

2005 Saltwater Recreational Fisheries License Report

Introduction

During 2002/03, the program underwent some major changes. Effective 1 July, 2002 the cost and structure of the saltwater license was changed by the SC Legislature to mirror the State's Freshwater license. This gives residents and out-of-state anglers a variety of license options to choose from. It also provided a doubling of the revenues which are being used for activities of importance to the State's saltwater recreational anglers.

Since its effective date of 1 July 1992, we estimate that the program has sold approximately 1,177,556 stamps/licenses to fishermen and 48,557 stamps to collectors. In addition, art collectors and conservationists have purchased approximately 12,891 limited edition and medallion prints by artists such as Diane Peebles, Tom Krause and South Carolina's own Bernie Slice and Matt Constantine. The stamp and art program ended in 2002 after 10 years.

During the period July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004 approximately \$1.15M total was generated by the program. The law stipulates that no more than 25% of the revenues generated for a given year may be used for administration and law enforcement activities. In addition, all new monies generated by the fee increase will be used for projects and activities that support recreational saltwater fishing and shellfishing in SC. This means that only \$30,730 was set aside to administer the program, \$122,992 was provided for coastal law enforcement, leaving approximately \$1.06M to fund eligible coastal saltwater projects and activities. In addition, approximately \$480K in additional funds were recouped and put back into the fund from past activities that that ended and had not spent all that was allocated to them. (See below).

2004 Highlights

Artificial Reefs - Fifteen offshore artificial reef construction projects were completed as of December 2004. This included the sinking of 2 barges and 3 tugs, 270 concrete reef units, tons of concrete and steel bridge rubble, and 50 steel shipping containers. The construction of three inshore reef sites was completed and a 4th one permitted. Three damaged or missing buoys were replaced. In addition, 56 days were spent monitoring and assessing these sites, documenting materials stability, reef development and species composition. - \$307K

Marine Fish
- SCDNR's Marine Gamefish Tagging Program continues to promote angler ethics and conservation with the support of license funds. Last year, participants tagged 2,869 fish. We received information from 406 recaptured fish; the top two species were

red and black drum. An effort to specifically tag dolphinfish continued this year. A total of 1450 dolphin were tagged and 39 were recaptured during 2004. Another important component in SCDNR's effort to maintain high quality fishing opportunities is our effort to monitor and stock recreationally important species. We have staff assigned to collect size, age and reproductive information from a variety of species. We do this by using our own gear to catch and record this data in a standardized repeatable fashion using long lines to catch large adult red drum offshore, trammel nets to catch the smaller juvenile red and

black drum, flounders, sheephead and seatrout inshore and even electroshocking. Staff also visit fishing tournaments and manage freezers in several locations where participating anglers can donate specimens for science. During 2004 staff visited 7 fishing tournaments and were able to obtain information on 560 fish. Anglers also donated 240 additional fish in the freezer program. Another popular program that has been given a boost from the saltwater license is SCDNR's red drum stocking program. It takes time and patience to manage a healthy brood stock and condition them to spawn on cue. Larvae that are produced must then be carefully maintained in ponds or tanks, marked with a chemical agent, so they can later be identified as hatchery fish and then

transported to the stocking area. During 2004 over 1 million baby red drum were released into the North Edisto River and approximately 980,000 fish were released in Winyah Bay. New ways to distinguish between wild and stocked fish are being investigated, using cutting edge genetic techniques which is beginning to show promise. In addition a new effort to study various species of sharks is underway. - \$737K

Oysters - Over 20,036 bu. of shell were planted on 7 public grounds during 2004. Sixteen shell re-cycling sites are now up and running for individuals to dump their shells so they can be put back onto recreational beds. We are also testing new and better ways to enhance and restore some of our local shellfish beds. Staff are testing different ways to place shell on banks, covering some of the shell with different materials to reduce erosion and using volunteers to build and monitor oyster reefs in different areas and under different conditions. Shellfish maps are available to the public free of charge by writing: Recreational Shellfish Maps, Office of Fisheries Management, SCDNR, P.O. Box 12559, Charleston S.C. 29422-2559 or by calling (843) 953-9854 or from the SCDNR Web site ([HTTP://WWW.DNR.STATE.SC.US](http://WWW.DNR.STATE.SC.US)) - \$288K

Education, Information, Outreach - The saltwater license website is up and running ([HTTP://SALTWATERFISHING.SC.GOV](http://SALTWATERFISHING.SC.GOV)) to keep the public updated on a number of issues including changes in the rules and regulation, saltwater fishing related news and related information. The website averages about 30,000 hits per month. Educational activities, outreach programs and materials including presentations and trips on the Educational Vessel Discovery, continue to be a popular activity with local clubs and schools and allow us to display the benefits of the License Program. The "Gone Fishing" automobile license plate has been developed and is now available to the public. - \$148K

