

# Bulletin

## Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County NJ



Free Issue

February 2026

At The American Legion Hall, Post # 170, 33 West Passaic Street, Rochelle Park, N. J.

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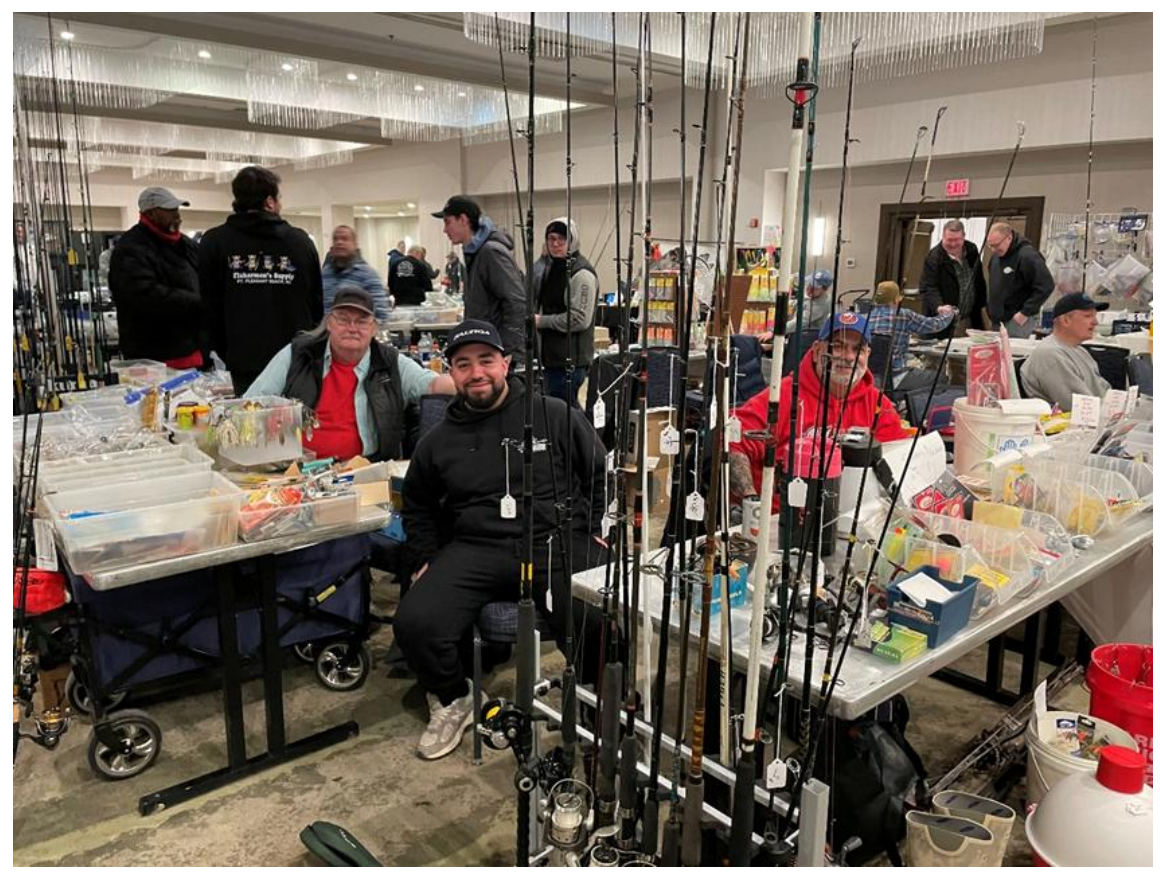
**Fred Villanova**



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### Glenn Peckel & Ralph DeJulia & Hamza's Table at the Flea Market



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*Good fishing, good friends. That's what SWABC is all about The Best Fishing Club in NJ*

The regular meetings will be held every third Tuesday of the month, (except March) at 7:30 PM at the Legion Hall. A \$5 fee is required, for non-members. This entitles you to refreshments, snacks, and some new tricks about fishing plus participation if you choose in our dark horse drawings. Welcome all; we hope you enjoy the evening.

## President's Corner

At our January 20th meeting, member John Fatuzzo gave us an excellent power point presentation on the Megalodon, probably the biggest animal that ever existed on our planet. It was a terrifying creature that roamed the seas. A Great White Shark looked like a sardine when placed next to it on the screen that John showed us. John provided us with a very interesting and a professional presentation on this creature that we all enjoyed. **Thanks John!**

Andrew Basso gave us an update on our upcoming February 1st Flea Market at the Hasbrouck Heights Hilton and we have 70 vendors lined up for it. Many prospective vendors wait at the last minute to commit to be there until they wait for the weather predictions.

Tickets were available for sale for our Past President's Dinner at the Mountainside Inn that will be held on March 24th. More information on this dinner is in another section of this newsletter.

Ralph DeJulia has set up four charter fishing trips for our club already and there were sign-up sheets available for them at this meeting. Ralph has done a great job in putting these trips together for sea bass and fluke. More details about these trips are in another section of this newsletter.

Member Hamza Issa handled our Dark Horse and had a number of very nice fishing reels as prizes for it that drew many members to purchase tickets to win these reels. Thanks Hamza!

We had a table set aside for members to donate fishing tackle that they do not use anymore so that we can sell this gear at our Flea Market as a fundraiser for our club. Thanks to all who contributed to it!

Nico made delicious chicken with rice, salad, and bread pudding for us to enjoy at this meeting. Thanks Nico!

Steven Weinstein was the lucky winner of our 50/50.

The night of our meeting was very cold and it was 22 degrees when I first arrived at the Legion, but many members still came out to attend it and we had a good time despite the cold.

## February 17th Meeting – Oyster Rehabilitation Program

Oysters consumed by diners in restaurants were regularly thrown in trash bins. An ambitious program developed by our state DEP along with a commercial seafood company not only saves discarded oysters, but uses them to seed new oysters in our local waters. This is not only a big win for our environment, but also a win for a new food source. A representative from our state DEP will be at this meeting to give us a presentation of this cooperative program with our state and a commercial fishing company to promote our oyster industry.



## March 24th Meeting – Past President's Dinner at the Mountainside Inn

Our club will host this annual event on **March 24th at 7:00 p.m.** to honor all the presidents who have served our club over its many years. Food is served **Family Style** with roast beef, chicken, salad, pasta, potatoes, veggies and dessert. Beer, wine and soda are also included with the dinner. The price for this year's Past President's Dinner with all of the above is **\$40 even in spite of this high inflation!** We will have speakers to touch briefly on a variety of fishing-related topics, a **huge Dark Horse**, door prizes, and certificates/gift cards to be presented to all of the winners of the Big Fish contest! The Mountainside Inn is located at 509 Hazel Street, Clifton, NJ.

Tickets for this dinner will be on sale at our February 17th meeting by Dinner Chairman Art Vrola. To purchase tickets and to receive more information about this dinner, please call Art Vrola at (201) 280-8612.

This is our club's March meeting and we do **NOT** meet at the American Legion Post for it. Our club normally has its meetings on the third Tuesday of every month, but the third Tuesday in March is St. Patrick's Day and many of our members attend events on this day and are not available to be at our Past Presidents dinner. That is why this dinner has been moved to the following Tuesday, March 24th.

## New Jersey Fish & Game Council under Attack Again by Animal Right Activists

By John Toth

**First the good news**, the bills to add animal right activists (3) to the NJ Fish & Game Council did **NOT** pass during the legislators 2025 Lam Duck session that ended on January 15th. Hunters and anglers contacted their legislators to prevent this from happening.

**Now the bad news**, animal right activists will not let their cause die to stuff the Fish & Game Council with their people and Bill S 471 has been already introduced by a legislator Brian Spano to change the Fish & Game Council to their liking. This is like when you think **Dracula** has been killed with a wooden stake, he arises from the coffin again and again to do something bad!

The NJ Fish & Game Council is important since it determines hunting and fresh water fishing regulations in our state and if the animal right activists gain control of it hunting and fishing will surely die a slow death.

I will keep you updated on the rise of Dracula! **We will keep our wooden stakes sharpened!**

## Big Fish Derby – New Category

On the recommendation of member Bill Fish, our Board approved Trigger Fish to be added as a new category of fish that can be entered into this contest. The minimum weight for Trigger Fish to enter is **1 lb. 8 oz.**

**Message from our Membership Chairman –**

**Art Vrola**

On behalf of our Board members, I want to **Thank** all members who have already paid their 2026 dues. Please keep in mind, the club depends heavily on the timely payment of dues to fund our programs throughout the year. As stated in our club's by-laws, to be an active club member our dues are due no later than February 2026.

If dues are not received by the end of February, delinquent members will be removed from our membership roster and will not receive our club's monthly newsletter or be eligible to participate in the club's activities. Checks for dues payment should be made out to **SWABC**. If you cannot attend a meeting - mail your check to the **American Legion Post # 170 c/o SWABC, 33 West Passaic Street, Rochelle Park, NJ 07662**.

Our club membership dues are **\$55 for an individual and \$60 for family membership**. Included in the dues are **two club raffle books** with a value of **\$20**. (Each book has ten tickets in it at a cost of \$1 for each ticket). Members can keep these raffle tickets for their own use to possibly win our raffle prizes or sell the tickets at \$1.00 each & keep the sales money.

The 2026 raffle tickets are in & will be handed out at the February meeting.

This membership policy was adopted by the club's Board to have an ongoing revenue stream to cover the club's expenses relating to insurance fees, hall rentals speaker fees, refreshments for our meetings and other expenses.

**Winter Trade Shows**

The first one up is the Boat show in February (12 - 15) and followed by the Salt Water Expo in March (13- 15) Our club has a booth at both of these shows and we need volunteers to staff them to sell raffle tickets and to talk to visitors to see if they would be interested in joining our club. The following is the list of volunteers that have signed up to work at both of these shows. More volunteers are **not needed** since we have enough volunteers to staff both of these shows.

**NJ Boat Show Sale & Expo – February 13th – 16th –  
NJ Convention Center, Raritan NJ**

**Thursday, February 12th**

11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.–John Toth, Fred Villanova (set up)  
3 to 7:00 p.m.–Tom Bornemann & Chuck Santoro

**Friday, February 13th**

11 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.–John Toth & Gene Snyder  
3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Glenn Peckel & Art Lein

**Saturday, February 14th**

10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. – *Hector Chacon & Frank Rella*

2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Art Lein & Rich Melton

**Sunday, February 15th**

10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.–John Toth & *Sal Crochiola*

1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – John Toth & Bobby Jones

**Salt Water Expo – March 13th – March 15th**

**Friday, March 13th**

Noon – 4:00 p.m. – John Toth, Fred Villanova (set up)

4 to 8:00 p.m. Tom Bornemann, Art Vrola

**Saturday, March 14th**

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Bob Goldstein, John Farrell,  
Ralph DeJulia

2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. –Bill Fish, Chuck Santoro & Dave Slater

**Sunday, March 15th**

10:00 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. – Don Lohse & Sal Crochiola

1:45 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – John Toth & Rick Reitano.

**Enjoy a Wild Game Dinner**

**The New Jersey Outdoor Alliance**, a PAC that supports the rights of hunters and anglers in New Jersey, is holding a Wild Game Dinner on March 29th at Pub 199 in Mount Arlington starting at 4:00 p.m. The menu has a lot offer with venison prepared in many ways, wild boar, and an assortment of seafood dishes that Pub 199 is noted for like mussels in garlic sauce, fried flounder etc. A tricky tray and a 50/50 will be available.

Cost per ticket is \$120 and John Toth (a Trustee of the NJOA) will have tickets for sale possibly at our club's February 17<sup>th</sup> meeting or in March at the latest. John can be reached at (732) 656 – 0139 if you want to order tickets or have questions about this dinner.

**SWABC “Mark an Offer” table  
manned by Bobby Jones, T.J. Taber &  
Sal Crochiola**



## **Heads you Lose – Tails you Lose – with Sea Bass Regulations**

**By John Toth**

Recreational anglers are always told by fishing management, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, MA-FMC) that we are overfishing various species and our quotas need to be reduced. Case in point is the recent attempt by the ASMFC to shut down striped bass fishing for two months for the 2026 season. On further review of the data, the ASMFC reversed this attempt since its data on striped bass stocks was flawed and the ASMFC ruled that the regulations for striped bass will remain the same in 2026 as the 2025 regulation – 1 fish from 28 to 31 inches. Like striped bass and other species, the ASMFC and the MA-FMC are always overeager to place restrictions on the recreational fishing community.

Well, what about when the stocks of black sea bass have been rebuilt upward by their own management records to about 284% of the target biomass. Yet why is it our quota to fish for them has not been adjusted upward accordingly? If the stocks of sea bass are at now record high, then the seasons to fish for them should be expanded to match this huge increase of sea bass stocks. While fishing for fluke in the summer, many of us have picked up nice and big sea bass but we have to throw them back since they are out of season. I am an advisor to the NJ Marine Fisheries Council on black sea bass and when it comes time to set sea bass seasons and size limits, the Council has to work with a quota that is very limited causing it to make the best choices for anglers out of a bad situation. That is why the number of sea bass that can be taken is stacked in the spring and fall seasons and one or none in the summer. If the limited quota we now have for sea bass was spread throughout the year, anglers would be allowed to take home only a few sea bass making a special trip to fish for them unlikely. This has been very frustrating for the NJ Marine Fisheries Council trying to do the right thing for us anglers.

Having so many black sea bass in our waters is also injurious to other fisheries. Sea bass are known to be voracious eaters of other juvenile fish like striped bass, fluke and even small lobsters. As mentioned above, the ASMFC is concerned about striped bass stocks yet these stocks are negatively impacted by the growing number of sea bass that consume their juveniles. A captain who I am friendly with and has spent many years on the sea has told me that he believes that the stocks of striped bass would be dramatically improved if we were allowed to fish for more sea bass.

This black sea bass stock issue is not new. In April of 2017, John Bullard, a National Policy Advisor for Recreational Fisheries, held a roundtable discussion with about 25 members of the recreational community to hear and understand issues that are most important to us. One

of the issues that were brought to the attention of Mr. Bullard was the overabundance of sea bass stocks and its negative effect on other fisheries. Unfortunately, nothing positive resulted from this meeting and I did not expect it to happen when Mr. Bullard did not want this meeting to be recorded. In December of 2018, as president of the Jersey Coast Anglers Association and the Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County, I tried to have another roundtable meeting set up with Mr. Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, so that we could again address this black sea bass issue and other problems affecting the recreational fishing community and work in tandem with them for resolution. This meeting did not take place since Mr. Pentony's schedule could not or would not accommodate a meeting with us.

Even with an abundance of sea bass, we have not received a substantial increase in our sea bass quota and that's why I term it as a head's you lose, tails you lose situation for the recreational community. Maybe we may soon see a substantial improvement with our black sea bass quota and allow us to catch more of them.

**Update:** The ASMFC and the MA-FMC at its joint December 17th meeting approved an increase in our sea bass quota for 2026 by 20%. Finally, this is a step in the right direction.

The New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council will meet early this year to develop our new regulations for sea bass that reflect this 20% increase in our sea bass quota.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Tackle Table with Dennis Kuntz & Friend**














# 2025 BIG FISH OF THE YEAR DERBY

## Final Standing

### & new rules for 2026

1. Fish must be in season.
2. *The fish can only be caught in New Jersey & New York waters.*
3. The fish entered must be verified by the boat captain or another club member or at an official weigh station. A picture of the fish is a much-preferred way to verify an entry into the Big Fish contest done by a cell phone or a regular camera. A club member can win more than one Big Fish contest prize.
4. Affidavits must be received within 30 days after the fish is caught. Entries for fish caught after the Dec. meeting of a given year must be received by the January meeting of the following year.

FISH	SPECIES	MIN. WEIGHT	ENTRY WEIGHT	ANGLER
	BLACKFISH	4	9 lbs. 8 oz.	Bob Goldstein
	BLUEFISH	12		
	COD FISH	10		
	FLOUNDER	1.5 lbs.	2.62 lbs.	Chuck Santoro & Don Lohse
	FLUKE	4	10 lbs.	Carmen Bufardeci
	LING	2	2 lbs. 4 oz.	Lou Castellano
	POLLOCK	10	12 lbs. 1 oz.	Jon Campbell
	PORGY	1.5 lbs.		
	SEA BASS	2	4 lbs.	Carmen Bufardeci
	STRIPED BASS	12	30	Nick Casamassimo
	WEAKFISH	2		

*Any member who knowingly submits a false affidavit, faces expulsion from the club.*

### SWABC Flea Market Report By John Toth

February can be brutal with bad weather and **Thank God** it did not snow, but the weather was cold with a chilly 12 degrees at the start of the morning and it remained cold throughout the day with a strong wind that made it feel colder. Our Flea Market Chairman, Andrew Basso, along with the assistance of Don Lohse did a fine job with enlisting about 70 vendors to fill the tables at the Hasbrouck Heights Hilton on February 1st!

Don Lohse sold 50/50 tickets and Bobby Jones and T.J. Taber sold our donated club tackle at our "Make me an Offer" table. Art Vrola and Fred Villanova sold our club's raffle tickets. Also, three new members were signed up by our Membership Chairman Art Vrola at their table. Jim Galanaugh Jr. and Chuck Santoro collected money as visitors entered the building. Gary Gusterson and Gene Snyder acted as security guards to give our vendors a sense of security and to prevent theft. Lou Castellano made signs we needed for our seminars, the 50/50 ticket raffle and the sign needed for the raffle for six anglers to go on the Ebttide Too, docked at Atlantic Highlands donated by Captain Bob Henn of Ebttide Fishing Charters. John Toth, Rick Reitano, and Nick Cassamassimo sold raffle tickets for this trip and Rick's wife even made tasty muffins that went well with a cup of coffee. Sal Crochiola helped wherever he was needed to make things run smoothly.

We had two seminars at the Flea market with Pedro Idefonso did the 10:00 a.m. seminar on black fish and Dave Lilly who did the 11:30 a.m. seminar on fluke. Pedro, only 14 years old, did a power point presentation on blackfish like he did at one of our club meetings and it was well received! Dave Lilly's presentation on fluke was well attended and it went very well since you could not hear a pin drop when Dave was talking. **Thanks Dave!**

The raffle for the 6 pack trip on the Ebttide was won by Gene Snyder. Our 50/50 prize was won by Rick Reitano.

Finally, I want to **Thank** all of you who helped in so many ways to make this Flea Market happen!



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## NEW Members

**Signed up at the January Meeting:**

**Kevin Osiadacz – Garfield**

**Douglas Frappier – Bergenfield**

**Signed up at the Flea Market:**

**Jon Dabal – Wallington**

**Ron Mroz—Wanaque**

**John Kurz—Wood Ridge**

**Tim O’Conner -- Hawthorne**

## Some of the tables at the 2026 SWABC Flea Market



## Salt Water Anglers of Bergen County #1 Salt Water Fishing Club

Enclose a check in the amount of \$55 for a one-year membership, into New Jersey’s #1 Salt Water Fishing Club

Mail To: **American Legion Hall Post # 170, 33 West Passaic Street, Rochelle Park, N.J. 07622**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail Address:** \_\_\_\_\_