

East Bay Anglers

Newsletter -- August '09

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Our 37th year

“The Bay: what it was -- what it should be -- what it can be” by Paulie Bettencourt

Coming in September: Mike Laptew's report on his shooting this summer for the January show. Some fantastic previews!



Meeting: August 12, 2009
Place: Riverside Sportsman's Club
Time: Meal at 6:45 PM Bob Haynes is preparing lasagna
Business: 7:15
Speaker: 7:30
Topic: Paulie Bettencourt will talk on conditions in the bay. See lead story for details.

Noted commercial fisherman and active environmentalist will speak at August meeting



Paulie Bettencourt

When Paulie Bettencourt is not on the water he can often be found in a meeting fighting for regulations needed to save the creatures he harvests. The late Senator Chafee often called on Paulie to talk on environmental issues related to the Bay.

Paulie has been a commercial fisherman for 45 years. Working within regulations on seasons, limits and sizes he catches and sells: stripers; scup; fluke; sea bass; clams and quahogs. He lives in Pawtucket and keeps his boat in a building near the upper Seekonk river.

As an environmentalist Paulie has worked closely with DEM on issues related to virtually every bay species on his list. Throughout his career as a bay 'commercial', Paulie has led the way on conservation issues. He is articulate, and is known for doing his homework.

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Boat of the future?



This is Brad Elsworth's 26 foot welded aluminum boat. That's a lot of boat to tow with a small 6 cyl truck -- although Brad has upgraded the differential-- being a mechanic he knew how. The boat is so light the truck handles it easily. With its 225 Honda the craft can hit 50 if it is needed. He cruises at 35.

However, the high freeboard and light weight do combine to create a wind-sensitive boat. So, Brad has found it useful to use a 'parachute' to hold the vessel in high winds. There are only four of these boats on the Bay at this time. They are made in Washington State. Elsworth lives in Barrington off Bay Spring .

The 26 foot boat provides plenty of space for several fishermen to work without getting in each other's way.



Open deck space is terrific. The light weight allows high speed.

Mike Rivera loves Jacksonville fishing

Club members who remember Mike Rivera will be glad to get this report from Florida. Those who have fished with Mike know that a day on his boat was a “long day.” Mike was relentless about fishing effort.

It’s no surprise then that his recent report on Florida fishing was enthusiastic. Not only does he fish the river, he also gets out into the “Stream” for Mahi Mahi. As can be seen in these photos, Fluke from the St. John’s river run pretty good size. The other photo is of Whiting. . . which is a winter fish up in these parts.

Getting out into the ‘Stream’ was not part of Mike’s repertoire while he was the East Bay Anglers. But, based in Jacksonville, he now gets out every chance he can. What happens out there



there is trolling. He has caught a whole menu of Florida offerings: Dolphin (Mahi mahi), Wahoo, Yellowfin Tuna, Bluefin Tuna and King Mackerel. Bottom fish species may include Triggerfish, Sea Bass. There are also Barracuda, Amberjack, Groupers, and a variety of sharks and other fish.

Mike has been in Florida for several years now. He has found that it is a continual learning experience. Each species takes different gear and methods.

Paulie harvests six bay species



Paulie Bettencourt checks weather conditions before launching his boat.

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Two other members of the famous Bettencourt family recently joined the East Bay Anglers: Albert and his son Kevin. He is “Uncle” Paulie to them.

Where’s the enforcement?

Being on the water so much, Paulie is witness to many instances of people abusing the bay, breaking laws, or taking fish under illegal conditions. So, it’s no surprise that one of his pet peeves is the lack of enforcement. His ‘repertoire’ of stories is full of incidents where DEM failed to enforce its own regulations.

Another by-product of his presence on the water has been his awareness of the failure of certain species. He was the first to raise the alarm over the collapse of the flounder population. He also was the first to spot the failure of horseshoe crab breeding. As is typical of these events, the biological research quickly caught up to what he could see daily.

Member of school committee

Being a ‘concerned citizen’ about bay issues has encouraged Paulie to participate in other political arenas. During the years that his daughters (3) were in school, he ran for and served on the local school committee. He was one of few members who actually went to classrooms to observe events. He became well known as someone who pulled no punches.

Helped save striped bass

However, my own appreciation of Paulie relates to his service on the striped bass issue in the ‘70’s and ‘80’s. We both served on the Citizens’s Advisory Committee. In those days it was more typical of commercial fishermen being at loggerheads with recreational fishermen. Paulie was bigger than that. He was fighting for the fish itself, not for his ‘rights’ to harvest them.

Third speaker in bay series

If you’ve been paying attention, you now recognize that we’ve had three perspectives on the Bay: Save the Bay’s John Torgan, URI’s Dave Bengston have both told us what we can expect.

Now a commercial fisherman with more than 45 years of experience in all phases of marine harvesting will give us his perspective. It should be an illuminating event for everyone who cares about the conditions of the Bay.

(Will Barbeau)

