

## Fishery-related Conflicts: Some Solutions

Most fishery-related conflicts can be resolved without major difficulty. For example, while fishing for stripers in Great Egg Inlet last fall, one could observe other anglers darting among the clam boats working their inshore dredges. However, it's best to stay away from the clam boats and avoid the press of a large crowd of boats (up to 100 on some days). The clam boat captains do have the right of way, as their vessels' mobility is restricted when their dredges are down. That is one simple solution to a potential fishery-related conflict!

In some cases, however, fishery-related conflicts begin as simple misunderstandings which, when unresolved, give rise to difficult situations. Two common types of conflicts are: recreational vs. commercial; and disputes over bag and size limits in recreational fisheries. Conflicts also arise with regard to gear and spatial problems between commercial fishermen.

The New Jersey's Marine Fisheries Council is working to create a better marine environment for everyone involved. The Council provides a forum for commercial and recreational interests to remedy the lack of communication that has contributed to conflicts in the past.

Industry representatives are encouraged to craft compromises like last year's fisheries management regulations that eliminated unattended anchored gill nets during the summer and early fall in an attempt to lessen the impacts of bycatch on non-harvested species such as striped bass. Some conflicts require more complex solutions. One example of this was the effort to move the menhaden reduction boats farther out of state waters.

Communication can settle many conflicts. For instance, after discussions during the September 2002 Council meeting, commercial fishermen avoided the Island Beach State Park area during last year's Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament. This had been a recurring issue due to the large number of recreational participants who enjoy the Governor's Tournament each year.

In September 2002, the Council convened a committee of recreational and commercial industry representatives to discuss ways to alleviate fisheries-related conflicts between commercial and recreational fishermen. Both groups supported this initiative.

The meeting resulted in a short article, *Improving Relations Between Recreational Anglers and Commercial Fishermen—Taking the First Step*, about the fall inshore gill net fishery which explains the fishery and how it relates to the recreational fishery along our beaches. The article also amplified the committee's discussions of solutions to problems encountered in various fisheries. (To read this article, see [www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/maratra.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/maratra.htm).)

Fishermen can also work to change the regulations that affect them. During this year, the Council may discuss the sale of recreationally harvested weakfish. Although such sales are not as common as they once were, the subject has been raised at several winter Council meetings and needs further discussion. A second such issue concerns the commercial gill net ocean fishery, which does not have a minimum required operating distance from the shoreline. Recreational surf anglers are advocating the adoption of a buffer by the Council.

Fishermen should also be aware that the Division of Fish and Wildlife is continually seeking comments and suggestions concerning potential problems as well as solutions to conflicts. Please let us know what you think are the major issues which should be addressed. We look forward to hearing from you. You can e-mail your suggestions or ideas to [njwildlife@nac.net](mailto:njwildlife@nac.net) or call our Marine Fisheries office at 609-748-2020.

The Council meets every other month in Galloway Township, Atlantic County (see our website for the schedule.) If there is a topic or issue you would like the Council to consider, you are encouraged to attend and comment. Good communication can resolve fisheries-related conflicts. The Division will post news and material from the angling public regarding Council proceedings and interactions with industry representatives on our website at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com).

It is important for all interested parties to respect the rights of others to participate in the fishery.

Anglers must abide by the regulations which permit specified commercial or recreational fishing activities. The Division is working hard to establish better relations between the commercial and recreational fisheries and to make sound, practical management decisions to benefit our fisheries. Cooperation among the different sectors of the fishing public through education, communication and respect is essential.