



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Connie Barclay, NOAA
(301) 713-2370
Forbes Darby, ASA
(703) 519-9691

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NOAA Fisheries and the American Sportfishing Association Announce Partnership to Help Restore Coastal and Marine Habitats *Reception Provides Setting for Announcement*

Tonight NOAA fisheries plans to announce a three-year partnership for up to \$5.4 million with the American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation to help communities restore coastal and marine habitat to benefit our nation's fisheries. During the American Sportfishing Association's Reception on Capitol Hill, NOAA's Acting Administrator Scott Gudes will announce the partnership funds.

"Tonight we will gather for one of the fantastic events scheduled during National Fishing and Boating Week. This is a perfect time to announce this partnership, since its purpose is to promote community involvement in the local restoration of fish habitat," Gudes said. "Thanks to Congress for providing us with additional funds, the projects that will be accomplished through this partnership will produce on-the-ground results, and help foster an appreciation for the environment in communities across the nation."

The NOAA Restoration Center and FishAmerica have been partners in fisheries habitat restoration since 1998. Since then, they have partnered on 70 projects across the nation to benefit marine and anadromous fish resources, such as dam removals, fish passage improvements, sea grass plantings, wetlands restoration, kelp bed restoration, streambank stabilization, coral reef and mangrove restoration and invasive plant removal projects.

"Healthy fish habitat is critical to the future of both fishing and boating," said Doug Gomes, vice president of sales and marketing for Grady-White Boats. "It's not only important for the present generation of anglers and boaters to have a healthy and productive resource, but also for future generations who have yet to experience the thrill of fishing and boating. Without habitat, we're sunk." Grady_White Boats is a \$100,000 donor to FishAmerica's current endowment campaign.

This year the NOAA Restoration Center and FishAmerica will jointly fund fisheries habitat restoration projects at a level of \$1.2 million. The partnership announcement at the reception tonight represents a more than ten-fold increase from the 1998 funding level of \$100,000.

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This year also marks the first year that the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) will work with NOAA and FishAmerica to identify and develop habitat restoration projects.

“We are very excited to work with NOAA fisheries and FishAmerica,” President of CCA David Cummins said. “It is important to first protect the resource, then improve current and future fishing for everyone, through activities like education and restoration. We are looking forward to involving members of our various chapters in fish habitat restoration activities.”

The American Sportfishing Association is a non-profit industry trade association organized to ensure healthy and sustainable fisheries resources and increase sportfishing participation through education, conservation promotion and marketing. The FishAmerica Foundation serves as the conservation and research projects arm of the American Sportfishing Association, and is a leader in efforts to protect and restore the Nation’s fisheries habitat, thereby increasing the opportunity for sportfishing success. More information on ASA and FishAmerica can be viewed at: <http://www.asafishing.org/programs/conservation/fishamerica/>

The Coastal Conservation Association is a national organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of marine resources. It is an organization of strong state chapters, comprised of avid recreational fishers who have banded together to address conservation issues nationally and within their respective states. More information on CCA can be viewed at: <http://www.joincca.org/>

The NOAA Restoration Center, housed in NOAA fisheries, is home to the community-based restoration program, a program involving communities in the restoration of local marine and estuarine habitat. Partnerships with federal agencies, states, local governments, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, businesses, industry and schools have helped more than 170 local efforts restore coastal habitat. NOAA fisheries and its partners provide funding and expertise to numerous coastal community projects, in an effort to promote coastal stewardship and a conservation ethic. More information on the NOAA Restoration Center can be viewed at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/>

The National Marine Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.