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NCWU Membership & Marketing

NC Seafood Industry Organizations Sponsor Dinner for NC Legislators

Raleigh, North Carolina - April, 2015 - The governing boards and administration of all major fishing industry and seafood related organizations in North Carolina joined forces to put on a North Carolina Seafood Sampler and Fish Fry on Wednesday, March 25, 2015 for the NC Legislators and their staffs. More than 500 people attended. The organizations sponsoring the event were: North Carolina Watermen United (NCWU); NC Catch; North Carolina Fisheries Association (NCFA); Carteret Catch; Ocracoke Fresh; Ocracoke Working Watermen Association; Outer Banks Catch; Brunswick Catch; Albemarle Fisherman's Association; Brunswick County Fishermen's Association; Carteret County Fishermen's Association; and Pamlico County Fishermen's Association. The event was held at Mills Construction Company with the help of company president Fred Mills, who has long been a friend to the seafood industry.

The purpose of the dinner was to remind the State Legislators how important the seafood industry is to the state, to NC residents, and to the economy of the coastal counties that bring seafood to market. Jerry Schill, president of NCFA felt "there were far more people there than we ever anticipated or hoped for. We hope this translates into positive support for the seafood industry." Britt Shackelford, president of the NCWU Board stated "as fishermen, we work hard to make a living on NC waters. It's hard for our Board to take a day off to come to Raleigh, but to a man we felt it's just too important for us to show the State how good our seafood is and how important fishing is to the local, coastal economies as well as the state economy." At the end of the evening, no one left hungry and all the seafood brought from all coastal areas of the state had been cooked and eaten. As a bonus, NC Sea Grant and the NC Dept. of Commerce provided information on which species are in season and how to tell when fish is fresh.

Governor Pat McCrory saying how much he liked NC fresh seafood came to enjoy a plate along with senior members of both the State Senate and the House of Representatives. Senator Bill Cook and his legislative assistant Jordan Hennessy were instrumental in setting up the event date and making sure that all state legislators knew of the dinner. At the end of the night, several staffers indicated that the NC

Seafood Sampler and Fish Fry was the best food event that they had had this legislative session.

The event, originally scheduled for mid-February and cancelled because of weather, benefitted from a later date allowing an outside oyster station that featured two kinds of steamed NC oysters including The Outer Banks well known, crab slough oysters. In addition, the crowd enjoyed Ocracoke clam chowder; NC fried shrimp, oysters, scallops, rock fish, red drum and flounder. A low country boil that featured steamed shrimp was also part of the menu. And for the non-seafood lover, racks of ribs and chicken were available.

The seafood which was donated from all over the coast including seafood from commercial fishermen Perry Wood Beasley, Andrew Berry and Farris O'Neal, B & J Seafood of New Bern, Garland Fresh Seafood of Supply, O'Neal's Sea Harvest of Wanchese, Quality Seafood of Harkers Island, and Wanchese Fish Company of Wanchese. Tom Thumbs Catering from The Outer Banks took care of cooking all the fresh seafood and the fixins that went with it.

Pam Morris, with the Carteret County Fishermen Association said "we all feel it's critical that people in Raleigh know that commercial fishing brings in an important 'crop' for the state. Generations of families up and down the coast have been fishermen and every year it gets harder and harder to make a living on the water. We just don't want it to be legislated away."

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Photos available upon request of Gov. McCrory, Senator Cook, Rep. Jerry Tillman, etc., from event