

For-hire Fishing Captains Drawn to Regional Workshops

By Sally Mills

Fishing “for hire” with a group of paying customers has become big business in Virginia, as it has along the entire eastern seaboard. A recent educational workshop series hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant programs is helping charter and guide boat operators better manage the changing climate of this fast-growing industry.

Today’s captains operate charter boats or slightly larger head (or party) boats built to accommodate a range of angler preferences for recreational fishing. Bob Zales, who operates a charter fleet in Florida and currently serves as president of the National Association of Charterboat Operators, estimates that these boats carry at least 13 million passengers a year off U.S. shores to fish, and generate \$23 billion in revenue to the national economy. Much of that money gets fed

directly to coastal towns providing tourism-related services.

This slice of overall fishing activity, however, often falls between the cracks of traditional commercial and recreational fishing sectors. As more scrutiny is paid to tracking fish stocks – and fishing effort – and sharing that information across state and regional boundaries, resource managers have begun to pay greater attention to this missing link.

The Mid-Atlantic Sea Grant program’s workshop series was designed to help charter and guide boat operators keep pace with pending management changes regarding such things as licensing, customer safety, fish handling, and effort and catch reporting.

The idea behind the workshops was simple. “We wanted to invite charter boat operators to come together and share their perspectives



Workshop participants had the chance to speak directly with NOAA fisheries managers and members of the U.S. Coast Guard about issues impacting their business operations.

with those who are making decisions about their future,” noted Dr. William DuPaul, who directs the Marine Advisory Program of Virginia Sea Grant. “Sea Grant often plays such a role among groups – getting information directly to the stakeholders affected.”

Workshops were held throughout the spring from New York to North Carolina, drawing about 40-50 boat

captains to each session. The content of each workshop was tailored to information requested by the participants, who replied to an industry-wide survey conducted by Tom Murray, a marine business specialist with Virginia Sea Grant. This ensured consistency among workshops while also customizing each to local industry issues as Murray helped coordinate the series.

In addition to licensing and safety requirements, topics included marketing for the World Wide Web, ideas for extending the business season, advice about business insurance, and the hard truths about admiralty law. Murray was pleased with the interest shown throughout the region, and found that the majority of participants appreciated the opportunity to learn and share this information with their peers.

Plans for future workshops are under discussion.



Local CBF Chapter Establishes VIMS Library Special Collection

The York Chapter of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recently presented a \$1,000 check to the VIMS Library to establish a special collection of books in memory of Hayden Ross-Clunis Jr., a founding member of the Chapter who died in January 2003.

The Hayden Ross-Clunis Jr. Collection will focus on citizen involvement in environmental management and policy making, an activity that was a major part of Ross-Clunis’s life for more than 30 years.

Hayden Ross-Clunis Jr. was a founding member of a citizen’s group formed in the early 1970s to prevent development of the Goodwin Islands. This group later became the first local chapter of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The York Chapter successfully preserved the Goodwin Islands for more than 20 years. The Islands were eventually donated to the College of William & Mary for VIMS to use as a research site and were designated as a VIMS-

managed Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in 1990.

Ross-Clunis was an active member of the York Chapter CBF. He served continuously on the Board of Directors since its inception, and served on numerous occasions as President, Treasurer, or Secretary.



Maurice Lynch, President, York Chapter, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, presents a \$1,000 check to VIMS Librarian Charles McFadden to establish a collection of books in memory of Hayden Ross-Clunis Jr., a long time VIMS Board member and Past-president of the Chapter who died in January 2003.

The map in the background is an original 1853 sailing chart of the North Atlantic produced by Matthew Fontaine Maury, Hydrographer of the Navy. The VIMS library purchased the chart with funds donated by the York Chapter in memory of Paul Baker, another long time Board member and Past-president of the York Chapter who died in April 2001.

Teachers Gain Hands-On Research Experience

For the fourth year in a row, educators and scientists at VIMS have combined expertise to teach a course that helps high school teachers integrate quality marine science into their classrooms.

The two-credit graduate course, *Marine Science Fisheries and Management*, was again held at VIMS’ Eastern Shore Laboratory in Wachapreague. It was coordinated by Susan Haynes and Vicki Clark, Marine Education Specialists in the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Services Program, and Dr. John Graves, Fisheries Science Chair. Several VIMS scientists provided instruction throughout the week.

“The caliber of work completed by this year’s teachers was excellent and, from their comments, they clearly gained a great deal,” says Haynes.

The 14 participating teachers, from Virginia and beyond, gained hands-on experience in internal and external fish anatomy, methods for fish tagging, quantitative fisheries stock assessment, and modeling. They were required to take the information presented and develop a lesson plan to take back to their classroom.

The course, which is funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service, included lectures as well as laboratory, field, and computer activities. It provided teaching-assistant experience for two VIMS graduate students.



Jim Gartland (I) and students dissect a croaker.

“I valued most the interaction with the researchers!” noted one teacher.

Another wrote that “the course was a well-balanced survey with exceptional instruction. And it’s fun! I’ll use a great majority of course material in an extended unit on Fisheries Science in a high school marine and environmental science course.”

“We plan to offer similar courses for secondary science teachers on an annual basis,” says Haynes, “and look forward to the continuing participation by VIMS scientists.”

For up-to-date information on courses and workshops visit www.vims.edu/adv/ed

