

THE PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO CONSERVING AND PROTECTING FLORIDA'S MARINE RESOURCES

WINTER 24

SEAWATCH

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Feds Poised to Close Door on Bottom Angling in the South Atlantic

The drumbeat that some anglers may be hearing in the South Atlantic isn't their imagination. It's the sound of NOAA Fisheries relentless efforts to slam the door on their fishing access. Using the red snapper fishery as a stalking horse, NOAA Fisheries is preparing to take the highly unusual step of a Secretarial Amendment to impose draconian fishing closures on anglers. Measures that not even the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council thinks are necessary or warranted given what is known about the fishery.

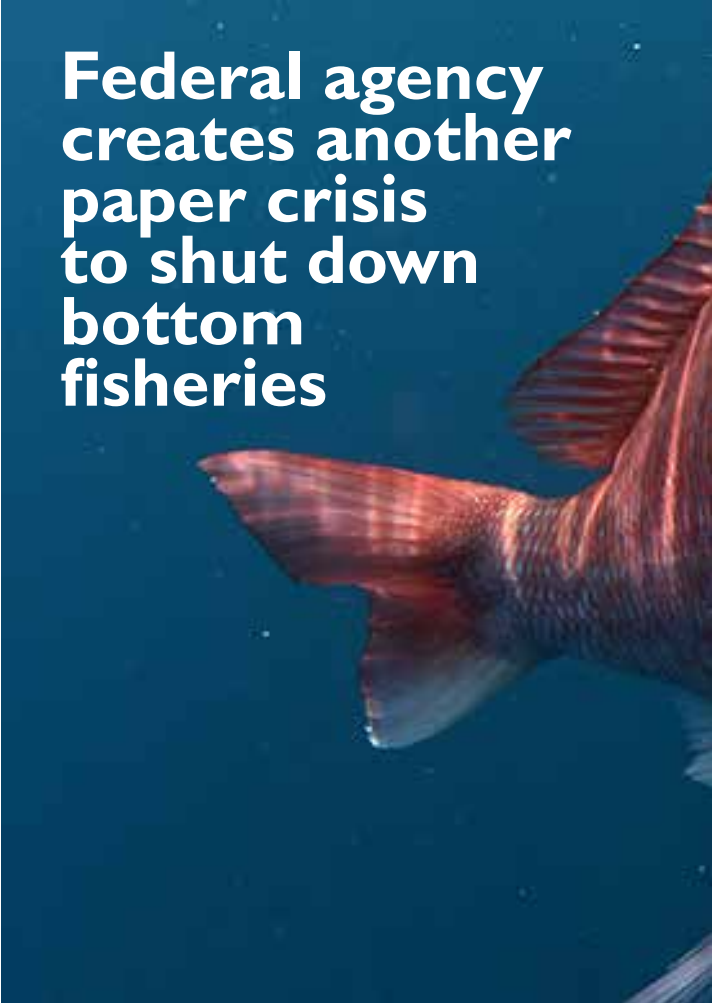
What is known about the fishery is that this is now perhaps the largest population of South Atlantic red snapper ever seen under management. It is a remarkable recovery since 2011 when the first-ever contemporary stock assessment conducted on the species revealed that it was severely overfished and undergoing overfishing. Since then, red snapper seasons have been virtually non-existent, and the fishery has come roaring back.

The challenge with red snapper is now three-fold. As the population has exploded, anglers have encountered them more often, and over an expanding range. Seasons have been closed (or open one or two days at most), but even when anglers don't retain red snapper, the fish we catch when fishing for other species sometimes do not survive release. Awareness and use of descending devices is growing exponentially and is effective. It is not clear if there is a real impact to the stock, but NOAA says this release mortality is enough to massively overfish the stock. Since release data is unverified data from intercept surveys, NOAA can take exaggerated discards and multiplying them by known-to-be-unreliable effort estimates to create a real problem. All that leads directly to the second challenge - NOAA's recreational data system, which is a multi-decade, ongoing farce.

NOAA's rec data system has already been overhauled twice in the past 15 years and is on its way to a third revision after the agency announced in 2023 that it is likely over-estimating recreational effort and harvest by up to 40 percent in some fisheries. The National Academies of Science has said on numerous occasions that even in its best form, the system is not appropriate for the way NOAA uses it. Nevertheless, the agency continues to rely on it as a surrogate for real-time, to-the-pound measurement of what the recreational sector catches, what it brings to the dock and what it discards. As a survey designed to show trends over time, the system is neither timely nor accurate. Far from it. But because it has nothing else, NOAA calls the results "the best scientific information available" and it insists the regional fishery management councils use that information to base their management decisions...even when it is known to be wrong by up to 40 percent.

Finally, against this backdrop of data uncertainty, NOAA has been espousing the view that there are too many anglers on the water. The agency can't tell you exactly how many anglers there are, but they assume it is too many which is laughable. More and more often, officials are working the term "effort rationalization" and "limited entry" for the recreational sector into management discussions. Arbitrarily appointing itself as the entity deciding who can and can't go fishing offshore has become a goal of the agency.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is aware of all the holes in the data, the agenda NOAA seems to be pursuing, and the folly of large-scale punitive action on a fishery that is expanding faster than anyone ever expected,



Federal agency creates another paper crisis to shut down bottom fisheries

including NOAA's own models that theoretically conclude we are overfishing. Despite enormous pressure from NOAA and the Regional Administrator for Southeast Fisheries, the Council has insisted that it needs to wait on better information, particularly from an independent stock assessment on red snapper now underway, as well as pilot programs in the states aimed directly at better understanding recreational discards. NOAA desperately wanted the Council to be the fall guy and implement bottom closures, but the Council drew a line in the sand and insisted on a rational approach that doesn't overly restrict recreational anglers.

However, NOAA found a way around the Council. The red snapper fishery in the South Atlantic was recently the target of a lawsuit brought by commercial fishermen, demanding the agency take steps to end the supposed overfishing of the red snapper population. NOAA didn't contest the lawsuit. It capitulated completely and announced it is pursuing a Secretarial Amendment to circumvent the Council. On October 11, NOAA published a notice that it is accepting public comments for an Environmental Impact Statement that will be used to support the Secretarial Amendment. This is the first step to arbitrarily implementing bottom fishing closures outside of the council process. The South Atlantic Council refused to participate in the charade, so now NOAA is using the chaos it created to pursue its agenda.

NOAA's rec data system has already been overhauled twice in the past 15 years and is on its way to a third revision after the agency announced in 2023 that it is likely over-estimating recreational effort and harvest by up to 40 percent in some fisheries.

The federal system continues to infuriate both the Gulf and South Atlantic councils and staffs as it creates paper crisis after paper crisis for various species. Stock assessments are far too infrequent, the recreational data system is a mess and economic data is non-existent. It is an outrageous situation, and the public must utterly reject this latest effort as the misguided pursuit of a federal agency that has lost its way.



JASON ARNOLD



October 28, 2024

CONSERVATION & PROTECTION OF MARINE LIFE
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Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Re: FB24-067: Request for Comments: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement
Coastal Conservation Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze management alternatives to support a Secretarial Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Secretarial Amendment). It must be stated outright that it is extraordinarily difficult to comment on regulations for a management issue that is so undefined and unsupported. There is no comparison or analysis of any method NOAA

Fisheries might propose to reduce recreational discards that are allegedly overfishing the red snapper fishery in the South Atlantic. The most recent stock assessment is based on data that is more than five years old. There is not even a reliable federal recreational data system that can accurately assess what recreational discards actually are in the red snapper fishery. As the following comments will expand on, the unknowns greatly outweigh the knowns.

While there are many things recreational anglers would support to recover a truly declining population, we believe that the available evidence strongly suggests this is yet another paper crisis derived from a systemic lack of information in the federal fisheries management system. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council pored over everything that was provided by NOAA Fisheries on this issue for more than two years and came to the same conclusion. Far from shirking its responsibility, the Council made it clear that the information provided to it was inadequate and that more information is badly needed to support rational management decisions.

The decision to pursue a Secretarial Amendment to conserve red snapper is set against what even NOAA Fisheries acknowledges is the largest population of red snapper ever seen under management. Anecdotal evidence from anglers indicates that red snapper are the only species which can be reliably encountered virtually everywhere in the region, and it is almost impossible to get a fish other than a red snapper to take a bait. Nonetheless, NOAA Fisheries' leadership has been blunt about its desire for widespread fishing closures. The disconnect between what the public sees on the water and these extreme management measures is jarring and confusing to the public, as is the complete rift between the South Atlantic Council and NOAA Fisheries.

When NOAA Fisheries argues that recreational discards of red snapper are driving an overfishing problem, it is important to emphasize that the discard data comes from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) survey and is the only non-validated data in the catch survey. It is well known that these self-reported numbers are subject to digit bias and perhaps extreme digit bias. When many fish are being caught and released on a trip, people have a tendency to stop counting by individual fish and start counting by number blocks (fives or tens), and they generally round upwards. Additionally, recall bias can exacerbate this digit bias. Whether this bias runs high or low is unknown, although experts familiar with these survey methods believe that this process and anglers' natural behavior (exaggeration) skew it in the high direction.

Furthermore, MRIP then takes a data stream with known but unquantified biases and expands those estimates using effort estimates from the Fishing Effort Survey (FES) which NOAA admits may be 40 percent higher than the real estimate. It is not difficult to see how discard estimates could end up drastically overestimated very quickly. The Secretarial Amendment must address at least these two sources of bias before taking any additional action, but other factors deserve equal consideration.

The State of Florida has been running a recreational catch survey side-by-side with MRIP for more than five years and it shows much lower recreational discards for red snapper. Anglers deserve to know why there is such a discrepancy. Without action to address the data biases, it will be impossible to determine the efficacy of any plan to reduce discards.



The self-reported nature of dead discards also means there is no way to know what part of the red snapper stock is being impacted by these dead discards as no ages or sizes are known. The stock model is an age-based model, and the entire overfishing designation hinges on there not being enough older fish in the distribution. A stock recovery trap such as this has been encountered before in many fisheries in which anglers encounter a rapidly growing, recovering stock, but the stock models lag the abundance and the tails of the age distribution are slow to fill in. What results is “paper” overfishing that doesn’t harm the stock at all, but a moribund federal fisheries management system reacts by rote.

If NOAA’s assertion that the population is lacking large, older fish is accepted, then it stands to reason that the dead discards in question are likely all smaller, younger fish recently recruited in one of the banner recruitment events occurring annually in this fishery. Following that line of reasoning would mean that the impact to overfishing is nil. It is well known that the stock/recruitment relationship is broken in this model and to argue otherwise requires an explanation of the ongoing, tremendous yearly recruitment observed in this fishery. It may be much more appropriate in this fishery to use recruitment and abundance as the primary indicators of stock biomass and harvest levels. The recent court ruling on Framework 17 in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council clarified that this type of flexibility is allowable under the Magnuson Stevens Act. We would encourage NOAA to make immediate, widespread use of this clarification and embrace the full potential of the ruling in this fishery in particular.

NOAA Fisheries officials have made it clear that, despite the lack of clarity in the information available, they believe the discard problem can only be solved by limiting effort or closing the bottom to all fishing or some combination of both. What we believe is a paper problem caused by NOAA’s own shortcomings is being used to call for limiting recreational access to public resources on a very large scale. Locking out the public destroys the public’s

connection to its marine resources and the generation of value in recreational fisheries which is driven by many factors beyond harvest. Closures are not an action that should be considered justified in the management of a species that is expanding faster than any model has predicted.

In closing, we applaud the South Atlantic Council for its stance on red snapper. It is the correct stance. We agree with the Council’s position that before taking drastic action, NOAA should:

- Examine biases in the data because the reality in the water is in complete disagreement with the interpretation that the stock is in trouble;
- Complete the multiple ongoing research projects to verify discards;
- Allow the independent red snapper stock assessment that uses fishery independent data exclusively and not flawed MRIP FES data to be completed;
- Provide a thorough explanation of why Florida’s state survey, where most of the red snapper are caught, shows far fewer discards than the federal data system;
- Allow the exempted fishing permit projects funded through the Inflation Reduction Act that are examining the recreational discard issue in the states to be completed.

Every one of these bullets is a vital point of information, and not one of them has been

provided to the Council. It is disturbing that an agency supposedly dedicated to science does not see the need to pursue information that is so obviously lacking. NOAA Fisheries’ decision to circumvent the Council and its insistence on such a course of action is cause for concern over the agency’s motives and its relationship with the angling public. We believe that the only reasonable resolution at this point is for NOAA Fisheries to fulfill its role as a center of science and provide the South Atlantic Council with the information necessary to determine a management regime in the best interests of the fishery and the fishing public before even considering bottom closures.



June 10, 2024
Randy Blankinship
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
Office of Sustainable Fisheries (F/SFI)
NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Blankinship,

The undersigned representatives of the recreational fishing and boating community appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Amendment 15 in advance of the final rule. The preferred alternatives in the FEIS are significantly different from those proposed in the draft rule and were not presented for public comment during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) phase. These new preferred alternatives would significantly alter the spatial and temporal distribution, as well as intensity, of pelagic longline fishing effort in areas of the southeast, where recreational fishing and boating activity is a significant and important component of the blue economy. While we appreciate this informal opportunity to provide staff with comments on the FEIS via this letter, a revised DEIS and proposed rule should be presented to the public for comment rather than proceeding directly to the FEIS/final rule stage without public input. A formal public comment period would provide for a transparent process that gives all stakeholders adequate opportunities to review the updated, 704-page version of Amendment 15 and provide input that can meaningfully inform rulemaking.

Although the preferred alternatives in the FEIS are significantly different from those proposed in the draft rule, the changes do not account for the comments outlined in our October 2, 2023, letter (attached). Given the significant departure between our comments and the FEIS, we ask that you reconsider these comments, as well as our initial concerns about the preferred alternatives in the FEIS, which are outlined below.

Bycatch Thresholds and Monitoring

The most significant changes proposed in the FEIS would allow pelagic longline fishing in the Charleston Bump and East Florida Spatial Management Areas. In the DEIS, each area was divided into monitoring and restricted areas based on modeled risk of pelagic longline interactions with sea turtles, billfish, and shortfin mako sharks (low- and high-risk areas, respectively). We have significant concerns about bycatch of white marlin and other billfish in these areas, especially given tagging data that suggest white marlin migrate through these areas up to twice annually. In the FEIS, the boundaries of low- and high-bycatch risk areas are modified from the DEIS to encourage fishermen to fish in these areas. Effort caps proposed in the DEIS are also significantly increased in the FEIS. The modifications to Amendment 15 to encourage pelagic longline fishing in areas that were originally closed to this activity due to bycatch concerns raises questions about acceptable levels of bycatch and how bycatch will be evaluated, particularly in the monitoring areas. Because the FEIS does not include bycatch caps or thresholds, the metrics that would be used to assess bycatch and levels of bycatch that would trigger closures are unclear. For the monitoring areas, it is also unclear how frequently bycatch in these areas would be reviewed, and how/when NOAA Fisheries will respond. Future drafts of Amendment 15 should include additional details that describe how bycatch will be evaluated, and how any experimental fishing in these areas will be used to further inform or refine bycatch caps. NOAA Fisheries must recognize that the Charleston Bump and East Florida Spatial Management Areas have played a significant role over the past two decades in reducing billfish bycatch and spurring rebuilding and economic growth in those fisheries. The management success and continued value of these areas should not be minimized. An appropriate response by the agency to acknowledge the importance of these areas would be to present a firm bycatch trigger that once met, would prevent additional sets.

EFP Process

In addition, we continue to have concerns about Amendment 15 reducing public transparency and scrutiny of exempted fishing permit (EFP) proposals to allow longlining in spatial management areas. All stakeholders, relevant states and federal fishery management councils should be consulted for their input on proposed research and individual EFP projects in these areas. Given the high public interest in past proposals to allow longlining in closed areas, wide use of these areas by other fisheries, need for scientific critique of proposed research projects, and the existing process by which EFPs may be issued for cooperative research projects, increased (rather than decreased) transparency and scrutiny of proposals is necessary. A public and transparent process is critical to avoiding appearance of conflicts of interest in any research outcomes, providing reasonable opportunities for input on individual EFP projects and research plans, and ensuring studies in the closed areas are scientifically rigorous and provide useful data for monitoring, assessment, and management.

Management Decisions Based on PRISM

Our October 2, 2023, letter outlined several issues with the use of PRISM as the sole scientific basis for management action in Amendment 15. Mathematical and statistical models are regularly used for management and decision making in many phases of our daily lives; however, the best example is in hurricane tracking and preparedness. A critical aspect of this concept is that no one model can truly explain a natural system thus we use multiple that may be more applicable in specific scenarios, building ensemble models for prediction and decision making.

Yet, in the case of PRISM, we are effectively using just one model because it is all that is available, and we do not yet know how it will relate to real world catch and encounter rates. If we did this in hurricane modeling, simply put, it would be disastrous. Until we can confirm this model works well for all the species of interest, we should consider the outputs as suggestions compared to true empirical evidence for decision making. We continue to believe that PRISM should be further evaluated as one of many tools available to manage these fisheries. In addition, and as articulated in previous comments, there is a need to utilize other fisheries dependent sources of catch data from the closed areas. Despite the challenges of standardization, NOAA Fisheries must explore ways of using all fisheries dependent data instead of a relying exclusively on one gear type that continues to show a down trend of effort. Now is the time to start establishing time series from other gear types.

If Amendment 15 is implemented, NOAA Fisheries should evaluate how the forecasted interactions with bycatch species under PRISM match the monitoring data from the first year of analysis. In other words, NOAA should estimate the number/frequency of interactions with bycatch species from the video monitoring data and compare that to what the model suggested the interaction frequency should be in each area. This will provide valuable data and ground truthing on the PRISM model relative to longline interactions, as we know the data input into the PRISM model is lacking for many bycatch species and there are significant concerns it may be misrepresenting the preferred habitat for species like white marlin. This should be done for each area of interest and repeated as often as possible for both EFP and non-EFP fisheries.

(continued on page 12)





Economic and Social Impacts on the Recreational Fishing Community

Although Section 5.4.6 of the FEIS broadly recognizes that HMS recreational fishermen in coastal counties of Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas may be impacted by this rule and that gear conflicts with the pelagic longline fishery are possible, we feel that the economic impacts of this rulemaking on recreational fishing in these areas has not been adequately considered. Notably, the FEIS also fails to consider effects of this rulemaking on non-HMS recreational fishing interests in this region despite the social and economic importance of recreational fishing in the southeast. This section also acknowledges the conservation concerns of recreational fishermen (regarding bycatch of species such as billfish on pelagic longlines) and notes that “the preferred measures in Amendment 15 are expected to better protect bycatch species, including recreational target species in the spatial management areas,” and would provide more fishing opportunities to recreational fishermen in the long run. This statement is untrue. To the contrary, opening areas that are closed to pelagic longlining increases the likelihood that recreationally important species in these areas such as billfish are caught on longlines. While this would provide more fishing opportunities for commercial fishermen, the same cannot be said for the recreational fishery.

Conclusion

Given longstanding concerns about opening the pelagic longline fishery in these areas and the concerns outlined above, we respectfully ask that a revised DEIS and proposed rule for Amendment 15 be presented to the public for comment rather than proceeding directly to the FEIS/final rule stage without public input. The recreational fishing community is supportive of periodic evaluation of management measures, including closed areas, to ensure their continued effectiveness but that evaluation must proceed with measured approach that respects the conservation objectives that drove the establishment of the areas over 20 years ago. We also ask that the comments and needs of the recreational fishing community be considered as NOAA Fisheries considers the future of Amendment 15 and spatial management of the pelagic longline fishery. Thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback.

Sincerely,

Glenn Hughes, President
American Sportfishing Association

Jeff Angers, President
Center for Sportfishing Policy

Patrick Murray, President
Coastal Conservation Association

Jeff Crane, President and CEO
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Dr. Guy Harvey, Ph.D., Chairman Emeritus
Guy Harvey Foundation

Jason Schratwieser, President
International Game Fish Association

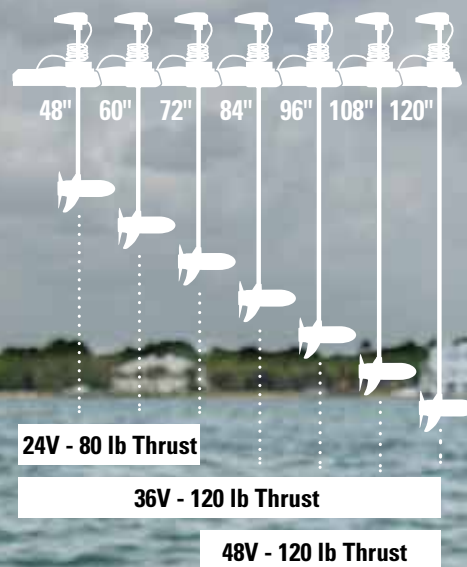
Frank Hugelmeyer, President
National Marine Manufacturers Association

NOAA Fisheries must recognize that the Charleston Bump and East Florida Spatial Management Areas have played a significant role over the past two decades in reducing billfish by catch and spurring rebuilding and economic growth in those fisheries. The management success and continued value of these areas should not be minimized. An appropriate response by the agency to acknowledge the importance of these areas would be to present a firm by catch trigger that once met, would prevent additional sets.

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FANTASY ISLAND LIVING SHORELINE PROJECT

IN HONOR OF FRED CRABILL



THE PARTNERS LAUNCHED PHASE TWO OF THE PROJECT IN EFFORT TO SUPPORT SHORELINE STABILIZATION AND HONORED A CCA FLORIDA LEGACY LIFE MEMBER



In November, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida, Duke Energy Florida, Tampa Bay Watch and Neptune Flood Insurance began deploying 870 oyster reef balls and 60 tons of fossilized and recycled oyster shell along 500 feet of shoreline to launch the Fantasy Island Living Shoreline Project in Honor of Fred Crabill.

The project honored CCA Florida Life Legacy member and conservationist Fred Crabill, and created approximately 4,639 square feet of oyster reef habitat in an effort to increase biodiversity, reduce erosion and improve water quality in Tampa Bay. This project marks a significant step

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IN POWERING THE VITALITY OF THE
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FOUNDATION GIVING AND
VOLUNTEERISM.**





forward in enhancing the area's shoreline resilience and protecting vital fish habitats, which were severely impacted from Hurricanes Milton and Helene.

"Fred Crabill loved fishing Tampa Bay and was committed to our waters and the preservation of Florida's coastal resources," CCA Florida Executive Director Brian Gorski said. "In partnership with Duke Energy and Tampa Bay Watch, this living shoreline project not only honors Fred's legacy but creates a long-term solution to protect and enhance our fisheries for future generations."

During the event, over 100 volunteers took part in the restorative efforts by constructing and placing the oyster reef balls and shell bags along the northeastern shoreline of Fantasy Island. This innovative technique will help reduce erosion, prevent habitat loss and restore essential ecosystems that support Florida's fish and wildlife.

"Duke Energy Florida believes in powering the vitality of the communities we serve through foundation giving and



volunteerism. Working together with organizations that share these ideals, like CCA and Tampa Bay Watch, allows us to make an even greater impact preserving our coastline,” said Geoff Foster, Duke Energy Florida Vice President of Rates and Regulatory. “The donation to this project continues our commitment to Florida’s communities and protecting the overall health of the state’s natural resources.”

In 2017, CCA Florida supported phase one of the Fantasy Island project and deployed more than 1,000 oyster domes and 40 tons of fossilized oyster shells.

CCA Florida and Duke Energy Florida each contributed \$50,000 to fund phase two of the project. This Fantasy Island Living Shoreline Project in Honor of Fred Crabill serves multiple ecological functions from stabilizing eroding shorelines to enhancing fish and wildlife habitats. Tampa Bay Watch will monitor the success of phase two through data analysis, refining future oyster reef restoration projects based on results.



THIS FANTASY ISLAND LIVING SHORELINE PROJECT IN HONOR OF FRED CRABILL STABILIZING ERODING SHORELINES AND ENHANCING FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITATS.





Ingredients

- 15 oz whole cherry tomatoes
(I used 1 pint plus ½ pint)
- 4 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ c extra virgin olive oil
- 2 medium salmon fillets
(I used 10 oz fillets)
- 1 8 oz block feta cheese
- 1 tbsp Italian herb seasoning
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 c fresh basil, chopped
- ½ lb dry pasta of choice
(I used an 8.8 oz bag of DeLallo egg pappardelle)

Salt and pepper

Feta Tomato-Basil Salmon Pasta

RECIPE & PHOTOS BY HEATHER PETEREK JOINCCA.ORG/RECIPES

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F.

To a medium size baking dish, add tomatoes, olive oil, salt, pepper, Italian seasoning, garlic and block of feta cheese. Gently toss all together until seasoning is evenly distributed and tomatoes and cheese are coated in oil. Place in the oven uncovered and bake for 20 minutes.

Season salmon fillets with a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Remove dish from oven and place salmon fillets directly on top of tomatoes, on either side of the block of feta. Return dish to oven and bake an additional 10-15 minutes or until salmon is cooked to your liking.

While salmon is cooking, boil your pasta according to package directions. Drain and reserve about ½ cup of the pasta water for later. Return pasta back to the pot used for boiling and cover.

Remove dish from the oven and using a fork, mash together the tomatoes and cheese, making the sauce. Next, with the fork, carefully combine the salmon fillets into the sauce, taking care not to break apart too much, leaving larger chunks intact.

Once your salmon and sauce are combined, pour mixture into pot with cooked pasta. Add the fresh basil and fold all together gently. If your dish needs more liquid, add in some reserved pasta water until you get consistency to your liking. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately. Serves 4.



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**CCA FLORIDA DESIGNED STAR AS A CPR
COMPETITION TO EDUCATE THE GENERAL PUBLIC
ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION
OF FLORIDA'S MARINE RESOURCES.**

A DECADE OF SU

STAR



CCA Florida STAR officially concluded on Monday, September 2nd and STAR announced nearly 100 winners that were drawn in the 100-day, family-friendly fishing competition. As the state's leading organization dedicated to habitat restoration projects, water quality initiatives and fisheries advocacy, CCA once again produced a great competition which since its launch in 2015 has engaged over 54,000 anglers, awarded over \$3.5 million in donated prizes with \$1 million of that being Youth scholarships to anglers from Florida and other states in our catch-and-photo event.

In the 10th year of competition, 2024 CCA Florida STAR presented by Yamaha has been a success in so many ways. CCA Florida designed STAR as a CPR competition to educate the general public about the importance of conservation of Florida's marine resources and to create awareness for CCA Florida and their sponsors. STAR wanted to be the competition that set the bar for other tournaments to follow, and we have done just that! In 2015, STAR began as one of the leaders in the Catch, Photo and Release fishing competitions in saltwater. Over the past ten years,

the competition participants have entered over 220,000 catch entries via a photograph & proprietary app. These entries did not require a fish to be killed to enter in the competition. Participants have gathered over 12,000 five-gallon buckets of trash and recruited over 5,000 new youth anglers to the sport of fishing. Many of the STAR anglers and their families share that their summers now revolve around fishing, conservation and gathering garbage from our coastal waters in order to make entries in STAR, where in the past it was organized sports or finding summer camps. Engaging



IN 2015, STAR BEGAN AS ONE OF THE LEADERS IN THE CATCH, PHOTO AND RELEASE FISHING COMPETITIONS IN SALTWATER.

PER STARS!

these families accomplishes a goal of STAR of involving more families in the sport of fishing and conservation.

To celebrate this monumental 10 years of competition, CCA Florida STAR will be hosting the 10th Annual Awards Ceremony and Banquet presented by Discover Crystal River on October 12th at a very unique venue, The Grove at Sweet Citrus Acres. This poolside airconditioned clubhouse provides a spacious activities area and expansive bar, come enjoy the vibrant social atmosphere in this charming old Florida-style space. Whether you join us to catch

up with friends over a cold beverage or are cheering on your STAR winner, The Grove clubhouse is the perfect spot for STAR to celebrate 10 Years of creating lasting memories. If you have an RV and want an exceptional place to stay for the Awards Ceremony or any visit to Crystal River, Sweet Citrus Acres Luxury RV Resort is the place, just mention CCA STAR to receive a preferred rate.

The 10th Annual STAR Awards Ceremony will be a spectacular event, hosting 400 guests which include winners, fishing enthusiasts, sponsors and favorite fishing celebrities. Every

(continued on page 26)



Yamaha
Contender
Dek Kat
Micro Draft Skiff
Spyder
Duke Energy
Sea Doo
can-am
Carolina Skiff
Custom Gheenoe
Infinity Trailer
West Marine
Realtree Fishing
Tigress Outriggers
& Gear
Humminbird
Minn Kota
T H Marine
Power Pole
Discover Crystal River
Academy Sports +
Outdoors
Pure Florida Englewood
Beach Punta Gorda
Engel Coolers
Costa
Cannon
NATIVE WATERCRAFT
Papa's Pilar
Florida Sports Coast
Millers Marine
Plantation on Crystal River
Phillips & Jordan Inc.
Sodium Fishing Gear

SPONSORS
STAR

SPONSORS

STAR



A DECADE

Tailin Toads
 Florida Cracker
 Ladies Tournament
 Florida Sportfishing
 Association
 Melbourne
 Strike Zone
 iAngler Tournament
 App logo
 Road King
 Power Tech
 Propellers
 Florida Fishing
 Products
 Bull Bay Tackle
 AFTCO
 Sweet Citrus Acres
 Rod Runner
 Reliable Fishing Bags
 Kahuna Wagons
 Elemental Methods
 Star brite
 Barnes & Thornburg
 Nextfish
 Florida Insider Fishing Report
 Reel Animals TV
 Florida Sportsman Radio
 Guidelines TV
 Beyond our Shores Foundation
 Ocean Tamer Bean Bags
 Anisa Stewart Jewelry
 Talon
 Fish Bites

guest will enjoy complimentary cocktails from Papa's Pilar, Tin Cup, Tito's & Coors Molson, yummy dinner, an awesome swag bag with Realtree tumblers compliments of Paddletail Waterfront Lodge, t-shirts compliments of Sodium Fishing Gear and live entertainment. There will also be fantastic raffle, silent and live auction items that include motors from Yamaha and Minn Kota, Electronics from Humminbird, cool fishing trips from our guest celebrities and so much more. Attendees can rub elbows with fishing celebrities such as Captains Jim Ross of the Florida Insider Fishing Report, Mike Anderson of Reel Animals Television,

Jay Withers of Guidelines TV, Blair Wiggins (Mogan Man) of Blair Wiggins Outdoors, C.A. Richardson of Flat's Class TV and Danny Allen of Beyond the Surface. The sponsors and reserve tables have a special treat, they received a signed, framed "Red and Blue" print from world renowned and STAR's featured artist Don Ray. Many thanks to Plantation on Crystal River for being the host resort. An amazing time will be had by all.

"STAR continues to be a tremendous tool for CCA to bring awareness to our organization, create conservation partnerships with our sponsors and to encourage



OF SUPER STARS!

anglers to implement conservation practices all while enjoying a really cool fishing competition. STAR has friends and families planning their summer around our event and engaging in conservation, that makes me so proud. Everyone who participates or partners with CCA Florida STAR is a SUPER STAR!" states STAR Director Captain Leiza Fitzgerald.

CCA Florida STAR is not only a fun fishing competition where any fish can win the angler a prize but it provides a large amount of dependent data that can be used by fisheries management groups and universities for further research on stock

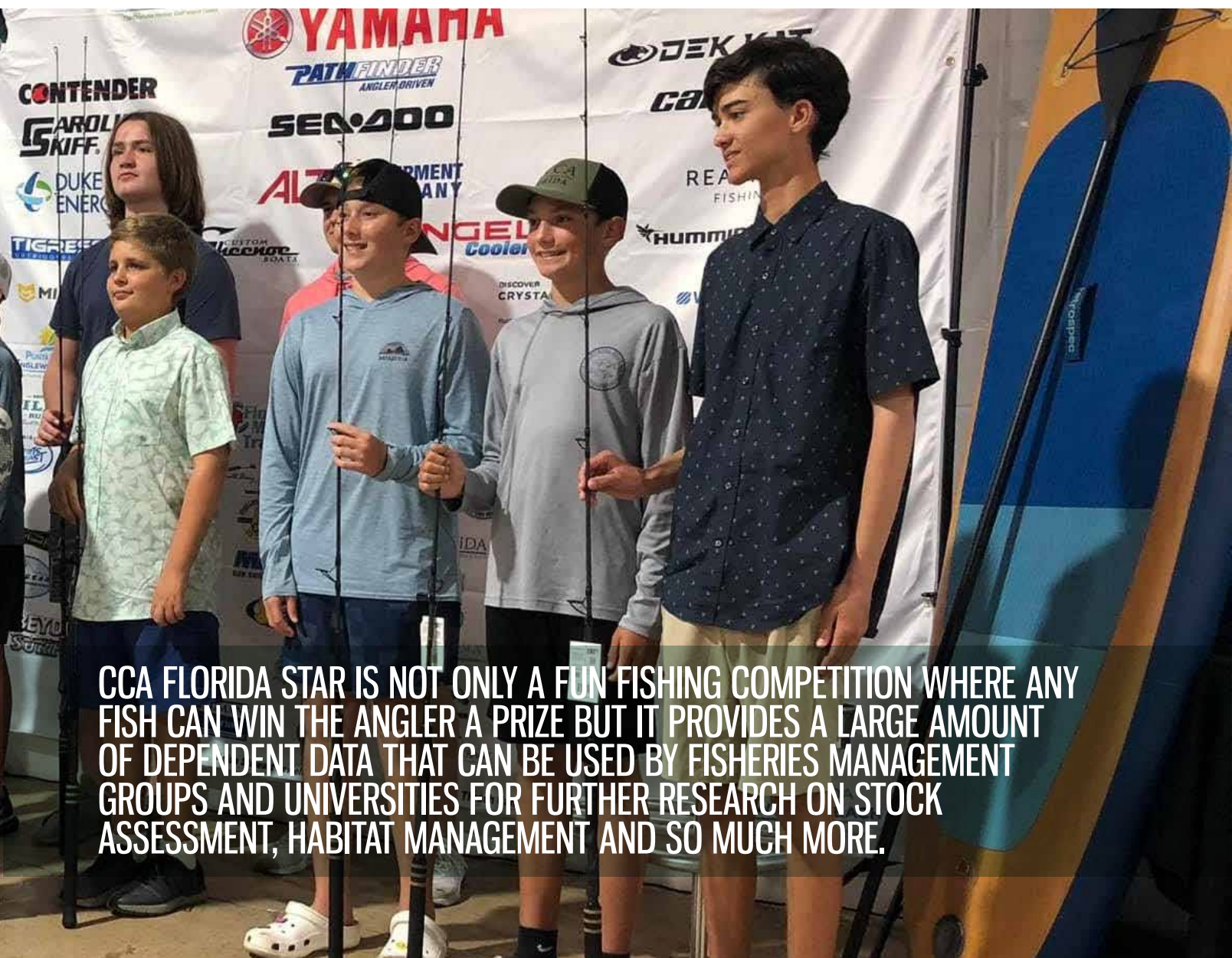
assessment, habitat management and so much more. Please take the time to patronize the many partners and sponsors of STAR as we would not be able to offer such a wonderful event without their support.

2025 STAR begins May 24 and will once again provide another reason for anglers to fish and practice conservation over the summer but you can start the winning early. Get registered **today** and if you recapture any year's STAR tagged redfish you will win a \$1,000 gift card from Engel Coolers. To win, just snap a picture of the tagged redfish with the tag still in the fish, submit your photo via our FaceBook page, report to the

phone number on the tag and be a current member and registered for 2025 STAR before you catch the fish for the win.

Start planning your fishing trips now to Citrus County (www.discovercrystalriver.com) or Charlotte County, Englewood/ Punta Gorda (www.pureflorida.com) they are all our destination counties and have more tagged redfish than any other counties.

**For more information on
STAR visit our website.
www.ccaflstar.com**



CCA FLORIDA STAR IS NOT ONLY A FUN FISHING COMPETITION WHERE ANY FISH CAN WIN THE ANGLER A PRIZE BUT IT PROVIDES A LARGE AMOUNT OF DEPENDENT DATA THAT CAN BE USED BY FISHERIES MANAGEMENT GROUPS AND UNIVERSITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ON STOCK ASSESSMENT, HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND SO MUCH MORE.

STAR



WHERE ARE WE RELEASING
STAR TAGGED FISH IN 2016?



STATEWIDE!



CELEBRATING A DECADE OF SUPER STARS!





**Start up
with ease.
Every time.**

**Run faster,
cleaner,
smoother.**

**Store with
confidence
between use.**

**START
RUN
STORE**



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PROTECTION + PERFORMANCE

2025 STAR



A GREAT REASON TO FISH AND A GREAT WAY TO WIN! REGISTRATION TODAY FOR THE 2025 CCA FLORIDA STAR COMPETITION PRESENTED BY YAMAHA

2025 STAR begins May 24. Get registered today and if you recapture any year's STAR tagged redfish you will win a \$1,000 gift card from Engel Coolers.

To win, just snap a picture of the tagged redfish with the tag still in the fish, submit your photo via our FaceBook page, report to the phone number on the tag and be a current member and registered for 2025 STAR before you catch the fish for the win.

Start planning your fishing trips now to Citrus County (www.discovercrystalriver.com) or Charlotte County, Englewood/ Punta Gorda (www.pureflorida.com) they are all our destination counties and have more tagged redfish than any other counties.

STAR is Florida's largest family-friendly fishing competition giving anglers of all ages endless summer-long fun!

For more information on STAR, please visit www.CCAFLSTAR.com



COASTAL
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION
FLORIDA

CONSERVATION | HABITAT | RESTOCKING | ADVOCACY

CONTRIBUTED
\$10 MILLION



SINCE 2010, CCA FLORIDA, CCA'S BUILDING CONSERVATION TRUST AND ITS PARTNERS HAVE CONTRIBUTED \$10 MILLION TO REBUILD FLORIDA'S MARINE HABITAT

100 TONS
OF OYSTERS



WERE SAVED FROM WASTE BY CCA FLORIDA IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. THUS FAR, 80 OF THE 100 TONS HAVE BEEN RECYCLED AND REDEPLOYED TO CREATE ARTIFICIAL REEFS



MORE THAN 19,000 MEMBERS
ACROSS FLORIDA'S 67 COUNTIES

IN LAST 10 YEARS

48

ARTIFICIAL
REEFS



100

HABITAT
PROJECTS



ADVOCATED
GAMEFISH
STATUS FOR
REDFISH

ADVOCATES AND CREATES
AWARENESS
FOR IMPROVING
STATEWIDE
WATER QUALITY

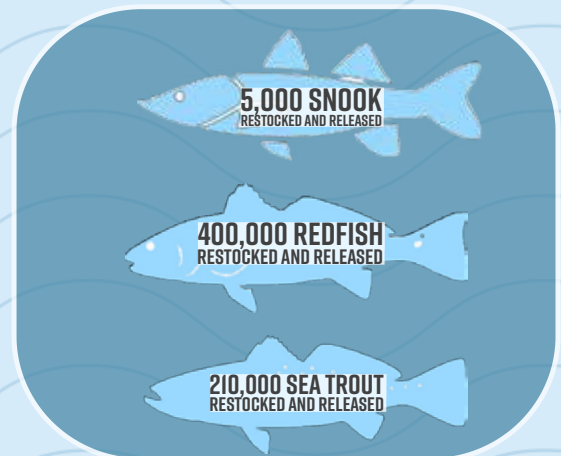
WORKED
WITH FWC TO
ENSURE MAXIMUM
ANGLER ACCESS
FOR RED SNAPPER

PROTECTING
FLORIDA'S MARINE
RESOURCES AND ANGLERS'
ACCESS FOR MORE
THAN 35 YEARS

INITIATED NET BAN
CONSTITUTIONAL
AMENDMENT

HELPED CONGRESS
INTRODUCE DESCENDING
DEVICE BILL AND
FORAGE FISH
CONSERVATION ACT

HELPED BAN LONGLINES
FOR BILLFISH
AND PELAGIC SPECIES



\$900,000 IN CCA FLORIDA YOUTH COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS
HAVE BEEN AWARDED SINCE 2015



\$25 FROM EACH TAG GOES
DIRECTLY TO CCA
FLORIDA'S STATEWIDE
WATER QUALITY, HABITAT AND
RESTOCKING INITIATIVES

CCA FLORIDA WORKED
WITH THE FLORIDA
LEGISLATURE
TO CREATE THE
CONSERVE FLORIDA'S
FISHERIES FLORIDA
LICENSE PLATE



That's a wrap on St. Augustine Ghost Trap Rodeo! In August, Ocean Aid 360 and #CCAFlorida organized an amazing tournament series to remove derelict crab traps during the biannual 10-day Blue Crab seasonal closure along the coast of Northeast Florida.

(continued on page 35)

GHOST TRAP R



ODEO

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

GIFT A LIFE MEMBERSHIP TODAY

As a CCA Florida Legacy member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more. Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.

Photo Courtesy of Pat Ford

Complete the form below, visit ccaflorida.org/store or scan the QR code by December 31, 2024 to receive the exclusive gifts and confirm registration.

- ☐ YES! I want to gift a CCA Florida Life Membership and receive a **Bajio Sunglasses gift card (\$209 value), one Contender Raffle entry (\$100 value), one Hewes Raffle entry (\$25 value) and one Pathfinder Raffle entry (\$50 value)**. I am enclosing \$1,000 to gift a Life Membership.



- ☐ YES! I would like to add an exclusive **CCA Florida Youth Life Membership for just \$500** and receive a FREE custom-embroidered AFTCO shirt! (Valid for children up to 16 years old)



- ☐ YES! I would like to make an in-kind donation.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YOUTH MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

YOUTH NAME _____

YOUTH BIRTHDATE _____ AFTCO YOUTH Shirt Size (Please Circle) **S M L XL**

IN-KIND AMOUNT _____

- ☐ CHECK ENCLOSED (Payable to CCA Florida)

- ☐ BILL MY CREDIT CARD

A copy of the original registration (CH-1255) and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free 800.435.7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state. 100% of the contributions are retained by the Coastal Conservation Association Florida.

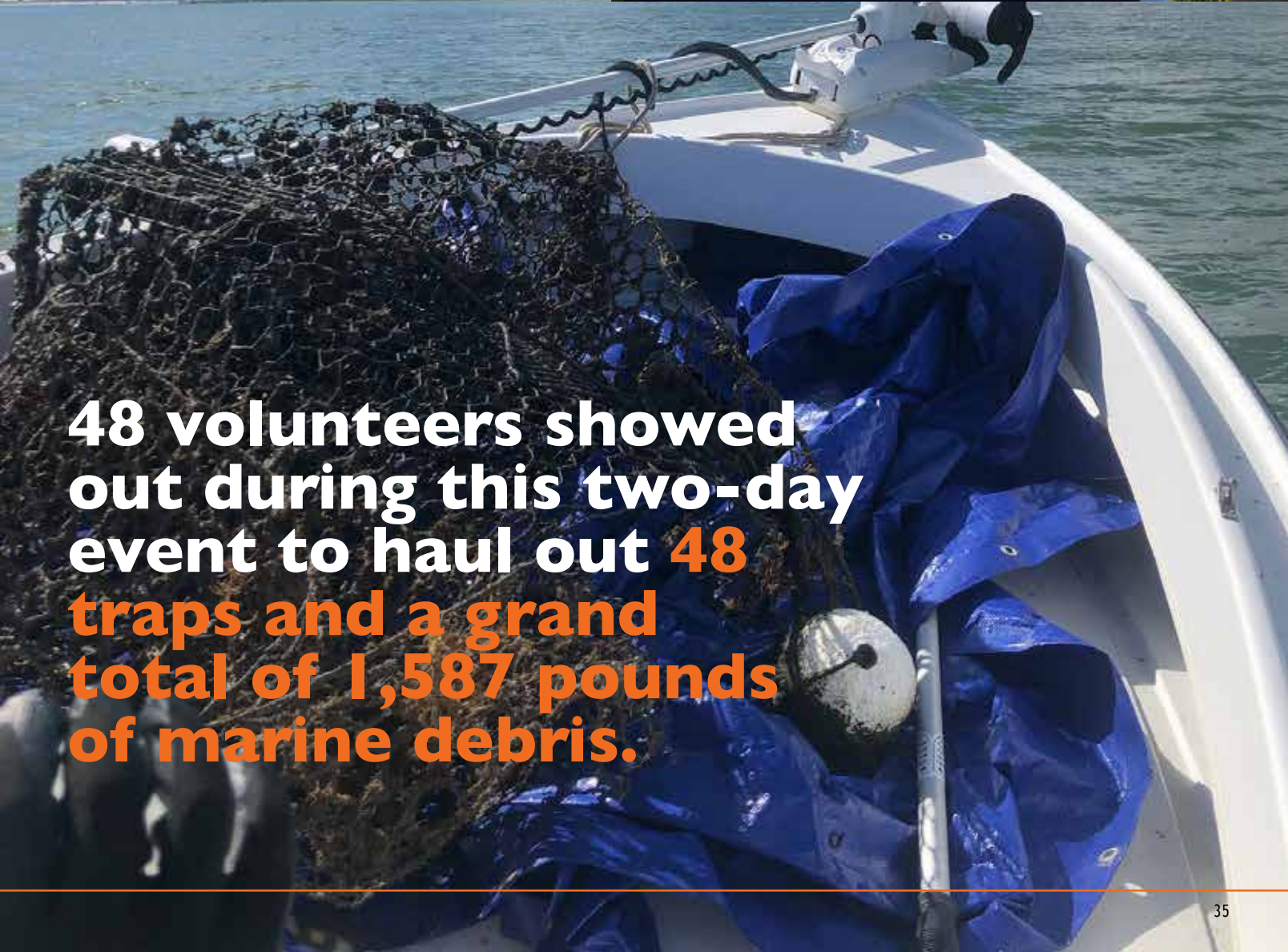
(Please Circle) **MASTERCARD VISA AMEX DISCOVER**

ACCOUNT _____

EXP DATE _____ CVV _____ SIGNATURE _____

Use enclosed envelope to send completed form to: Coastal Conservation Association Florida, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, FL 32856
For questions or payment plan information, please call 407.854.7002 ext. 102 or email accounting@ccaflorida.org.

GHOST TRAP RODEO



48 volunteers showed out during this two-day event to haul out 48 traps and a grand total of 1,587 pounds of marine debris.

P O W E R Y O U R P U R S U I T

ABYSS BATTERY

ABYSS (ə'-bis) comes from the Greek word ábyssos meaning "Bottomless, Boundless, and Immeasurable". The Unfathomable Depths of the Ocean are the world in which we are deeply rooted and from where we draw our name and our inspiration.

What sets us apart?

- More capacity and amp hours
- Smaller case size without sacrificing performance
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- Pre-programmed AI
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Discover the best Trolling Motor Lithium Batteries

that match the depth of your needs

DRAMATIC WEIGHT SAVINGS,
PERFECT FOR SMALLER BOATS.

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These lightweight marine batteries charge faster than traditional lead acid solutions while also providing longer run time between charges.



POWER YOUR BOAT LONGER,
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36V Lithium Batteries

Ideal for deep cycle applications in diverse marine environments, seasons, and temperatures, from calm weather to heavy winds!



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GHOST TRAP RODEO



Thank you to all of the awesome volunteers who participated in hands on marine conservation. Volunteers were awarded prizes such as paddleboards, rods and reels, Engel Coolers and more!

Special thanks to our partners at UF Whitney Lab, FWC, Palm Valley Outdoors, Once Was Lost, and JDog Junk Removal for their participation on this project!

FISH HOW YOU WANT
ALL DAY



The Power-Pole CHARGE Marine Power Management Station does the work of three devices — a traditional battery charger, a charge-on-the-run and an emergency start system — all in one compact unit. The CHARGE automatically manages your power supply to all of your batteries and with the C-Monster app, you can monitor those batteries in real time, giving you the power to fish how you want for as long as you need to without having to worry about your power supply.

For complete details or to find a dealer, go to power-pole.com.



YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

BECOME A HERITAGE MEMBER TODAY

As a CCA Florida Heritage member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more. Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.

Photo Courtesy of Pat Ford

Complete the form below, visit ccaflorida.org/store or scan the QR code by December 31, 2024 to receive the exclusive gifts and confirm registration.

- ☐ YES! I want to become a CCA Florida Heritage Member and receive a **FREE Engel 80 High Performance Hard Cooler and Ice Box (\$390 value)**, **Bajio Sunglasses gift card (\$209 value)**, **two Contender Raffle entries (\$200 value)**, **three Hewes Raffle entries (\$60 value)** and **three Pathfinder Raffle entries (\$150 value)**. I am enclosing \$4,000 to upgrade my Life Membership to a Heritage Membership.



- ☐ YES! I would like to add an exclusive **CCA Florida Youth Life Membership for just \$500** and receive a FREE custom-embroidered AFTCO shirt! (Valid for children up to 16 years old)



- ☐ YES! I would like to make an in-kind donation.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YOUTH MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

YOUTH NAME _____

YOUTH BIRTHDATE _____ AFTCO YOUTH Shirt Size (Please Circle) **S M L XL**

IN-KIND AMOUNT _____

☐ CHECK ENCLOSED (Payable to CCA Florida)

☐ BILL MY CREDIT CARD

(Please Circle) **MASTERCARD VISA AMEX DISCOVER**

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EXP DATE _____ CVV _____ SIGNATURE _____

Use enclosed envelope to send completed form to: Coastal Conservation Association Florida, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, FL 32856
For questions or payment plan information, please call 407.854.7002 ext. 102 or email accounting@ccaflorida.org.



IN OCTOBER, CCA FLORIDA HOSTED A HABITAT WORKSHOP. HIGHLAND PREPARATORY SCHOOL LACROSSE TEAM PARTICIPATED AND ASSEMBLED MORE THAN 50 VERTICAL RED MANGROVE PLANTERS.





**WORKSHOP AT CYPRESS GROVE PARK WITH THE LAKE
AM. AROUND 30 STUDENTS AND TEAM MEMBERS
AL OYSTER GARDENS (VOGS) AND HELPED PLANT
OPAGULES. GREAT JOB, HIGHLANDERS!**



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REDFISHER 16



A Serious Backcountry Boat That's Easy To Manage.

LOA: 16' 6" • Beam: 7'3" • Draft: 11" • Max HP: 115 • Fuel: 32 Gal

COASTAL CLEAN-UP CHALLENGE



Congratulations to the following winners:

The UCF Marine Biology Class was awarded eight American Express Gift Cards worth \$25 each, Bill Kearney and Sandy Stark won a pair of Bajio Sunglasses and Jamie Stanley won a \$200 gift card to Academy Sports and Outdoors!

The 2024 CCA Florida International Coastal Cleanup Tournament has come to a close! Volunteers participated in hands-on marine conservation from Duval, Pinellas, Hillsborough and Volusia counties to remove trash from the St. Johns River to the Tampa Bay. Some notable trash finds included an old covered chair, buckets, fishing gear, plastic bottles, aluminum cans and tires! Participants were selected to win some amazing prizes as a thank you for their marine debris haul.

Thanks to everyone who participated in restoring our beautiful Florida coastlines and waterways.

Stay tuned for more Coastal Cleanup Challenges on the way!

200 LBS OF TRASH REMOVED





Louisiana Hurricane Relief

CCA Louisiana answered the call! In October, a crew of volunteers from CCA Louisiana, led by Livingston Chapter President Mark Juneau, drove three trailers 750 miles to Holmes Beach to provide food and much-needed supplies to those affected by Hurricane Milton. The amazing crew arrived Sunday night and started cooking meals Monday morning. So far, they have served 2,500 meals and provided drinking water, cleaning supplies, pet food, towels, socks and generator maintenance supplies to local residents. These volunteers have even camped in tents on the front porch of The Home True Value Hardware store!





We want to give a special shout out to Scooter Keen, Britt Champagne, Kristen Roshto and Paul Meschke for being part of this selfless effort. CCA Florida is beyond grateful for the support from our CCA Louisiana friends and their willingness to donate time and resources to help Floridians in need.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

BECOME A LEGACY MEMBER TODAY

As a CCA Florida Legacy member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more. Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.

Photo Courtesy of Pat Ford

Complete the form below, visit ccaflorida.org/store or scan the QR code by December 31, 2024 to receive the exclusive gifts and confirm registration.

- ☐ YES! I want to become a CCA Florida Legacy Member and receive a **FREE Engel 80 High Performance Hard Cooler and Ice Box (\$390 value)**, **CCA Custom Black Aces Tactical Pro S2 Omen 12 gauge (\$500 value)**, **Bajio Sunglasses gift card (\$209 value)**, **five Contender Raffle entries (\$500 value)**, **10 Hewes Raffle entries (\$250 value)** and **10 Pathfinder Raffle entries (\$500 value)**. I am enclosing \$5,000 to upgrade my Heritage Membership to a Legacy Membership.
- ☐ YES! I would like to add an exclusive **CCA Florida Youth Life Membership for just \$500** and receive a **FREE custom-embroidered AFTCO shirt!** (Valid for children up to 16 years old)
- ☐ YES! I would like to make an in-kind donation.



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YOUTH MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

YOUTH NAME _____

YOUTH BIRTHDATE _____ AFTCO YOUTH Shirt Size (Please Circle) **S M L XL**

IN-KIND AMOUNT _____

☐ CHECK ENCLOSED (Payable to CCA Florida)

☐ BILL MY CREDIT CARD

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(Please Circle) **MASTERCARD VISA AMEX DISCOVER**

ACCOUNT _____

EXP DATE _____ CVV _____ SIGNATURE _____

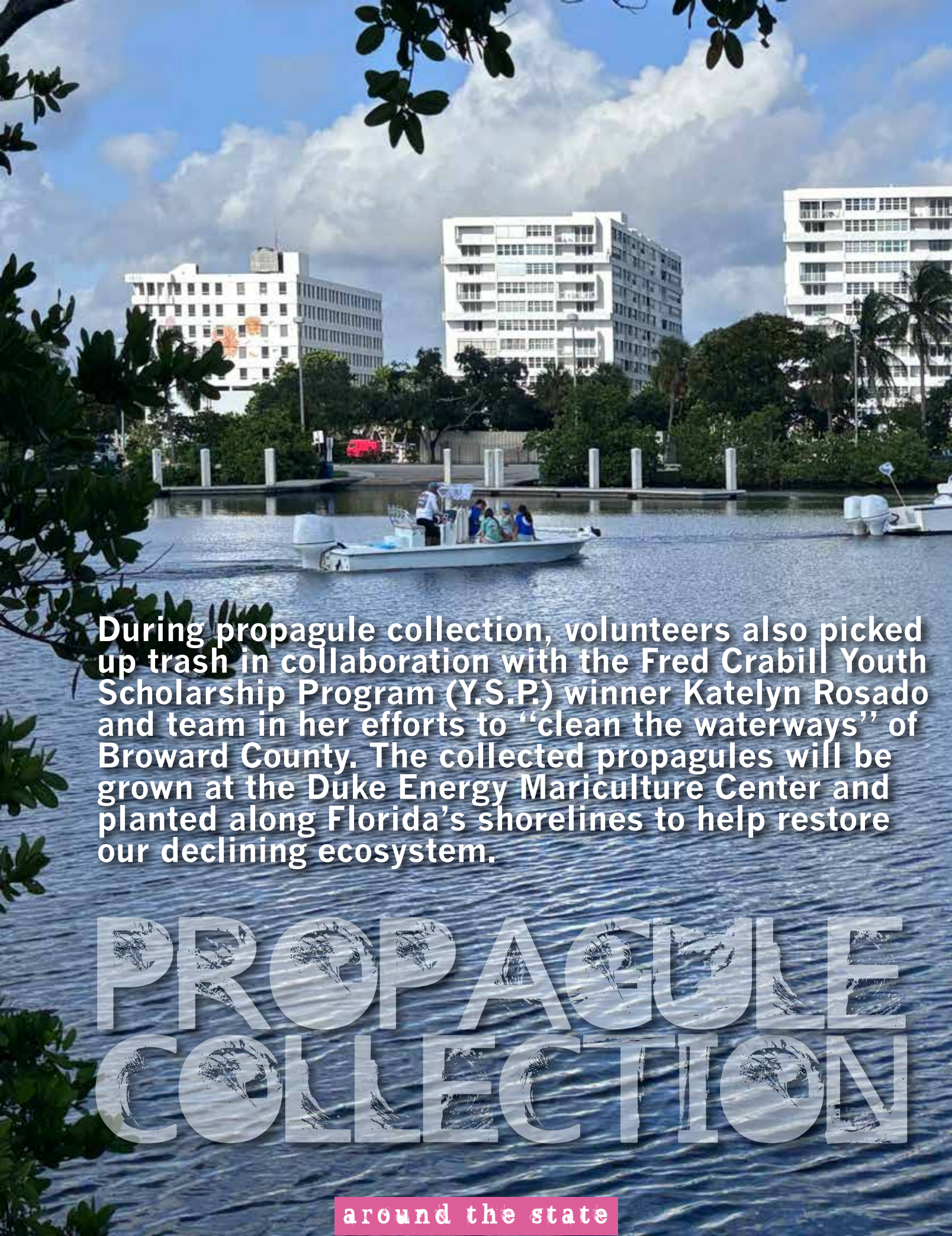
Use enclosed envelope to send completed form to: Coastal Conservation Association Florida, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, FL 32856
For questions or payment plan information, please call 407.854.7002 ext. 102 or email accounting@ccaflorida.org.

PROPAGULE COLLECTION



In September, volunteers joined us along the rivers and canals of Fort Lauderdale for the Broward County Propagule Collection event.

(continued on page 48)



During propagule collection, volunteers also picked up trash in collaboration with the Fred Crabill Youth Scholarship Program (Y.S.P.) winner Katelyn Rosado and team in her efforts to “clean the waterways” of Broward County. The collected propagules will be grown at the Duke Energy Mariculture Center and planted along Florida’s shorelines to help restore our declining ecosystem.

PROPAGULE COLLECTION

around the state



around the state



PROPAGULE COLLECTION

Thanks to our awesome partners and volunteers for supporting this great event!

AWARD-WINNING ULTRA-PREMIUM FLORIDA-LOCAL RUM



- CCA FL EXCLUSIVE -
10% OFF ONLINE ORDER



Ernest Hemingway



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YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

BECOME A LIFE MEMBER TODAY

As a CCA Florida Life member, you help support Florida's marine fisheries, habitat, waterways, coasts and more. Join us as we continue to work toward enhancing these resources and Florida's fishing future.

Photo Courtesy of Pat Ford

Complete the form below, visit ccaflorida.org/store or scan the QR code by December 31, 2024 to receive the exclusive gifts and confirm registration.

- ☐ YES! I want to become a CCA Florida Life Member and receive a **Bajio Sunglasses gift card (\$209 value), one Contender Raffle entry (\$100 value), one Hewes Raffle entry (\$25 value) and one Pathfinder Raffle entry (\$50 value)**. I am enclosing \$1,000 to upgrade my Standard Membership to a Life Membership.



- ☐ YES! I would like to add an exclusive **CCA Florida Youth Life Membership for just \$500** and receive a FREE custom-embroidered AFTCO shirt! (Valid for children up to 16 years old)



- ☐ YES! I would like to make an in-kind donation.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____ PHONE _____

YOUTH MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

YOUTH NAME _____

YOUTH BIRTHDATE _____ AFTCO YOUTH Shirt Size (Please Circle) **S M L XL**

IN-KIND AMOUNT _____

- ☐ CHECK ENCLOSED (Payable to CCA Florida)

- ☐ BILL MY CREDIT CARD

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EXP DATE _____ CVV _____ SIGNATURE _____

Use enclosed envelope to send completed form to: Coastal Conservation Association Florida, P.O. Box 568886, Orlando, FL 32856
For questions or payment plan information, please call 407.854.7002 ext. 102 or email accounting@ccaflorida.org.

habitat



MANGROVE PLANTING





In August, more than 40 volunteers, employees and environmental experts from Duke Energy Florida, Tampa Electric, Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida, Hillsborough County's Conservation and Land Management and Pinellas County's Environmental Management Division, led a unique restoration project by simultaneously planting nearly 700 red and black mangroves at two locations impacted by tidal influence.

"Teaming up with our neighboring utilities, governmental leaders and key community organizations to prepare, protect and power our communities is not something new for our company and industry," said Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy Florida state president. "As we've learned from decades of storm response and service, collaboration is essential to addressing our communities' most pressing needs. Today's event is no different. We

DUKE ENERGY, TAMPA ELECTRIC AND CCA FLORIDA PLANT NEARLY 700 MANGROVES AT TWO SHORELINES IN HILLSBOROUGH AND PINELLAS COUNTIES





habitat

MANGROVE PLANTING

TO DATE, THE MARICULTURE CENTER, WITH HELP FROM CCA FLORIDA, HAS **RELEASED NEARLY 5 MILLION FISH** AND CRUSTACEANS ALONG FLORIDA'S COASTS AND HAS **DONATED APPROXIMATELY \$200,000 WORTH OF SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION** FOR HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECTS IN LAKES, SPRINGS AND SHORELINES ACROSS THE STATE.

thank Tampa Electric, CCA Florida, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties, among the many others, who are dedicated to keeping our communities safe, resilient and thriving.”

The two locations, EG Simmons Regional Park and Keystone/Carlton Road in Northern Pinellas County, were selected based on need, environmental factors and consultation with Hillsborough County’s Conservation and Land Management and Pinellas County’s Environmental Management Division.

“This project is a win for the shoreline, a win for our partners, and it reflects our continued commitment to environmental stewardship,” said Archie Collins, president and chief executive officer of Tampa Electric. “We are delighted to collaborate with like-minded neighbors – including Duke Energy Florida – to complete this important coastal resilience project.”

Florida’s mangrove ecosystems serve a vital role in the overall health of the state’s coastal estuaries. Mangroves reduce coastal erosion caused by storm surges and improve water quality by absorbing excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Mangrove soils and roots also sequester carbon dioxide while providing habitat and refuge to a wide variety of fish and wildlife.

The mangroves are grown and donated by CCA Florida and the Duke Energy Crystal River Mariculture Center, a company-owned-and-operated environmental restoration and

conservation center dedicated to rebuilding and maintaining Florida’s fish populations and habitats.

More than 30 years ago, the Duke Energy Crystal River Mariculture Center started as an environmental compliance requirement to operate nearby power plants and has since grown into one of Florida’s most successful fish hatcheries and conservation allies.

Instead of shutting down the operation when the power plants closed and the environmental requirement was no longer necessary, Eric Latimer, Duke Energy Florida’s manager of the Mariculture Center, found ways to work with nonprofits, universities and state agencies, like CCA Florida, among others, to rebuild and maintain Florida’s fish populations and habitats that were being impacted by declining water quality and disasters such as red tide and hurricanes.





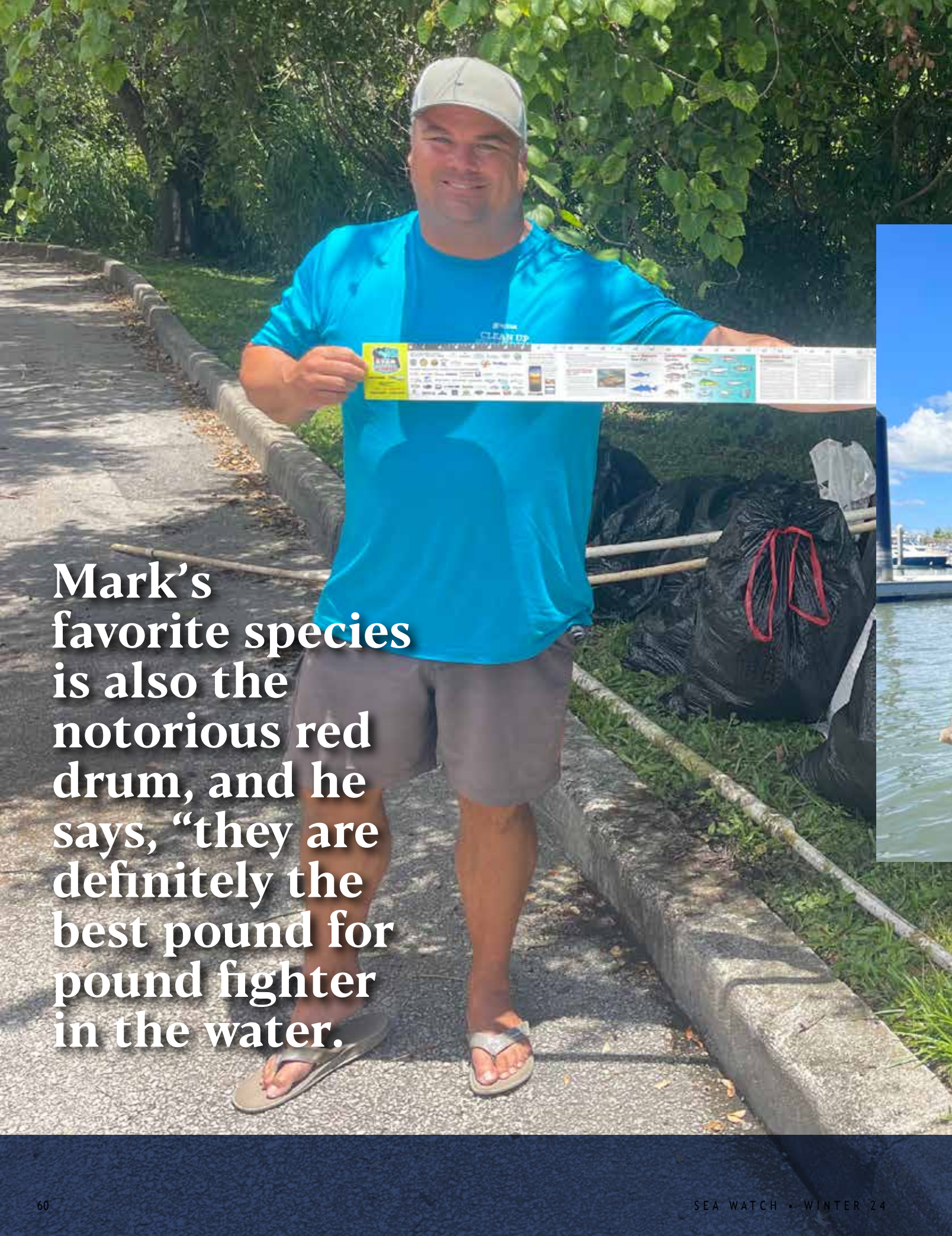
Meet Mark Feagle

HABITAT HERO

**Mark is a true Floridian
that loves fishing,
diving, camping,
and almost anything
outdoors.**

At CCA Florida, habitat restoration is a foundational element to our mission in an effort to ensure the health of our marine resources. Several years ago, CCA Florida began recognizing our members who have gone above and beyond with regard to habitat restoration in SeaWatch Magazine. In this edition we are recognizing Mark Feagle, President of the CCA Northeast Chapter and member of the CCA Management Committee, as the next Habitat Hero. Born and raised in Gainesville, FL, Mark is a true Floridian that loves fishing, diving, camping, and almost anything outdoors. Mark grew up fishing around the state with his father and purchased his

(continued on page 61)

A man wearing a light blue t-shirt, grey shorts, a white baseball cap, and flip-flops stands on a paved path. He is holding a long, white sign that reads 'CLEAN UP' at the top. The sign features various logos, including 'SEA WATCH', and illustrations of different fish species. In the background, there are green trees and a concrete curb. To the right, there are black plastic bags filled with trash, and a body of water is visible in the distance.

**Mark's
favorite species
is also the
notorious red
drum, and he
says, "they are
definitely the
best pound for
pound fighter
in the water."**

HABITAT HERO



first boat at the age of 16. At that time, he and his friends were out on the water every chance they got, constantly fishing between Cedar Key and Steinhatchee. Similar to our last Habitat Hero, Trampis Bonjorn, Mark's favorite species is also the notorious red drum, and he says, "they are definitely the best pound for pound fighter in the water".

Mark pursued a degree in Construction Management and is currently a REALTOR® and owner of a residential construction company in Orange Park. Mark became a CCA Florida member in 2018 after he and his wife attended the local barbeque. At the time, he was looking for an opportunity to meet like-minded individuals and decided to get involved with the Northeast Chapter. Mark felt the goals and procedures for giving back to Florida's coastal ecosystems aligned with the love for his home state. Shortly after, Mark volunteered to serve as the Chapter President and has held the position since. However, Mark's true passion for conservation stemmed from a grassroots effort led by himself and his father-in-law, Jeff Fagan. They teamed up to start a waterway cleanup initiative throughout the St. Johns River from Orlando to Jacksonville. Mark brought the idea to his Florida Realtors leadership team, and they adopted the Clean Up Florida Waters Initiative. This cleanup program is now one of the largest in the state with over 3000 volunteers, 140+ events, and in 2024 alone collecting over 65,000lbs of trash in one month.

Mark has since connected the Florida Realtors with CCA Florida to team up on a few other habitat restoration projects. In 2023, CCA FL and the Florida Realtors worked with the University of North Florida on a living shoreline project in Jacksonville that consisted of pervious oyster shell habitat (POSH) units. Not long after, Mark helped arrange another project with CCA Florida and the Florida Realtors to deploy almost 100,000 clams in the northern end of Mosquito Lagoon. These projects are the first of many to come from this great partnership that Mark has been essential in facilitating. Since his tenure as Chapter President, Mark has been determined to get the Northeast Chapter involved with anything and everything conservation based. Last year, he helped coordinate the partnership between CCA Florida and the Cameron Smith Foundation which resulted in an artificial reef project that involved deploying a 175ft rotary crane barge 28 miles off the coast of Jacksonville. Mark has also been a key figure in all four of the Ghost Trap Rodeo events with Ocean Aid 360 and CCA Florida in Northeast Florida and gets hands-on every time! More recently, he helped arrange a CCA booth to be set up at Florida Fin Fest, one of the largest conservation music festivals. This event helped to spread the word about our efforts to get the local community engaged.

(continued on page 63)





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HABITAT HERO



Mark is not slowing down anytime soon and has plans to continue to expand upon the Jacksonville Chapter's conservation efforts. Mark said, "my number one goal is to ensure Florida is as beautiful for future generations as it is today". He makes it apparent that it is part of his mission as Chapter President to make sure the voices of their local guides and anglers are heard at a higher level. "As a Chapter, we have a vital role to make sure any water quality issues stay top-of-mind with our leadership to continue making progress towards cleaner water in Northeast Florida," Mark states. He also made it clear that the committee members of the Northeast Chapter give their all to make sure any environmental issues are addressed. Last, but not least, Mark wants to give a special thanks to CCA Florida for everything they do and all the support they provide to Northeast Florida. Mark concluded by stating, "I will continue to work hard to make sure our area gets the best research and projects available to keep Florida beautiful."



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COMPLETED HABITAT PROJECTS

Since 2010, CCA Florida in collaboration with the Building Conservation Trust and our partners, have contributed over \$10 million in habitat projects statewide. Join us in these efforts!



1. CCA/South Walton Artificial Reef Association, Inc. Reefs
2. CCA/Tri County Deep Stim III Reef
3. CCA Reef/MBARA
4. CCA/Duke Energy Reef – Mexico Beach
5. CCA/Ocean Aid 360 Apalachicola Ghost Trap Rodeo
6. CCA/FDEP Sea Urchin Round-Up
7. CCA/FDEP/Duke Spartina Grass Replanting
8. CCA/BCT Billy's Barge Artificial Reef
9. CCA Dr. Bart Carey Memorial Reef
10. CCA R.Z. "Sandy" Safley Reef
11. CCA NCBS Lone Cabbage Reef Fish Monitoring
12. CCA/UF/IFAS Centipede Bay Oyster Reef Restoration
13. CCA/Hernando Co. Ghost Ship Reef
14. CCA/BCT/Tampa Bay Watch Fantasy Island Oyster Restoration
15. CCA/BCT/Tampa Bay Watch 2D Island Oyster Restoration
16. CCA Duke Energy Red Tide Research
17. CCA/FWC Suncoast Youth Conservation Center Saltwater Pond
18. CCA/Ocean Aid 360 Tampa Bay Ghost Trap Rodeo
19. CCA Rhodan Reef
20. CCA/UCF De Soto National Memorial Living Shoreline Stabilization
21. CCA/BCT Sean Gucken Memorial Reef
22. CCA/Manatee County Larry Borden Artificial Reef
23. CCA/Lee County USS Mohawk CGC Reef – Veterans Memorial Reef
24. CCA/BCT/Lee County Punta Rassa Oyster Restoration
25. CCA/BCT/Lee County San Carlos Bay Oyster Restoration
26. CCA/Duke Energy Hemp Key Mangrove
27. CCA/LBHS Seagrass Restoration
28. CCA Turtle Bay Oyster Reef
29. CCA/Duke Energy/FDEP Lover's Key Mangrove Restoration
30. CCA/Duke Energy Delnor-Wiggins Mangrove Planting
31. CCA/Naples Bay Oyster Restoration
32. CCA Florida Bay Seagrass Restoration
33. CCA/UNF Florida Bay Turtle Grass Research
34. CCA/Eagle Scout Andrew Hall Dragon Reef
35. CCA Broward Chapter Pilot Oyster
36. CCA/No Shoes Reef 4
37. CCA Bob Burton Memorial Reef
38. CCA/BCT Goggle Eye Reef
39. CCA/BCT Andrew "Red" Harris Foundation Reef
40. CCA/BCT Andrew "Red" Harris Foundation "No Shoes" Reef
41. CCA/Florida Oceanographic Society Seagrass and Oyster Restoration
42. CCA/MCAC Brause Girls Reef
43. CCA/Wildlife FL/FWC Eelgrass Restoration
44. CCA/Loxahatchee Eelgrass Restoration
45. CCA 10-Mile Creek Eelgrass Restoration
46. CCA Curtis Bostick Reef
47. CCA/Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Seagrass Restoration
48. CCA/Indian River Land Trust Solar Aeration
49. CCA Indian River Lagoon RISSA Seagrass Buoys and Oyster Restoration
50. CCA Treasure Coast Chapter Revegetation
51. CCA/BTT/IRL Land Trust Tarpon and Snook Impoundment Tagging
52. CCA Spotted Seatrout Acoustic Study
53. CCA/City of Satellite Beach Samsons Island Restoration
54. CCA/BCT Lady Philomena Cargo Ship - Volusia County Reef Site No. 12
55. CCA/Northeast Florida Realtors Clam
56. CCA/UCF/NPS Canaveral Nat'l Seashore Indian Midden Living Shoreline Restoration
57. CCA/BCT Starship II Reef
58. CCA/UCF Tomoka State Park Indian Midden Living Shoreline Restoration
59. CCA/Heineken/UCF Tomoka State Park Indian Midden Living Shoreline Restoration
60. CCA/City of Fernandina Living Shoreline Oyster Restoration
61. CCA/BCT Starship Reef
62. CCA Ripper Reef
63. CCA/BCT Jacksonville River Reef



▲ Coastal Cleanups

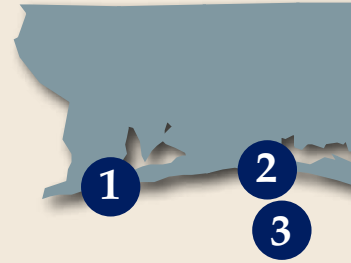
 Redfish Stock Enhancement
Locations - 305,000 (3"- 30")

 Snook Stock Enhancement
Locations - 5,150 (4"- 6")

 Spotted Seatrout Stock
Enhancement Locations -
150,000 (4"- 6")

ONGOING & UPCOMING HABITAT PROJECTS

Since 2010, CCA Florida in collaboration with the Building Conservation Trust and our partners, have contributed over \$10 million in habitat projects statewide. Join us in these efforts!



1. Pensacola Artificial Reefs
2. CCA Choctawhatchee Bay Shoreline Restoration
3. Okaloosa County Artificial Reefs
4. CCA St Andrew's Bay Seagrass Restoration
5. CCA Steinhatchee Reef
6. Coorigan's Oyster Reef Restoration
7. CCA/Duke/UF Living Shoreline
8. CCA/Duke Energy/Reef Innovations/Citrus County Inshore Reef
9. CCA Homosassa River Restoration
10. CCA/Hernando County Bendickson Reef
11. CCA/Hernando County Jenkins Creek Living Shoreline
12. CCA/Pinellas County Reef
13. CCA/Duke/TBW Fantasy Island Living Shoreline Project in honor of Fred Crabill
14. CCA/Larry Borden Reef
15. CCA/Manatee County Oyster Habitat Restoration
16. CCA Sarasota Bay Artificial Reef
17. CCA/Sarasota Bay Watch Clam Restoration
18. CCA/Charlotte County Artificial Reef
19. CCA/Lee County Phoenix Reef
20. CCA Turtle Bay Oyster Reef Restoration
21. CCA/St. James City Oyster Gardening
22. CCA/I. Care Coral Reef Restoration
23. CCA/John Pennekamp Park Seagrass Restoration
24. CCA/Biscayne Bay Seagrass Restoration
25. CCA John Michael Baker Memorial Reef - Broward County
26. CCA Fort Lauderdale Oyster Ring
27. CCA/City of Stuart Vertical Oyster Garden
28. CCA/BWO/FWC/UF Indian River Lagoon Clam Restoration
29. CCA Alex and Anna Jernigan Reef
30. CCA/Brevard County Artificial Reefs
31. CCA/UCF Mosquito Lagoon Oyster Restoration
32. CCA Halifax River Vertical Oyster Garden Project
33. CCA/University of North Florida Living Shoreline Restoration
34. CCA Oyster Shell Recycling Program
35. CCA/Duke Oyster Shell Recycling Program



THE \$1,000,000 HABITAT

Welcome to the future of environmental conservation in Florida. CCA Florida is proud to announce the launch of a monumental grass-roots initiative – The \$1,000,000 Habitat Pledge.

OUR GOAL Elevating Conservation

At the heart of this initiative is a clear and compelling goal: to substantially elevate CCA Florida's conservation commitment through the successful completion of 20 additional coastal habitat projects across the state. These projects represent more than just environmental restoration; they symbolize our collective commitment to conserving Florida's natural beauty and biodiversity for future generations.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW A Statewide Call to Action

Spanning over two years, this initiative places a strong emphasis on engaging our statewide CCA chapters in meaningful local habitat projects. It's an invitation for chapters to actively participate and contribute to our statewide conservation efforts.

Throughout the duration of the program, CCA Florida is set to disburse 20 grants, each valued at \$50,000, to CCA chapters that successfully complete the grant application process and receive approval from our Director of Habitat and Environmental Restoration. This initiative has been made possible through the generous donations of CCA Florida members and our dedicated partners, reflecting a community united in its passion for conservation.

100,000 PLEDGE



Launched in January 2024, this groundbreaking effort marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to sustainable coastal habitat restoration.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

A Snapshot of Our Commitment



A Pledge of \$1,000,000: We've dedicated a substantial sum to support the success of CCA habitat projects across the state.

Focus on CCA Statewide Chapters: CCA Florida chapters are encouraged to participate and make a difference in their local communities. All grant applications must be approved and submitted by a local CCA Chapter committee.

A Two-Year Initiative: This is a sustained effort, supporting long-term conservation measures and stakeholder engagement.

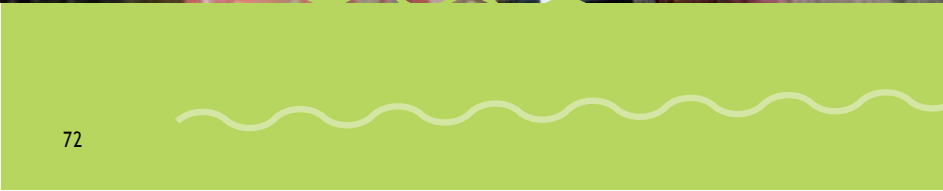
Annual Donations: \$500,000 will be allocated each year, reflecting our ongoing commitment to this cause.

Selecting 20 Projects: CCA Florida will select 20 habitat projects, each will receive a \$50,000 grant to spearhead this conservation commitment.



PICTURE





PICTURE



RAFFLE PACKAGES RETURN

Choose from the Grander, \$500, \$250 or \$100 raffle pack for the ultimate selection of tickets!

GRANDER - Six (6) Contender 28T tickets, Seven (7) Pathfinder 2200 TRS tickets, Seven (7) Contender 24S tickets and nine (9) Hewes Redfisher 16 tickets (a \$480 savings)

**INTRODUCING VARIETY
RAFFLE PACKAGES**



Contender 28T
6 tickets \$600 value

Pathfinder 2200 TRS
7 tickets \$350 value

Hewes Redfisher 16
9 tickets \$180 value

Contender 24S
7 tickets \$350 value

THE \$1000 TICKET PACK
29 TICKETS - YOU SAVE \$480

CCA FLORIDA

\$500 - Three (3) Contender 28T tickets, Four (4) Pathfinder 2200 TRS tickets, four (4) Contender 24S tickets and Six (6) Hewes Redfisher 16 tickets (\$320 savings)

**INTRODUCING VARIETY
RAFFLE PACKAGES**



Contender 28T
3 tickets \$300 value

Pathfinder 2200 TRS
4 tickets \$200 value

Hewes Redfisher 16
6 tickets \$120 value

Contender 24S
4 tickets \$200 value

THE \$500 TICKET PACK
17 TICKETS - YOU SAVE \$320

CCA FLORIDA

WINTER EVENTS SAVE THE DATE

February

**6
MID COAST BANQUET**

**13
NORTH BREVARD
BANQUET AND AUCTION**

**20
KEYS BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**27
MANATEE COUNTY
BANQUET AND AUCTION**

March

**7
OCALA BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**13
CITRUS BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**FORT MYERS BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

**MARTIN BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

**15
TREASURE COAST BBQ**

**20
TAMPA BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**STEINHATCHEE BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

**27
CHARLOTTE BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

April

**3
POLK BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**3
HOMESTEAD BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

**4-6
TORTUGA MUSIC
FESTIVAL**

**10
EMERALD COAST
BANQUET AND AUCTION**

**16
SOUTH WALTON KIDS
TOURNAMENT**

**17
LAKE BANQUET AND
AUCTION**

**24
HERNANDO BANQUET
AND AUCTION**

**25
ORLANDO BBQ AND
AUCTION**

**29-MAY 1
ABC TOURNAMENT**

May

**1
SARASOTA TARPON
TOURNAMENT**

**2-3
SARASOTA
ALL RELEASE / BBQ**

**8
BIG BEND BANQUET**

**10
NAPLES BANQUET**

**14-17
Life Member Outing**

CCA FLORIDA
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RAFFLE PACKAGES RETURN

Choose from the Grander, \$500, \$250 or \$100 raffle pack for the ultimate selection of tickets!

\$250 - One (1) Contender 28T ticket, Two (2) Pathfinder 2200 TRS tickets, Two (2) Contender 24S tickets and four (4) Hewes Redfisher 16 tickets (\$135 savings)

**INTRODUCING VARIETY
RAFFLE PACKAGES**



THE \$250 TICKET PACK
9 TICKETS - YOU SAVE \$135

CCA FLORIDA

Contender 28T
1 ticket \$100 value

Pathfinder 2200 TRS
2 tickets \$100 value

Hewes Redfisher 16
4 tickets \$85 value

Contender 24S
2 tickets \$100 value

\$100 - One (1) Pathfinder 2200 TRS ticket, One (1) Contender 24S ticket and Two (2) Hewes Redfisher 16 tickets (\$50 savings)

**INTRODUCING VARIETY
RAFFLE PACKAGES**



THE \$100 TICKET PACK
4 TICKETS - YOU SAVE \$50

CCA FLORIDA

Pathfinder 2200 TRS
1 ticket \$50 value

Hewes Redfisher 16
2 tickets \$50 value

Contender 24S
1 tickets \$50 value



Maverick
Fish the Legend.

PATHFINDER
ANGLER DRIVEN

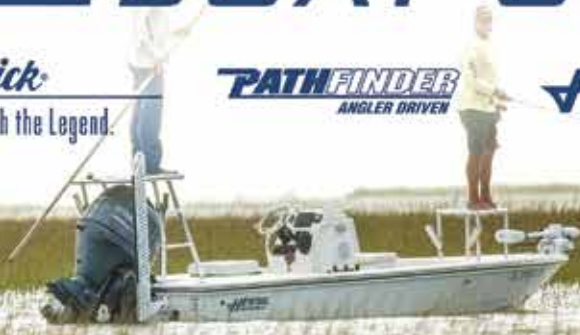
MBG MAVERICK
BOAT GROUP

Maverick
Fish the Legend.

PATHFINDER
ANGLER DRIVEN

HEWES.

COBIA



HEWES

COBIA



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