

HARBOUR LIGHT

OFFICIAL VHFC NEWSLETTER August 2023

Editor: Ed Valitutto VHFC Website: http://www.vhfishingclub.com

VHFC meets the second Friday of each month from April through November

Location: Manahawkin Community Center

775 East Bay Ave Manahawkin, NJ

Doors open at 7:30; Meeting begins at 7:45 PM

Next meeting: 11 August 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello VHFC Members,

Well you do not need a crystal ball to know that the summer of 2023 is over the halfway point! My first tomatoes are finally turning red, the A/C has been running non stop for weeks, weekend traffic on all our roads (compounded by the never ending road work) and waterways are crowded and sluggish, restaurant reservations are difficult and within a month school reopens. Yep the summer of 2023 will soon be history! If you haven't been making the most of what this fine area has to offer in the good of summertime, then it's time to start before the fall season arrives.

Our Seventh Annual VHFC Fluke Tournament was held on 15 July and was the best to date! Be sure to read the article in this month's Newsletter showing lots of pictures from the event and listing the winners. The weather was perfect and everyone had a great time.

If you missed the July meeting, then you missed out on Dr. Doug Zemeckis' excellent presentation on the survey methods used for determining the size and status of our various

fish stocks and their impact on the setting of bag and size limits. Our meeting attendance has been on the increase this year so please continue to try to attend our meetings. Getting presenters is enough of a challenge but having only a small audience means getting them for a return appearance is all but impossible.

Lastly, enjoy the bounty of our area but please stay safe. Drink plenty of fluids, use sunscreen, plan your activities off the scorching afternoon hours or just get in the shade sporadically. Lastly, be sure to weigh-in your catch for our FOM / FOY awards and submit a report of your success for others to enjoy.

Ed

UPCOMING NEAR TERM EVENTS

August 11 Friday - VHFC Club Meeting 7:45

JULY MEETING - Our guest speaker is Steve Palmer. Steve is the owner and proprietor of Jingles Bait and Tackle in Beach Haven, and now also is part owner of the Miss Beach Haven party and charter boat. Steve is going to give us a primer on surf fishing our local beaches.

NEW JERSEY JCAA & FISHING REGULATIONS - Editor's Note: Since JCAA is off for the summer, Phil Simon has submitted an Opinion Piece on our Fishing Regulations. This is Phil's opinion and does not reflect the official position of VHFC. I personally agree with Phil. Read it and we can discuss it at our meeting next Friday.

OPINION by Phil Simon - Have you been wondering why our fishing regulations seem to have gotten even worse in recent years despite the fact that our landings of fish are at historical lows? One of the reasons may be that the regulators are looking at bad data. Some years ago, everyone was complaining about the "fatally flawed data" that was being used as input for the calculations and models used by the fisheries scientists to calculate stock sizes, catch limits, season openings and closings and the rest of the numbers we are presented with each year by the NJ Marine Fisheries Council. The council is obligated by law to set their regulations based on the hard numbers of allowable catch by weight presented to them by NOAA and their scientists (known as the Science and Statistics Committee, SSC).

In acknowledgement to the reviews that their methods were bad, NOAA instituted a new effort to come up with a "better" way of estimating the catch and fishing effort numbers that are the major pieces of data that determine our yearly numbers. This new set of methods, collectively termed the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) made several changes, the most significant being the way that fishing effort was surveyed. In the past this was done by a random telephone survey of all NJ residents (with landline phones), but the new method

surveyed known fisherman by mail (based on a variety of lists including, in our case, the NJ Saltwater Registry), hoping to get better precision and accuracy of the number of people out there fishing. Catch estimates (the number of fish caught per trip) were also changed somewhat. These are based on the dock intercepts, where fisheries personnel question returning recreational fisherman what species they fished for and how many fish they caught.

MRIP replaced the old system during the 2018 – 2020 fishing seasons. What was reported was that the number of people and trips out in the recreational catch that made up the fishing effort had been grossly underestimated, sometimes as much as eight-fold, depending on the fishery. This forced the regulatory agencies (the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the Mid Atlantic Marine Fisheries Council) to tighten the regs to limit the recreational catch even more, which is why things have seemed to have gotten worse for us. And because it seemed we were catching so many more fish, the SSC decided that the stock sizes for many of our targeted species needed upward revisions as well. Otherwise, it was reasoned, we would have fished out the stocks long ago. The beneficiaries of these enlarged stock estimates turned out to be the commercial sector, whose quotas were increased. Because we had been catching more fish than we were "supposed to" our quotas were not increased. This is a highly questionable set of logic from a statistical standpoint, as we are using new, yet unconfirmed estimates of fishing effort to re-set what should be determined by both fishery dependent and fishery independent measures, including actual trawl surveys that count the fish. Alarm bells should have been ringing so that before making these changes to the state of the world, perhaps some further examination of the new methods and data be conducted.

The MRIP people of course could find nothing wrong with what they had created. But think about this for a minute. By focusing their new survey on people who are known fishermen, they omitted all the people who are only occasional players, and in effect made the sample less random, and, perhaps, less representative of the people out there fishing. Think about the people you see out on the reefs on the average weekend. Do you think they are all fishing enthusiasts like our club members with years of experience? What percent of the typical recreational fleet out on the Barnegat Light Reef really know what they are doing? There's an old saying that 10% of the fishermen catch 90% of the fish. I suspect there is a fair amount of truth in this, but do you think the SSC takes this into account, correctly, when computing their fishing effort numbers? I have been told that well, of course they do. But could they be off a bit on their catch estimates? Perhaps more than a bit? What do you think?

Statisticians call this a skewed sample, meaning it is biased, in this case assuming that the MRIP sample population of known fishermen is the same as the total recreational fishing community, when it may not be. This assumption, and the overall methodology, needs to be more thoroughly examined. A better method of estimating fishing effort may correct the nonsense we have been hearing in the last few years. So, the moral of this story is: *Beware of*

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what you wish for. We forced NOAA into "doing something", and we got MRIP. In my opinion, we may have replaced one set of bad data with another.

REVISED HISTORY OF NJ FISHING REGULATIONS by Ed Valitutto - I did an article in the Sept 2021 Newsletter, detailing the history of our Regulations. I updated the Summary Table below for 2023 and it is a perfect segue to Phil's piece. **Warning:** It is pretty depressing to see how much our fishing regulations have changed for the worse - shorter seasons, lower bag limits and increased size / maximum size requirements - over the last 20 years. Don't blame this on global warming or the wind turbines - they may very well cause future issues. Blame it on taking years to invoke a 200 mile limit No Fish Zone, continued industrial pollution / fertilizer runoff especially in the striper estuaries, continued Menhaden overfishing and lack of Fish & Game enforcement personnel for starters! Bad data just exacerbates the problem!

Species	2004 Regulations	2021 Regulations/2023 Regulations	
Weakfish	8 fish at 13"	1 fish at 13"	
Striped Bass	1 fish 24' to 28" & 1 fish >28"	1 Bonus Tag fish 24" to <28" 1 fish 28" to <38" 1 fish 28" to <31"	
Fluke	8 fish at 16 1/2"	3 fish at 18" 2 fish 17" to <18 and 1 fish at 18"	
Sea Bass	25 fish at 12" 1 Jan - 30 Nov	10 fish at 12.5" 15 May 22 Ju 2 fish at 12.5" 1 July – 31 Au 10 fish at 12.5" 8 - 31 Oct 15 fish at 13" 1 Nov -31 Dec 1 fish at 12.5" 1 Jul – 31 Aug 15 fish at 12.5" 1 Nov - 31 Dec	
Winter Flounder	No limit at 11"	2 fish at 12"	
Tautog	14" size limit 4 fish 1/1 - 5/31; 1 fish 6/1-11/14 8 fish 11/15–12/31	15" size limit 4 fish 1 Jan – 28 Feb 4 fish 1 – 30 Apr 1 fish 1 Aug – 15 Nov 5 fish 16 Nov. 16 – 31 Dec	
Bluefish	15 fish no minimum size	3 fish no minimum size	

Oh, and when was the last time you caught cod, whiting, ling, mackerel or croakers!

2023 Fluke Tournament & BBQ by Ed Valitutto - The VHFC Seventh Annual Fluke Tournament was held on Saturday July 14th and was an outstanding success! This year's turnout was the largest yet with 28 entrants and that was without the Leary clan who had a family reunion event. Fortunately, mild winds made fishing outside doable for anyone wanting to travel to the reefs. Here is the complete list of winners & weigh-ins:

Will Kresge	3 lb	12 oz	First \$280
Brian Larkin Jr	3 lb	8 oz	Second \$168
Bill Dabney	3 lb	6 oz	Tied Third \$56
Phil Simon	3 lb	6 oz	Tied Third \$56
Bob Rode	3 lb	5 oz	
Kerry Stephen	3 lb	5 oz	
Jim Healy	3 lb	4 oz	
Kevin Fairbairn	3 lb	3 oz	
Bob Rode	2 lb	13 oz	
John Steubing	2 lb	9 oz	
Marty Friedrich	2 lb	8 oz	
Brian Larkin Sr	2 lb	6 oz	

Special mention to John Barrett who caught a 17" Seabass

The BBQ was enjoyed by the hungry folks who stopped by Mill Creek Park. Thank you to everyone who participated and special thanks to all those who brought the wonderful treats to share. Thank you to my co-chef Vic Harris and the folks who helped serve the food and clean up.

That's Will Kresge 1st (L) and Phil Simon & Bill Dabney tied 3rd (R) with Pat Presutto







Dawn &
Jerry
Nichols
and
friends
having a
bite to eat.
2nd Place
winner
Brian
Larkin Jr
on the
right rear.



Plenty of smiles from Bob Dodds, Cheri & Teresa Hebert (R) and Susan Simon with Pat Valitutto (L)



That's a happy 1st place winner Will Kresge sitting across from Cecilia Friedrich with husband Marty standing. Tied for 3rd is 'camera shy' Bill Dabney is explaining his winning technique to Christine Steubing.

FISH CLEANING ARTICLE (Source Unknown) submitted by Bill Dabney - Many people will never truly appreciate what great table fare fish can be for one simple reason - they've never eaten fish that has been well cared for. Most 'fresh' fish in markets probably sat on deck baking in the sun before making it below decks, where it was then 'flash' frozen. That was weeks before it ever made it to the store for purchase. That's why most people comment on the 'fishy taste' that turns them off. However, let them enjoy a piece of truly fresh and well cared for fish and their minds will be opened.

First, you need to properly care for your catch as soon as it hits the deck. Due to boat space, most people have coolers that are small and worse, do not have adequate ice. A better solution is to create a cold salt water brine. In a larger cooler, add a block or two of ice and enough saltwater to cover the fish. This is much better than dumping a few cubes of ice which melts too quickly.

When cleaning fish, two rules are keep the filets cool and keep them moist but not soaked. Fish well cared for on the boat can be ruined on the cleaning table. Do not leave your hard earned catch in the sun or have them soaking in water although a quick rinse (preferably in clean saltwater) to get off the majority of blood and scales is okay.

Once home, cut off any bones and trim off the dark meat. Give them a quick rinse, lay them out on paper towels and gently pat dry. If you plan on freezing them, let them sit for 10 - 20 minutes. This is very important as it prevents freezer burn. Bag the fish in meal size quality freezer bags without overcrowding and compressing the filets. Squeeze out any air in the bag and lay out the bags in your freezer.

Some folks swear by filling the bags with water to eliminate any air. By far, the best method is using a vacuum bagger to preserve your catch. After spending hundreds of dollars on rods, reels, bait and fuel (not to mention the cost of your boat or charter), spending \$99 on a vacuum sealer is a no brainer. Properly dried and sealeed, your catch will keep for over 6 months and taste almost as good as the day you caught it!

Your Catch, which supplements this very nicely and emphasizes the need to properly bleed your catch. I had always bled stripers and bluefish. But last year on a trip to Nantucket, every fluke and seabass on two different charters were immediately bled before going on ice.



Of course, I don't always follow my own advice. This photo taken a few weeks ago, shows a bled (R) and not bled (L) fluke. If these had been a striper or bluefish, the results would have been way more visual. Does it affect the taste - that's a separate test - but I believe it does.

2023 FOM CONTESTS - Please see the following table for all FOM contests. There are presently 15 Open contests shaded in blue & Congratulations to this month's Winners (Marty Friedrich for both Fluke and Seabass) shaded in green.

2023 Bill Figley Young Angler FOM Awards (4)

1	1 April - 30 September No Entry to Date	White Perch
2	1 June - 30 September No Entry to Date	Blowfish
3	1 June - 30 September No Entry to Date	Kingfish
4	2 May - 27 September Braddock Cline Leads 18 3/4"	Fluke

2023 Regular FOM Awards (26)

1	15 March - 30 June Dave Puzak 37 3/4"	Striped Bass
2	15 March - 30 June (Surf Only) Pat Presutto 37 3/4"	Striped Bass
3	15 March - 30 September Brian Leary leads 26 3/4"	Bluefish
4	15 March - 30 September (Surf Only) Pat Presutto leads 31 1/2"	Bluefish
5	15 March - 30 June Dave Spendiff 14 1/4"	White Perch
6	1 April - 30 June Tyler Leary 27 1/4"	Weakfish
7	1 April - 31 October No Entry to Date	Blowfish
8	1 April - 31 October No Entry to Date	Kingfish
9	1 April - 31 December Ron Nachmann leads 37 1/2"	Red or Black Drum
10	1 - 30 April & 1 Aug - 30 Sept Marty Friedrich leads 22 1/4"	Blackfish
11	2 May - 30 June John Barrett 24 1/2"	Fluke
12	2 May - 27 September (Surf Only) Cheri Hebert leads 22 1/2"	Fluke
13	17 May - 19 June Bill Figley 21 1/4"	Seabass
14	1 - 31 July Marty Friedrich 24 1/2"	Fluke
<mark>15</mark>	1 - 31 July Marty Friedrich 20 1/2"	Seabass
<mark>16</mark>	1 July – 31 October No Entry to Date	White Perch
17	1 July – 31 October No Entry to Date	Weakfish

18	1 - 31 August Marty Friedrich leads 21"	Fluke
19	1 - 31 August No Entry to Date	Seabass
20	1 - 27 September	Fluke
21	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Bluefish
22	1 Oct – 31 Dec (Surf Only)	Bluefish
23	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Striped Bass
24	1 Oct – 31 Dec (Surf Only)	Striped Bass
25	1 Oct – 31 Dec	Blackfish
26	7 Oct – 31 Dec (Closed 27 – 31 Oct)	Seabass

2023 FOM ENTRIES - Here's our list of the latest 2023 entries to date from last month's Newsletter. Go to <u>VHFC Standings</u> for the complete list of entries.

07-13-23	Weakfish	19"	Steve Scharaldi	Middle Grounds
07-15-23	Seabass	17"	John Barrett	GSN Reef
07-15-23	Fluke	21 1/2"	Bill Dabney	Little Egg Reef
07-16-23	Weakfish	14"	Bill Figley	Holgate
07-23-23	Seabass	20 1/2"	Marty Friedrich	Little Egg Reef
07-25-23	Seabass	17"	Larry Gonnello	Unknown
08-03-23	Fluke	21"	Marty Friedrich	Little Egg Reef

Be sure to check out the following photos!



That's a beautiful catch of White Perch caught by Bill Dabney and Phil Kaplan.

Unfortunately, for some reason, no one submitted a photo showing the length for FOM consideration. White Perch reopened on 1 July.

To date, there are No Entries for Weakfish, Blowfish, White Perch & Kingfish.



That's Marty Friedrich's 21" leading fluke for August. Marty will probably beat that several times before the month is over!

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS by Ed Valitutto - We have two more upcoming events for your enjoyment and participation. Full details will be offered when available.

- 1) Annual Dinner Bill Dabney will once again be the chairman for this event. A specific date has not been chosen but likely it will be midweek in late September or October at Kostas Grill in Tuckerton. Kostas serves Greek cuisine and is BYOB. Everyone will pay for their own selections off the menu and VHFC will provide sparkling wine for the occasion. This is a fun social event!
- 2) Second Annual Bottom Fishing Trip Phil Simon did such a good job coordinating last year's trip that we nominated him to do it again. The outing will be on the *Super Chic* same as last year, on Tuesday October 3rd, departing at 6:30am from 18th St in Barnegat Light. This will be primarily a black sea bass trip, but then you never know what you will find. Cost details are still being worked out and will depend on how many sign up. We will firm this up as we get closer to the date.

MONTHLY RECIPE - Pan - Fried Fluke with Sweet Fish Sauce submitted by Bill Dabney - This recipe originated with John Geiser, the Asbury Park Press freelance outdoors columnist,

and can be found in his book "The Shore Catch". It is a nice change from the standard flour, egg wash and breadcrumbs.

Pan - Fried Fluke

Ingredients

- 2 Lbs Fluke filets or any white fish
- 1/3 cup cornmeal
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1/2 Tsp salt
- 1/2 Tsp paprika
- Oil for frying

Directions

- 1) Cut fish into serving size portions. Combine cornmeal, flour, salt & paprika and dredge filets in the mixture. Place in the refrigerator for ~15 minutes to set the coating.
- 2) Add oil to a fry pan (~1/8" depth) and heat until hot but not smoking ~360 degrees.
- 3) Add filets to the pan and fry for 3 5 minutes per side depending on thickness until golden brown. Turn the fish over and cook the other side. Drain on a wire rack and place in a warm (175 200 degree) oven to keep warm.
- 4) Wipe out the pan and add more oil. Heat as before and fry the remaining pieces.
- 5) Serve with lemon wedges or Sweet Fish Sauce

Sweet Fish Sauce

Ingredients

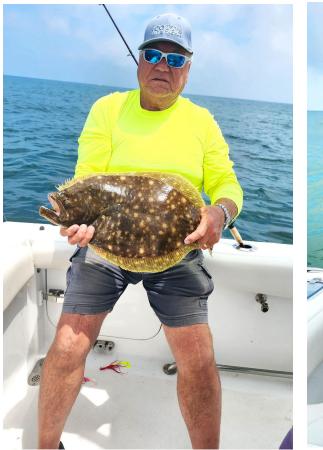
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 2 TBS Sweet relish well drained
- 1 Tsp finely minced onion
- 1 Tsp lemon juice

Directions

Combine ingredients and mix well. Chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes before serving.

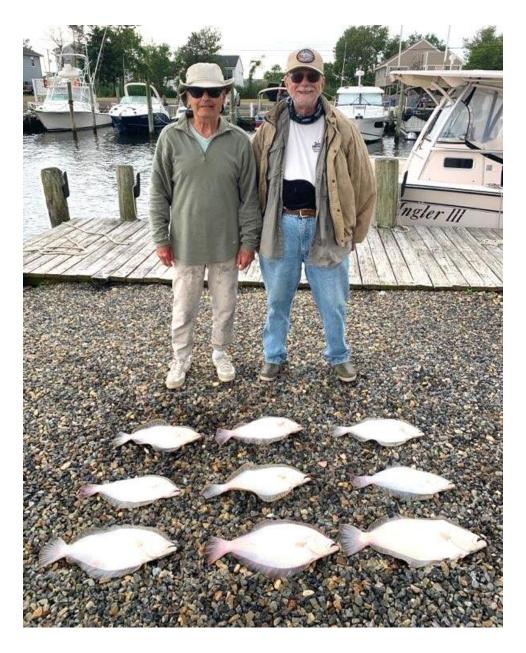
Ed V's Comments: Drain the relish well and go easy with the lemon juice or the sauce will be watery. I also add a few drops of Sriracha or other hot sauce to color it light pink and provide just a hint of heat.

FISHING REPORTS - Please go to the VHFC website at http://www.vhfishingclub.com to read fishing reports submitted by fellow club members. Please submit your reports using the simple form on the pull down menu. If you do not feel comfortable using the form, please email Ed Valitutto @ edvalitutto@gmail.com or call 609 994 1311 and provide me with the details so I can do a report for you. Please take a moment to provide a report for other members to enjoy and gain some valuable fishing insight. There were 7 reports since the July Newsletter.





Two separate trips by Marty Friedrich and both yielded very nice fluke - but not nice enough to get Marty to smile!



Bob Dodds and cousin Joe went out with Brett Taylor knowing that the weather would be getting bad. Just one shy of a boat limit, Brett decided to leave based on the radar.

On the way back to Waretown, Brett made one very quick stop but just enough for Bob to catch a 22" for the boat limit.

We got back just in time for Brett to clean all the fish in the heavy rain.





Left Photo - Bob Dodds with granddaughters, Ashley 20 and Maddie 8, on an annual bay fluke fishing trip with Brett Taylor. Hannah, 13, could not make it this year. They caught 8 keepers: Bob's 4, Ashley's 3 and Maddie's 1. with another 25 shorts. What fun!

Right Photo - Bob Dodds with Phil Simon and future club member (procrastinator)
Boston Bob, on yet another Brett Taylor charter. They finished with 8 keepers from 18.5 to almost 23". Bob had a great day with 4 keepers, 18.5, 21, 22 & the biggest one.





Left Photo - That's Fluke Tournament winner Will Kresge holding a Remora - a fish with a flat head and suckers that it uses to attach to a shark. The guys were out on a fluke & Seabass trip. They landed about 20 short fluke with only 1 over and 1 slot and several nice seabass.

Right Photo - That's Marty with the largest of the Seabass - a 20 1/2" beauty.



That's VHFC members
Caesar Pesarini, Alan
Goracy, and Ed
Valitutto after a day of
fluke fishing in Little
Egg Inlet. They caught
a few short fluke and
those impressive
beauties! Alan's was
17 1/2, Ed had an 18+
and Caesar caught a
20 1/2. Take that Marty
Friedrich and we are
all smiling!

VESSEL SAFETY CHECKS - By Jeff Orsoe Both the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the United States Power Squadrons have certified vessel examiners who will perform a free Vessel Safety Check ("VSC") at your boat, at a time of mutual convenience. There is no charge and no consequences if your boat doesn't pass. Our goal is simply to help make boating as safe as possible for you, your family and your friends. Personal pleasure craft, only.

I am available to perform a Vessel Safety exam on your vessel. As stated above, there is no charge for the exam and if you do not qualify for the sticker, the results will not be reported to any agency. Contact: Jeff Orsoe Cell / Text: 732-672-5530 or email: jorsoe786@gmail.com.

A fire extinguisher is one of the items that is required. Last year, a new law regarding them went into effect. The extinguisher now has a 12 year qualifying life cycle. If you look at the

bottom, you will see the year it was made. Just add 12 years to that date to figure the expiration date.



VHFC Hats - Hats are khaki colored and feature a high definition VHFC patch on the front. They are high quality and available at club meetings for \$20. If you would like a hat,, please contact Dave Spendiff for details.

VHFC Shirts - VHFC T-Shirts are available for purchase but we need to order a 12 lot minimum. Sizes range from XS (Extra Small) to 6XL and are available in nine colors. Shirts have long sleeves and feature UPF 50 Sun Protection. Let us know



your size and color preference. These are quality shirts to be worn proudly. White is shown below with the ordering info. Sizes/Cost: XS, S, M, L & XL @ \$31, 2XL @ \$32, 3XL @ \$33 4XL @ \$34, 5XL @ \$35 & 6XL @ \$36. Colors: White, Pale Green, Sand, Pale Orange, Pale Yellow,

CLASSIFIED ADS BUY, SELL or TRADE

Classified ads may be placed free of charge by any club member for non-commercial fishing related items. Please contact Ed Valitutto via email at edvalitutto@gmail.com to place your ad.

FISHING WITH CLUB MEMBERS - Members may place free ads in this section if you wish to find someone to fish with. Maybe you need to find someone with a boat or you are interested in finding someone to share expenses on your boat. With gas prices reaching the sky, helping out with fuel costs is almost a necessity.

USEFUL INFORMATION LINKS

See the full list on our website **Links**

Wave Information (Height, Period, Direction and Water Temperature) from a Buoy 15 Miles Outside Barnegat Inlet Updated Every 30 minutes: <u>Buoy #44091</u>

Boat/US: http://www.boatus.com/

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary: http://www.cgaux.org/

Notice to Mariners (District 5):

http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=InmDistrict®ion=5

Fisherman's Headquarters: http://www.fishermansheadquarters.com/

The Boat Shop: http://theboatshoponline.com/

The Bass Barn: http://www.thebassbarn.com

Barnegat Fishing Hole: http://www.barnegatfishinghole.com/ubbthreads/ubbthreads.php

Animated Knots: http://www.animatedknots.com/

Long Beach Island Water Temperature & Winds:

https://seatemperature.info/long-beach-island-water-temperature.html

SPONSORS - The following sponsors offer a discount with the presentation of your current VHFC Membership Card. Discounts normally do not apply to items that are fair traded or items on sale.

BHW Marine Center 10% discount with VHFC card 857 Mill Creek Rd Manahawkin, NJ 08050 **609-709-5424**

Boat U.S.

Special membership price call Jeff Orsoe. Forms for members' use will be at VHFC meetings or call Jeff Orsoe 732-672-5530. Also, VHFC members only pay \$9.50 for a year of Boat U.S.

Creekside Outfitters 10% discount with VHFC card 403 Rt. 9 Waretown, NJ 08758 609-242-1812

D & S Marine Service 10% discount on parts with VHFC card6 460 Dock Rd, West Creek NJ 08092 **609-296-0309**

Fisherman's Headquarters 10% discount with VHFC card 280 West 9th St, Ship Bottom, NJ 08008 **609-494-5739**

JB Awards 10% discount on engraving and trophies with VHFC card **609-290-5851**

Jingles Bait & Tackle 10% discount with VHFC card 1214 N Bay Ave, Beach Haven, NJ 08008 **609-492-2795**

The Boat Shop 10% discount with VHFC card 756 E. Bay Ave, Manahawkin, NJ 08050 **609-597-1271**