

Of a Different Stripe

New York CCA officers resign to launch separate grassroots effort.

THE COASTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (CCA) is a national organization whose objective is to "conserve, promote and enhance the present and future availability of...coastal resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the general public." With 15 state-level chapters that run from the gulf coast, around Florida, and up the Atlantic seaboard, the CCA does its best to mobilize grassroots efforts to carry out that mission.

But as with any national organization, there are times and places where local interests conflict with the aims of the national group. In March, just such a rift led to the resignation of several key CCA New York members, who have since formed their own organization, called the Fishermen's Conservation Association (FCA). FCA plans to address what it sees as some pressing local concerns, including obtaining game-fish status for stripers in New York waters, working to increase public access to the waters around New York City, and bolstering beach cleanup, habitat restoration, and kids' educational programs.

Former CCA New York president Capt. Frank Crescitelli spearheaded formation of the Fishermen's Conservation Association because he says they were "frustrated" with the direc-

tion and policy strictures of CCA. This was particularly so when it comes to getting game-fish protection for striped bass in New York waters. According to Crescitelli, CCA New York was not pursuing game-fish status for stripers as vigorously as he liked because doing so was "too hard and too unlikely to be successful." Crescitelli also claims CCA national has been unwilling to establish coalitions with like-minded groups. The new FCA, however, plans aggressively to pursue such relationships. One of the first items on the group's agenda is to partner with Strippers Forever to commission a study of the economic impact of striper fishing in New York waters.

For its part, the CCA New York chapter plans to continue with its original mission: promoting the conservation of the resources and fisheries. "CCA New York is rededicated to its role as a conservation organization," says Charles Witek, state chairman of CCA New York. "We will work with any organization that furthers our mission, and we will work with [FCA] if they proceed with scientifically grounded work on issues where our interests converge."

For more information about the Fishermen's Conservation Association, visit www.joinfea.org. And if you're not already a member of the Coastal Conservation Association, stop by its Web site at www.joincca.org. —by John Likakis ♦

CONSERVATION

TIM LEARY



Striped bass do not have game-fish status in many Atlantic states, including New York, which is most famous for its fall blitzes at Montauk Point. The fledgling Fishermen's Conservation Association is making game-fish designation for Big Apple stripers one of its top priorities.