



# *Call of the Wild*



Fall '08

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

They say time flies when you are having fun, and the last two years have absolutely rocketed by. It seems like just last week I stepped into my role as your president, but the fact is that was back in December 2006, and now the time has come for me to pass the gavel on to your next president. Hence, this will be my last President's Message.

First and foremost, let me begin by thanking you for electing me president and allowing me to serve you in this capacity for the past two years. It has truly been a joy and a privilege to represent you on conservation-related matters in Southwest Alabama and throughout the state of Alabama as a whole. Mostly, I have been humbled and honored to follow in the footsteps of those who have held this office before me. Some of Mobile's and Alabama's staunchest conservationists and finest citizens have served as this organization's president before me, and it is a true source of pride that you have allowed my name to be associated with such an impressive lot.

We have accomplished much over the past two years. The annual Wood Duck Box Project continues to be our flag ship effort, and last year we enjoyed the highest turnout of volunteers in the project's history. The Speckled Trout Tournament continues to be a successful venture and generates most of the conservation funds MCWCA utilizes to fulfill its mission. Our annual Kids' Day Safe Shooting event is quickly becoming our most popular offering, with more and more kids signing up every year and being exposed to responsible firearm safety training. Membership has increased in accordance with the goals we set two years ago and MCWCA has enjoyed a great deal of media exposure and good publicity as well.

We have served conservation by meeting numerous challenges. MCWCA, along with other conservation organizations, enjoyed victory over the Conoco-Phillips Open Loop Liquefied Natural Gas Debarkation Facility off Dauphin Island, and lent its support to the recent achievement of a ban on future permitted commercial monofilament gill nets in Alabama waters, as well as on shrimp trawling in sensitive portions of Mobile Bay, and others. And while not all challenges resulted in victory for conservation, MCWCA voiced its position on the potential adverse impact to the Garrows Bend area by the Choctaw Point Container Terminal.

Reestablishing grass beds in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and along the Mobile Causeway is of vital importance. That is why I am so proud MCWCA has led the way on the Mobile Bay NEP's recent subaquatic vegetation (SAV) marsh reestablishment efforts. MCWCA and others have helped to plant almost 5,000 aquatic plants south of the Causeway, and we are anxious to keep this going! At some point conservation will have to tackle issues pertaining to the ongoing deterioration of our Mobile-Tensaw Delta, and MCWCA will no doubt find itself squarely in the middle of this necessary work, too.

I am pleased and proud to report to you that MCWCA is strong financially and organizationally. We are well-suited to move forward and meet the conservation-related challenges that lie ahead for southwest Alabama and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. With your hard work and dedication, I know MCWCA will be up to the task.

I urge future presidents, the Board and the membership to keep our youth a high priority in this organization's focus and to continue to enhance the Kids' Day Safe Shooting Event. Our children truly are the future of sporting conservation, and we need to do all we can to encourage a safe and positive introduction of our kids to the places and activities we hold so dear.

Again, please accept my humblest and heartiest thanks for allowing me to serve as your president the past two years. I will remain an active force on your Board of Directors and look forward to seeing you at this year's annual meeting on Monday, December 1, 2008 at Wintzell's Oyster House in downtown Mobile.

-Roger Guilian



## ALABAMA COASTAL CLEANUP EXCEEDS 1,000,000 POUNDS!



Members of the MCWCA showed up along the causeway Saturday September 20th for the **21st Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup**. According to the **Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**, an estimated 5,000 volunteers all along the Alabama coast helped collect an estimated 60,000 pounds of garbage from our waterways and shorelines. Escambia County was added to the list, which includes Mobile and Baldwin counties. This may account for the 12,000 pound increase of trash collected from last year's 48,000 pounds. In any case, the milestone of the 1 million pound mark was collected on Saturday. In addition to tarnishing the natural beauty of our state, marine debris (trash and waste discarded in the water) kills thousands of marine mammals, sea birds and turtles each year. It also damages fishing nets, fouls propellers, and clogs water intakes.



Jim, Bay, and Druhan Cummings helped cleanup the Mobile/Tensaw Delta

The most common items that were collected along the causeway included: shotgun shells and wading, beer cans and bottles, fishing line, boots, cell phone parts, cigarette butts, and plastics bags. Some unusual items collected included: a boat, ladies undergarments, car parts, and household appliances. Since Alabama joined the international effort to remove marine debris in 1987, more than 50,000 volunteers have cleaned about 3000 miles of shoreline. Now that's teamwork! All causeway volunteers received a free lunch at The Oyster House and a Coastal Cleanup t-shirt.

### ACTIVITIES THAT PRODUCE MARINE DEBRIS

**Recreational and Shoreline Activities** - Debris from beachgoers, picnics, sports and games, festivals, as well as litter washed from streets, parking lots, and storm drains.

**Ocean/Waterway Activities** - Debris from recreational fishing and boating; commercial fishing; cargo, military, and cruise ships; and offshore industries such as oil drilling.

**Smoking Related Activities** - The littering of cigarette filters, cigar tips, and tobacco products packaging is common on land and sea.

**Dumping Activities** - Debris from legal and illegal dumping of building material or large household items.

**Medical/Personal Hygiene** - This debris can be left by beachgoers as well as disposed of improperly into toilets and city streets. Because medical and hygiene debris often enters the waste stream through sewer systems, its presence on the beach can indicate the presence of other, unseen pollutants.



## FEDS TO REVIEW U.S. 98 PROJECT

by Ben Raines Mobile Press-Register August 11, 2008

Ten months after widespread damage to wetlands along the U.S. 98 project in west Mobile County was revealed, the Alabama Department of Transportation has requested an "after the fact" permit for the destruction of an additional 11.5 acres of wetlands surrounding Big Creek Lake and the Escatawpa River.

The extra wetland loss has caused the Federal Highway Administration to re-evaluate a "Finding of No Significant Impact" granted when the project was approved in 2005. Federal officials said the review means, "all the options are on the table, including the no-build alternative." The review also stops the project from moving forward for the time being, according to federal officials. Meanwhile, construction and **run off** continues.

Both the environmental group Mobile Baykeeper and the Mobile Area Water and Sewer System opposed the roadway and disagreed with the finding. Both wanted a formal Environmental Impact Statement to be conducted, but state transportation officials argued that a more rigorous examination of the project was unnecessary.

The loss of the additional 11 acres of wetlands was required to stabilize the steep dirt hillsides much of the roadbed was built atop, according to the permit request filed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Those hills have collapsed a number of times, in large measure because highway designers failed to account for the area's abundant rain and the high water table in Mobile's wetlands, according to transportation officials.



This new permit request does not include the numerous wetland areas that Press-Register reporters found to be covered in thick layers of mud along the roadway. Those areas will be dealt with through ADEM's administrative order, which requires the Transportation Department to remove the mud and restore wetlands, according to ADEM officials. It is unclear how many wetland acres were affected

by the illegal runoff, but in many cases, Press-Register reporters documented mud flows stretching deep into surrounding woods. Transportation officials said the agency believed it had lost 3,000 cubic yards of mud into creeks that run into the Escatawpa River.

That is equivalent to about 300 dump truck loads that were lost into creeks that drain into Big Creek Lake, Mobile's exclusive drinking water source. "We believe the Federal Highway Administration decision to open the old studies is a great one as those studies were woefully inadequate in the first place," said Casi Callaway, director of Mobile Baykeeper. "We will continue to insist that the road project is studied from I-65 to the Mississippi state line because the drinking water supply for over 250,000 people has already suffered from deleterious construction practices." ADEM Photo

### ***Diamond Anniversary!***

Beginning in 2009, the MCWCA will be celebrating it's 75th year of wildlife habitat restoration and conservation in the Mobile area. Be sure to attend to the Annual Meeting on Dec 1st at Wintzell's in downtown Mobile to kick off a special year for the MCWCA. There will be a guest speaker, door prizes and food and beverages are served. **ORDER MCWCA MERCHANDISE FROM OUR WEB SITE**





## Alabama Dove Season Dates Finalized By the ADCNR

The **Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources** announces that the final framework for the 2008 dove season has been approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This year the north and south zones in Alabama will hunt under a 70-day season with a 15-a-day bag limit. This change was finalized in late June and represents an increase in the bag limit for the south zone and an increase of the number of hunting days for the north zone. The south zone includes Baldwin, Barbour, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Henry, Houston and Mobile counties. The remaining counties are in the north zone.



Bay, Druhan, and Jim Cummings after a North Zone hunt

The season dates are:

**SOUTH ZONE:** 15-a-day – 15 in Possession

12 O'clock noon until Sunset October 4

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Oct 5–Nov 2

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Nov 27–Nov 30

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Dec 6–Jan 10

**NORTH ZONE:** 15-a-day – 15 in Possession

12 O'clock noon until Sunset September 6

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Sep 7 – Oct 5

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Oct 25– Nov 15

One-half hour before Sunrise until Sunset Dec 13 – Dec 30

The mourning dove is the most abundant game bird in AL. Over 62,000 licensed hunters enjoy dove hunting.

## Bass Pro Shop Open for Business!

Bass Pro Shop is finally open! Wahoo! I'm excited for two reasons. First, I get to take my boys and do some shopping for all of our outdoor gear in a really neat atmosphere. If you've never been to a Bass Pro Shop, you're missing out. Second, and most importantly to me, possibly this will be the beginning of the end of a huge amount of construction sediment **run-off** into D'Olive Creek and eventual Mobile Bay. In 2005, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management issued a notice of violation for sediment discharges that exceeded allowable limits. Large amounts of silt deposits were first reported in the Mobile Register in October 2007 and, while there has been a concerned effort to fix the run-off problem since, some inevitable run-off still continues from construction.

Loose sediment in creeks can cover the natural bottoms, smothering the aquatic plants and insects at the base of the food chain. The deposits can also smother the eggs of fish, such as large-mouth bass and bream, that spawn in nests made in the stream bottoms.

As with the US 98 road project, progress can be good and bad. There is no doubt the Spanish Fort Town Center and the businesses within will be great for the local economy and provide jobs, but I have to wonder at what price our local wildlife habitats have to suffer for an economic gain?



Suspended sediment turns a tributary of D'Olive Creek milky brown downstream from Spanish Fort construction. MPR Photo.



## A Gator Tale

I never thought hunting a prehistoric animal would be so exhilarating until I set out on a delta adventure with a motley crew consisting of Joseph Law, III, Dr. Joe Law, Jr., David Inge, Dr. Steadman McMurphy and Marl Cummings, IV. Our journey began at the once thriving local watering hole "Liz's" on the causeway. We launched our gator hunting vessel and set a course due north for Run-a-muck island. Shortly after nightfall, with our bellies full from what we all knew could be our last meal, we charted a course for the Tensaw River in search of the overpopulated, but rather elusive *Alligator mississippiensis*, a.k.a gator.

Armed with several q-beams powerful enough to summon Batman, a deadly homemade harpoon, grappling hooks and a bangstick, we worked our way down the Tensaw "hunting" gators. We quickly discovered this was no simple task. Following numerous close encounters with the toothy reptilian creature, we finally hooked a mentally challenged gator on the Spanish River. Having polled the crew, team "Nightstalker" reached a unanimous decision to release this one and go in search of a larger more challenging opponent. We called it a night and headed back to the "Ritz on the Raft."

Day 2: Our escapade continued on the Spanish River shortly after nightfall. With the comforting glow of the city lights in the background, we worked our way up the river seeking our prized gator. By 1:00 a.m., the gator slayer was running low on gas and we had nothing to show for our exhausting effort. We returned to Run-a-muck to retrieve some go-go juice and regroup. Following an uplifting pep talk from Dr. Joe a.k.a. "the nutty professor" in which he so eloquently related our situation to a day in Vietnam (Walter Sobchak in the Big Lebowski would have been proud) we returned to the Spanish River.

With Marl sprawled out on the stern snoring like a freight train, Steadman "the Doc" McMurphy, perched on the bow and armed with his weapon, exclaimed "there she blows!" Knowing full well that our wives would not allow us to spend another night chasing gators in the delta, we collectively decided this was our gator. Captain Joseph Law suddenly turned hard to portside as Steadman unleashed his best cast of the hunt. The oversized meat claw of a treble hook flew through air as its target swam for her life. Once hooked, the beast jumped out of the water thrashing violently. David "Deltaman" Inge struggled to get another hook in the angry gator. Armed with my homemade harpoon, I stood by anxiously waiting for the right shot.



With grace and professionalism, Steadman fought his opponent on rod and reel for an hour and a half. By this point, I was tired of playing with the harpoon so I reached for a much more lethal weapon. The Doc and Deltaman worked the tired beast along side the gator slayer as Joseph landed a precise blow to the neck with the stinger. Marl finally awoke from his four hour nap as it was time to dispatch our worthy opponent. Knowing I successfully annihilated several cantaloupes during target practice the day before, I was confident in my abilities with the bangstick. I took my shot and the fight was over.

Feeling like good ole southern boys with our kill in the bed of our truck, our spirits were high as we headed to the ADCNR weigh station. She was a few inches shy of nine feet in length. While this gator could not have starred in the next installment of Lake Placid, we were proud of our successful hunt. Team Nightstalker will always cherish the memories of the time spent in this magnificent resource we all work so hard to preserve, the Mobile Delta.

Special thanks goes to MCWCA member Jonathon R. Law for submitting this article.





## ALABAMA MONOFILAMENT RECOVERY AND RECYCLING INITIATIVE



The MCWCA has once again teamed up with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Kelly Brinkman, Natural Resource Planner State Lands Division, Coastal Section has assisted us in adding two monofilament recovery pipes (see photo) along the Mobile Causeway. The first recycle pipe will be located at the first public boat launch immediately east of the bridge over the Tensaw River and west of Oysterella's Restaurant. The second, will be along the north side (west bound lanes) of Hwy 90 where many anglers fish along the road east of Chocalata Bay. Each one of these two recycle pipes will be equipped with the MCWCA decal on it.

According to the ADCNR: "Why should you recycle your monofilament? Because discarded monofilament takes over 600 years before it will begin to biodegrade. During those 600 years, monofilament can entangle or be ingested by fish, sea turtles, birds, marine mammals, and other wildlife. Monofilament can also become entangled in boat propellers causing costly damage to motors, and it can trap SCUBA divers and swimmers as well. Even when you throw your line in a garbage can there is a risk that it will ensnare other wildlife or wash its way back to the water."

One solution to the problem is to have recycling containers available to boaters and fishermen to discard their used line. Once the used fishing line is collected it goes into a pre-postage-paid box that, when filled, will be sent to a recycling facility in Iowa. The facility is run by *Pure Fishing* where they will recycle the line to make plastic fishing reefs. Now that's using your head!



Any time you are traveling on the causeway try to remember to check the recycle bins to ensure they are not full. If it is full, empty the bin and e-mail [info@MCWCA.org](mailto:info@MCWCA.org). The success of this program depends on anglers getting involved, taking action, and being responsible conservationists by properly disposing used fishing line and spools.

**Thanks to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for funding this project and to the ADCNR for helping us get involved.**

Thank you to **Exxon Mobil** for their continued generous support of the MCWCA. It is supporters like Exxon Mobil that allows the MCWCA to continue our 74 year legacy in sporting conservation and habitat restoration in the Mobile area.

***Thank you Exxon Mobil!!***



## Fishing & Hunting Report

### Field Maintenance (continued...)

The Summer Edition of the *Call of the Wild* mentioned that the summer months were a good time to spread lime and bush-hog your fields. I'm sure you all took care of that between fishing trips! If you didn't, you've got a little work ahead of you.

For those of you that have done your regular maintenance, October is the time to disc and spread a seed that has been selected for its ability to attract deer, its nutritional value (high protein), and made for cold-heartiness, drought and disease resistance. Be sure to check the sturdiness of your stands and sight in your guns. Gun season is here!

Thanks to Pepper Roney for submitting this article.

Pepper and his company, **Mobile Glass, LLC** were major sponsors of the **2008 MCWCA Annual Speckled Trout & Flounder Tournament** held in June.



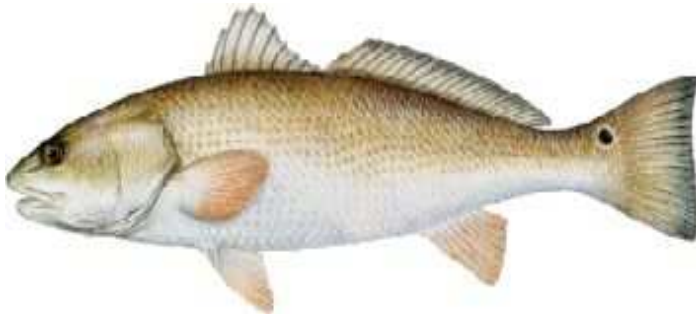
Marl Cummings III performing summer maintenance.

PROCEEDS OF THE MERCHANDISE PURCHASED FROM WEB SITE GOES TO HABITAT RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION IN OUR AREA.

### Mobile/Tensaw Fall Delta Fishing Report

As the water temperature changes from the upper 80s down to the mid to lower 70s, you will start to see more of a Fall pattern with the Speckled Trout and Red Fish. This water temperature change usually starts to happen in late September and continues through October and November.

The fish will start to slowly move out from the deep structures and into the shallows. You may notice that some shallow reef fishing in the Bay will turn on again as if were early May. The shallow bars and bays of the Delta will hold lots of active Red Fish and Specks making meals of the snails off the grass that has grown up over the Summer.



Specks and Reds can be plentiful on a moving tide where rivers, creeks, or bays converge. Just cast on the shallow side of the drop off with live shrimp under a cork and you should have plenty of success in the Fall mornings while listening to the ball game. Allow enough line to let the shrimp drift along the bottom and be ready! Once you hook up with a good Red, you'll know why Fall fishing in our Delta is considered the best time of the year.

Thank you to MCWCA board member Bryan Pearce for submitting this article.

Bryan and his employer, **The SSI Group**, were major sponsors of the **2008 MCWCA Annual Speckled Trout & Flounder Tournament** held in June.



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#### 2008 MCWCA OFFICERS

President.....Roger Guilian  
Secretary.....Jim Cummings  
Treasurer.....Ernest Ladd IV  
Executive Director.....Jim Caulk

#### 2008 MCWCA Calendar of Events

Annual Wood Duck Box Project  
February 16th, 2008  
Hubbard's Landing - Stockton, AL  
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Derelect Crab Trap Removal  
March 1st, 2008  
Causeway  
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Mobile-Tensaw Delta Bream Tournament  
May 3rd, 2008; 2-2:30pm  
Runamuck Island, Raft River

Annual Speckled Trout Tournament  
June 21st, 2008; 2-5pm  
Point Clear and Dauphin Island Marinas  
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Annual Kid's Day Gun Safety Event  
October 4th, 2008; 8am-1pm  
Taylor Creek  
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74<sup>th</sup> MCWCA Annual Meeting  
December 1st, 2008; 5-9pm  
Wintzell's Oyster House Dauphin St.

**Thank you to the 2008 MCWCA Sponsors!**

**Exxon Mobil**

**Mobile Glass, LLC**

**The SSI Group, Inc.**

**Volkert & Associates, Inc.**

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