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## **NC Catch and Local Catch Groups Continue to Grow Business for Local Seafood**

Ocracoke, North Carolina (April 15, 2015) - The Fourth Annual Local Catch Summit drew more than 70 commercial fishermen, seafood retailers and wholesalers, local food advocates, and seafood consumers to the Ocracoke Community Center on March 23, 2015 to strengthen partnerships that support and promote NC seafood.

The Summit took place in the location where Outer Banks Catch, Ocracoke Fresh, Carteret Catch, and Brunswick Catch leaders in 2011 first explored the idea of partnering under the NC Catch banner to heighten seafood consumer education and awareness.

“It was exciting and inspirational to see so many folks gathered to talk about the seafood industry in North Carolina,” Jess Hawkins, NC Catch board member and retired fisheries biologist, said.

“Especially encouraging was learning about the many ways the Department of Agriculture helps people learn about North Carolina seafood. Studies continually demonstrate that consumers prefer local seafood.”

Representatives from NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Pate Dawson – Southern Foods Company, Locals Seafood, and NC Sea Grant talked about promotional programs and distribution opportunities for local seafood.

“The presentations and one-on-one discussions were informative and valuable as our industry adapts to economic, social and environmental change,” seafood wholesaler Jeff Aiken, owner of Jeffrey’s Seafood in Hatteras, said.

Attendees included members of Outer Banks Catch, Ocracoke Fresh, Carteret Catch, Brunswick Catch, NC Fisheries Association, NC Watermen United, Outer Banks Seafood Festival, NC Seafood Festival, NC Oyster Growers Association, Carteret County Economic Development Council, NC Division of Marine Fisheries, as well as seafood business owners.

“The commercial fishing industry needs consumer groups to help maintain access to local seafood and to build economic diversity that supports tourism and generates local and state tax revenues,” commercial fisherman Hardy Plyler of Ocracoke told the audience.

In conjunction with the Summit, NC Department of Agriculture and Pate Dawson – Southern Foods representatives visited fish houses and retail markets in Columbia, Wanchese, Hatteras, Ocracoke, Cedar Island, Sea Level, Harkers Island, and New Bern.

“This trip has been a great start in meeting many new friends who can help meet the growing demand for local seafood in our state,” G. W. Stanley, Domestic Marketing Supervisor with NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, explained.

The Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association, NC Farm Bureau, Dare to Hyde Adventures, NC Sea Grant, Hyde County, Tideland Electric Membership Corporation, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership, NC Growing Together Project at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, North Carolina State University, Saltwater Connections, The Resourceful Communities Program at The Conservation Fund, Julian Price Family Foundation, and Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center sponsored the event.

*NC Catch believes that by promoting the rich culture, variety of resources, health benefits and incredible tastes from our shores, we can help maintain thriving coastal fishing communities and build a stronger appreciation of North Carolina's local seafood for generations to come. Our non-profit represents local Catch groups that connect consumers and businesses with year-round access to high-quality seafood. For more information, visit <http://www.nccatch.org>.*

Photographs by Ann C. Simpson:



Tideland Electric Membership Corporation sponsored the Summit lunch featuring local fish and shrimp prepared by Eduardo's Taco Stand.



Kris Cahoon Noble, Hyde County Office of Economic Development and Planning Director and NC Catch Board member, talks about value-added seafood.