

# Reeling in Weakfish for Sea Grant

Anglers not only raised fish out of the water during May's Third Annual Great South Bay Weakfish Tournament, but a portion of the proceeds from the two-day event will be put to good use in furthering NYSG's activities in coastal outreach, education and research. More than 400 anglers and 120 boats turned out for the tournament, hosted by Surfside 3 Marina.

"Our presence at this year's tournament helped get the word out about the many research and education projects we sponsor," says **Cornelia Schlenk**, NYSG's Assistant Director. "All of us at Sea Grant are appreciative of the fundraising efforts made possible by Surfside 3 Marina and the generosity and interest of so many of the captains and their fishing teams."

So why was Sea Grant targeted to benefit from the tournament? On Long Island, Sea Grant has also been instrumental in sponsoring catch-and-release programs, by-catch workshops, and has worked with the angling community to plan the new Sportfishing Education Center in Babylon. "We're not involved in making policy or regulations," says **Antoinette Clemetson**, NYSG's fisheries specialist. "Our job is to help empower people by educating them about our natural resources that they use both for business and pleasure." These include understanding hard clam population factors, learning what triggers the blooms of brown-tide algae in our bays, and understanding the impacts of breaches.

Adds Schlenk, "In working closely with everyone from anglers to charter operators, business associations to bait suppliers, our aim is to give

Photo by Barbara Branca



**Cornelia Schlenk, NYSG Assistant Director gets the word out about Sea Grant's mission as she congratulates the winners of the Third Annual Great South Bay Weakfish Tournament.**



**Frank Carnese, captain of the Labelle Lorette, holds the 10.12 pound weakfish that won the tournament.**

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everyone concerned the information they need to make sound, fact-based decisions. NYSG's goal is to provide information based on solid scientific research so that good management decisions can be made for our environment and economy."

Anglers at the event were vying for a new 17-foot Boston Whaler Montauk, which was awarded to the captain of the *Labelle Lorette*, **Frank Carnese** who brought home the prize winning 10.12-pound weakfish. Second place was held down by another 10 pounder - Charles Rex's 10.08 was good for \$1,500. A trio of 9.7-pound weakfish followed, all weighed in and registered according to time, with the earlier time receiving the higher prize. The first 9.7, caught by James Dion, was worth \$1,000, while the second, caught by James Uzenski, took \$500. All of top 10 fish caught were over the 9-pound mark.



**Frank Carnese, far right, took home the largest, but the whole crew was pretty happy at weigh-in.**

Photo courtesy of Greg Giarrantano of Burnett's Bait and Tackle

Sea Grant representatives provided tournament participants with fact sheets as well as an opportunity to discuss the program's successes, both present and over the past three decades. "We considered this tournament an excellent opportunity to showcase the important work done by New York Sea Grant," says **Paul Barbara**, co-owner of Surfside 3 Marina. "Everyone who enjoys the water, or makes a living from it, benefits from the information they help provide, not just on Long Island, but on a national scale."

— **Paul C. Focazio**

*Additional information provided by LKGS, Inc. and The Fisherman*