fishing leader in Connecticut and he asked if someone from RISAA was willing to come and talk to their organization to teach them how to create what we have in Rhode Island.

"We've never been able to unite here in Connecticut," he said. "You guys have done something that other states can't pull off."

I tried to tell him that RISAA had a policy, from the very beginning, of learning to work within the political and fisheries system, and that just complaining all the time does no good. Fortunately, it worked, and our membership has grown with many people who have agreed with those policies.

MENHADEN REPORT

One of my duties as a member of the R.I. Marine Fisheries Council is to chair the Menhaden Advisory Panel (AP), which is

made up of a group of appointed recreational and commercial fishermen. That panel usually meets each winter where we received a report on the previous year's fishing and the current stock status from ASMFC.

The Menhaden AP met on January 11. Jason McNamee, of the Division of Fish & Wildlife, reported that ASMFC states the coastwide menhaden stock is in good shape and are not overfished and that overfishing is not occurring. He then reported on the fishery performance in 2009.

Because of the many rainy days and lack of fish entering the Bay, the 50% stock rule was exceeded and the commercial fishery went over the cap by 119,000 pounds before it was shut down. He stated that they will endeavor to improve monitoring in 2010, including overflights using the state's helicopter.

After two hours of discussion, the AP decided upon the following that will be brought back to the Fisheries Council:

- Proposed that a "floor" should be set so that commercial fishing could not begin until a certain number of fish was confirmed to be present in the bay.
- Requested that a maximum boat length of 85' and a maximum carrying capacity of 120,000 pounds be set.
- That purse seines be marked at 50' intervals with a different colored buoy so enforcement can determine length restriction
- Would like DEM enforcement to certify & measure nets before a commercial boat can begin fishing

All panel members also discussed the need for more aggressive enforcement of the menhaden provisions. (to page 14)



IMPORTANT DATES

Additional information on these events can be found on the RISAA web site at www.risaa.org/events.html

- ❑ Feb 16 RISAA Board of Directors Meeting - 6:30 PM
- ❑ Feb 20 RISAA's 12th Annual Banquet - 7:00 PM
West Valley Inn, West Warwick, RI
- ❑ Feb 22 RISAA Monthly Seminar - 7:00 PM (see page 12)
- ❑ Feb 23 RIDEM Public Hearing - 6:00 PM
Changes to summer flounder, scup, tautog, weakfish
Corless Auditorium, URI Bay Campus, Narragansett
- ❑ Mar 1 R.I. Marine Fisheries Council Meeting - 6:00 PM
- ❑ Mar 9 RISAA Fly Fishing Committee - 6:30 PM
- ❑ Mar 19-21 New England Saltwater Fishing Show
R.I. Convention Center, Providence
- ❑ Mar 23 RISAA Board of Directors - 6:30 PM
- ❑ Mar 29 RISAA Monthly Seminar & Quarterly Meeting
R.I. Sea Grant: *The Ocean SAMP Plan*
Capt. Jim White: *Light Tackle Fishing in the Bay*
- ❑ Apr 26 RISAA Monthly Seminar - 7:00 PM
Dave Fewster: *Squid Fishing*
- ❑ June 19 RISAA's 13th Annual TAKE-A-KID FISHING DAY