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THE PLUM LINE

The Official Newsletter of The Plum Island Surfcaster
P.O. Box 364 – Newburyport, MA 01950
<http://plumisland.surfcaster.com>

MARCH 2006

Half – Way There . . .

February 15, 2006

If you are like me, this time of year is the worst. Three months since my last fish in the surf and three months before I have a chance at catching another in these waters.

The weather turns nasty, and the Holidays and the joy they bring are far behind us. All the hustle and bustle that occupies us from mid-November until January 2nd is long gone, and I start to get restless, looking at the calendar, cleaning and tweaking my gear, doing whatever it takes to keep the Cabin Fever symptoms at bay.

One of those Cabin Fever antidotes I take is to read and re-read my old fishing journals, often they bring a great day on the water back to life, almost like looking at a series of photographs. Other times they highlight facts and statistics that might get overlooked.

In reading my journal for the 2005 season and earlier journals, I have come away with a upsetting trend that has me concerned.

It appears as if my wife is right – I fish more than ever, but what is really upsetting me is that my catch of larger bass has dwindled significantly vs. the overall number of fish I am catching. This trend has progressed steadily over the years – according to my very unscientific journals. But the great thing about a journal is that you don't have to rely on a sometimes-faulty memory. It is all there in black and white.

Back in the days of the 36" recreational minimum, and commercial bass fishing was severely cutback, I caught (and released) my share of "keepers" along with many, many more low 30's fish (inches that is). Mid to high twenties fish were common. . . As the recreational minimum size has been reduced (first to 34" then to the current 28") and bag limits increased (one then two per day per fisherman) my journals indicate that the average fish size I have caught has certainly gotten smaller.

32" fish – once fairly common are now something to celebrate. 5 yrs ago, the same could be said for 36" fish.

While all this was going on in the recreational side, the state, in its infinite wisdom, re-vitalized and expanded the MA commercial fishery for bass. If the regulations do not change for 2006 it will be possible for commercial license holders to catch, kill and sell as many as 30 fish of 34" or more in length daily from Tuesday thru Thursday until the commercial quota is filled. How can that help things for the Bass – targeting the breeding sized fish – or help the occasional recreational fisherman, simply looking for some sport and the chance to put dinner on the table?

Although the overall quantity of fish seems stable or even better, my journals indicate that the average size of the Bass I am catching is going steadily down. Can this trend be good for the bass – or does it foreshadow a more ominous future for Striped Bass stocks?

For sure there will be those of you out there who will say – “I caught more keepers this year than ever” and that may be true, but think about it. . Is your fishing effort up or down or even, is your skill level increasing? Think about the fish you have caught and see if you can spot a trend . . . keep a journal and learn from past years. You will be amazed, entertained, and informed.

Charles Novotny

Presidents Message

Part of what makes our club great is the diversity of its membership. Boat guys and surf guys, some who fish with bait, while others fly fish. Some guys hold their commercial rod and reel license while others would like to see the striped bass gain game fish status. Regardless of your preferred method of catching or whether you decide to keep striped bass or sell that fish, we are all fishermen. We are all Plum Island Surfcasters. Because we are so diversified, with so many different views we need to remember that even though we may not agree with the methods or the principles of our fellow members we need to respect their right to do so. All of us are obeying the law. All of us care about our fishery. And I hope that everyone cares about each other regardless of our differences.

Kevin M. Moore

Reminder to Club members:


THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER UNTIL YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.


PISC 2006 membership fees are now due! Please see Don Jalbert at March's meeting to pay your dues.

Also the comment letter for S2308 is on our website to be downloaded and sent out to our Senators and Representatives.



*The Massachusetts Striped Bass Association
presents:*

2006 MSBA Annual Sport Fishing Expo






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Adults \$15 • Children 14 & Under \$5

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Featured Attractions

On The Water Theatre — MSBA Seminar Room
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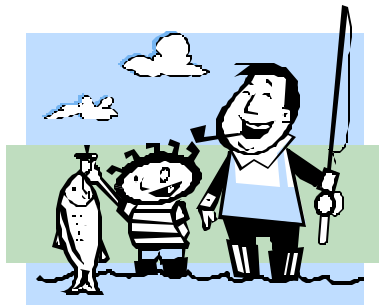
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ATTENTION Juniors!

We have a change in the schedule for June's Meeting!

Fri. June 25, 2006 meeting will be change to June 16, 2006, which is also a Friday. The time will be 6pm. If you have any question please fell free to contact me at Moorek320@aol.com or 978-255-0128 Thanks Kevin Moore



Jr's. Program Schedule

At the Parker river wildlife refuge headquarters (classes will be held from 3-5 PM)

Saturday March 25th: Bait rigs

Saturday April 29th: Fly tying

At the Newbury upper green

Saturday May 13th: Annual casting clinic (8:30 AM -12 PM)

At Plum island point

Saturday June 10th: Mackerel fishing trip

Sites to be determined by fish

Friday June 23rd: Fishing trip

Friday July 28th: Fishing trip

Friday August 25th: Fishing trip/ possible overnighter

Friday September 29th: Plum island overnighter

Friday October 13th: Plum island overnighter

Date to be determined

September beach blast

PISC Regulation Update

River Herring

Last fall the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission approved a recommendation by Paul Diodati, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries, to prohibit the harvest, possession or sale of river herring (alewives and blue-back herring) in Massachusetts for 2006 through 2008. This recommendation was made after years of close monitoring of our river herring runs during their spring spawning migrations. For the most part, the state has seen a dramatic decline in river herring abundance, a decline that is not part of the normal abundance stages for the species. Although it will be illegal to use river herring as bait in Mass state waters, the use of sea herring will still be legal. The Division has agreed to produce a 'cheat-sheet' that will help fishermen identify the different herring species we have in our waters. The species identified are alewives, blue-back herring, sea herring and American shad. The identification sheet will be available through the Division's web site, www.mass.gov/marinefisheries and also at local bait shops. Compliance of this regulation will be of utmost importance as part of the efforts to restore our river herring stocks. If you witness violations and want to report the event, you are urged to call the Massachusetts Environmental Police at 1-800-632-8075.

Groundfish

At their February 1st council meeting, the New England Fisheries Management Council approved measures that would reduce cod mortality on the recreational sector fishing in the Gulf of Maine as part of Framework 42. The measure, which was the preferred alternative of the NEFMC's Recreational Advisory Panel (RAP), includes a prohibition on the retention of cod in much of the Gulf of Maine from November 1 through March 31, along with an increase in the minimum size to 24 inches. However, since Framework 42 will not go into effect until after the start of the 2006 fishing year on May 1st, the National Marine Fisheries Service will likely implement measures for the interim that mirror the above mentioned measures. The limit on cod will still be 10 fish and this applies to both private boats and party/charter boats fishing the Gulf of Maine. In addition to the cod measures, the NEFMC voted to establish a control date for the party/charter sector. This was also a recommendation of the RAP as a means to control effort

on severely depleted stocks of cod in the Gulf of Maine. This control date would put any new entrants into the fishery (federal party/charter boats) on notice that their permit may be subject to certain limitations in the future. As part of the control date, the RAP also discussed the possibility of seeking an allocation of cod that would be managed solely for recreational uses. The recreational sector, in theory, would be able to manage their allocation (with Council approval) as they see fit but most importantly, we would not have to take future reductions or be subject to further restrictions as a result of commercial over-fishing. This allocation effort is just discussion right now but may become more of a reality with future groundfish management plans.

Two Year Cod Closure Established in Massachusetts Bay

It is no surprise that the Gulf of Maine cod stocks have dropped considerably over the past ten years. The most recent assessment also indicates that cod stock rebuilding in the Gulf of Maine is not occurring in accordance with the rebuilding schedule. Because of the depleted cod stock condition, coupled with increased federal fishing regulations, some federally licensed commercial fishermen have been working a loophole that allows them to fish in Massachusetts state waters under a state commercial license and avoid the more restrictive federal regulations until later in the fishing year when it is safer to go offshore.

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has recognized this problem over the past few seasons. To address this loophole and to also provide protection for extremely large amounts of cod aggregations in Mass Bay during the fall and winter months, the DMF and the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission created the Cod Conservation Zone (CCZ) in the fall of 2005. Fishing for cod in the CCZ was prohibited (both commercial and recreational) from December 1, 2005 through January 15, 2006. Because of additional concerns about spawning cod aggregations in Mass Bay and the fact that the target Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Gulf of Maine cod had already been exceeded for the 2005 fishing year, DMF Director Paul Diodati extended this year's closure from January 15 to February 28, 2006. The closure for this coming year is also scheduled for the same timeframe, December 1, 2006 through January 15, 2007. However, because of pending federal regulations regarding the entire Gulf of Maine multi-species groundfish fishery, the closure may have to be extended on both ends. To keep up to date on the potential changes to the Mass Bay closure this coming season, visit the DMF's web site at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.

Massachusetts Commercial Fishing Permits

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries has implemented changes this year to their commercial permits. There is a new groundfish endorsement that will be required for any commercially permitted boat that wishes to land and sell groundfish (cod, haddock, pollock, redfish, white hake, yellowtail flounder, winter flounder, windowpane flounder, American plaice, witch flounder and monkfish). There are criteria that one must satisfy before being issued this new groundfish endorsement. One criterion is to have possessed a state-issued commercial permit on November 4, 2004, including federal permit holders authorized to take groundfish as long as they retire their federal permit. The long-standing rod and reel commercial permit, which entitles an individual to conduct commercial fishing as opposed to a commercial boat permit (allows all aboard to fish commercially), will continue to be issued but rod and reel permits will not be issued a new groundfish endorsement. Those that do not qualify for this new groundfish endorsement may possess and sell up to 75-pounds of cod per vessel per 24-hour day harvested in state waters. If this permitting process affects you, it is recommended that you read the complete details of these changes on the DMF web site. I will also be available to answer questions related to these changes but unique situations will need to be addressed by the Division.

Massachusetts Legislation – S2308

This bill, which I have been working on and spoke about for eight months now, was released from the Natural Resources Committee to the Senate for debate. As it is written in its current version, the bill still has major changes that the recreational sector should be pushing for. This is a very comprehensive, involved bill and this 'update' could not capture the history of the bill or the suggested changes that need to be made. One thing that can be relayed here is that this organization needs to take action to get changes made and that action, at the very least, should include club support for the position that the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission has taken. The Commission has forwarded a letter to legislative representatives of their suggestions on how the bill needs to be changed to best suit the marine resources, the agencies dedicated to managing those resources, the user groups involved and the overall economic impact to the Commonwealth. It is imperative that both sportsmen's clubs and individuals weigh in on this bill with the legislature. Please contact me directly if you any assistance in writing a letter, finding out who to send it to, talking points, etc. I will make myself available as a resource for you.

Striped Bass

At this time, there are no striped bass changes anticipated for the recreational or commercial fishery in 2006. The striped bass commercial fishery will likely start some time after July 4th but the exact date has not been determined yet.

Essex County League of Sportsmen

The annual banquet has been set for April 1st at the Hilltop restaurant. Tickets are \$35 each and can be obtained from Chuck Casella. The banquet features a cocktail hour, an unbeatable buffet dinner, award presentations, raffles and silent and live auctions.

The League dues for participating clubs was increased this year by \$90. The increased fee will be a start to upgrading the Massachusetts Sportsmen's Council communication system and administrative process. The Essex County League has spoke to the MSC president and treasurer regarding the upgrade and the two have voiced their support for the idea and will work to develop a plan to implement the chances. Also, the Mass. Sportsmen's Council banquet is Saturday, April 8th at the Chester P. Tuttle Post #279 American Legion in Auburn.

The Mass Division of Fisheries and Wildlife are promoting the second season of their Young Adult Pheasant Hunt program. This three-part program accepts young adults between 12 and 17 years of age. The participants are required to attend two workshops involving hunter ethics, safe gun handling, 'in the field' sessions to identify unsafe situations, shooting zones, field dressing birds and instruction on the use of equipment typically used in upland hunting. There are some requirements associated with being accepted in to the program but if you are interested or know someone who may be interested, please contact Chuck Casella at 978-290-0705 for more information. You may also check out the program on the web at www.mass.gov/masswildlife.

Chuck Casella
Legislation
PISC

TOURNAMENTS

Plum Island Year Long – May 1st – October 31st

Plum Island Invitational – Saturday May 27th - 28th

Tri-State Tournament – Cape Cod Leg - June 2nd, 3rd, 4th

Plum Island Boat Tournament – Saturday June 10th noon – June 11th noon. BBQ to follow

Tri-State Tournament – Maine Leg – September 8th, 9th, 10th

Exotics – October 1st – November 1st

Tri-State Tournament – Rhode Island Leg – October 27th, 28th, 29th

Die Hard – November 1st – November 30th

Please note the date change for the Maine leg of the Tri-State.

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REFRESHMENTS

NO TIME TO EAT BEFORE THE MEETING, NO WORRIES.

The refreshment committee will be offering a nice home cooked meal before each meeting for a donation of \$3.00. Below you will find the menu for the next three months. So come **HUNGRY!**

The meal for March's meeting will be a Boiled Dinner \$4.00 (higher cost)

April: Homemade Baked Beans & Hot dogs

May: Chili w/cheese

June: Spaghetti w/ meat sauce

Coffee and snacks will continue to be offered for a small donation.

The refreshment committee and JR. Surfcasters Thank You for your continued support.

Welcoming Committee

A Welcoming Committee has been formed, this committee will be supervised under membership. This idea was brought to the board by Jean Paul Gregoire , who has also offered his services in this area. Jean Paul & Joe Camilliere have agreed to serve the club in this way. However we are still looking for one more person to serve, if you are interested or know someone who is interested in serving the club in this way, please contact: Don Jalbert, Membership

Goal of the Welcoming Committee:

It is the goal of the membership committee to extend the hand of friendship to all new members, this will be an opportunity to introduce new members to other members with the same area of interest, promoting club support.

2006 SCHEDULE:

Mar 21- Al Montello "Lake Ontario Fishing for Salmonoids (salmon, steelheads and browns)"

Apr 18- Roger Aziz, Jr., "Shad Fishing in the Merrimac"

May 16- Captain Charlie Crue, "Light Tackle and Fly Fishing in the Merrimac"

June 20- Dave Hadden, Editor for Fly Fishing America, "Fishing from Kayaks"

July 18- Don Jalbert, "Late Summer Stripers in NH"

Aug 15- Kevin Moore, "Surf Fishing the Island from the River to the Refuge"

Sept 19 – Steve McKenna, "Techniques for Big Bass After Dark"

Oct 17 – TBA

Nov 18 – Saturday Awards Banquet/Photo Contest/Fish Stories

Dec 19 – Yankee Swap – Gifts and Desserts

Club meetings are the 3rd Tuesday of every month at the Newbury Fireman's Hall. Doors open at 6:30pm for setup. A short business meeting will start a 7:30pm, followed by a quick raffle drawing, and then our speaker will follow. We try to be done by 9:30pm. The hall is located off Route 1A@Morgan Ave, behind the Newbury Town Hall and Fire Dept.

