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Spindle City Precious Metals Mouse Over

Hook Fishermen's poised to enter a new era

Photos Zoom



Courtesy photo

John Pappalardo says the organization's name might change to better reflect its many initiatives.

By Doreen Leggett The Cape Coddler Posted Jul 20, 2010 @ 09:00 AM

CHATHAM — Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association is involved in everything from the restoration of herring runs to the health of marshes...

The new chief executive officer of the association has seen the efforts of the advocacy group change from a focus on helping those who ply the sea with hooks and lines to one that serves a variety of sometimes competing interests.

"The name of the organization is up for grabs at this moment," he said.

Pappalardo said the hook association, formed in 1991, has outgrown its name; the range of issues it delves into is far more encompassing.

The breadth of its mission is so large that Pappalardo will spend the initial months in his new position, which was created when executive director Susan Nickerson left last month...

"I don't want to spread us too thin," he said. "I want to take a step back and take a critical look at all the opportunities."

The lives of fishermen have changed drastically in recent years. Declining stocks set off a raft of new regulations that culminated in a completely new management regime.

Sectors, which are similar to a cooperative, have created a lot more paperwork and data collection for fishermen and have required some adjustment.

That focus on fishermen will not change, said Pappalardo, adding the group will also expand the fisheries it works with, such as monkfish and lobsters.

He also plans to foster the early success of Cape Cod Fisheries Trust. The Trust purchases fishing permits, which have become wildly expensive, and then leases them to small-boat fishermen who use traditional gear.

"The program is still in its infancy," he said, adding, "I want to make sure it gets all the nurturing it needs."

Programs like the Trust are an example of the "innovative, entrepreneurial solutions" to fisheries and environmental problems that Pappalardo wants to foster.

He also wants to increase the outreach and education the organization does; a goal that is difficult in the association's close quarters in North Chatham but one that will be made easier when staff members move into their new home at the Nathan Harding House.

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Scientists from venerable institutions, such as the Marine Biological Laboratory, will be invited in for “interactive” lectures. Pappalardo has worked with many of the researchers in his role on the New England Fishery Management Council. He is serving the last of nine years, four as chairman, on the council, which is responsible for regulations that try and prevent overfishing.

“It’s really taught me how to forge consensus,” said Pappalardo, who is known for his sincerity.

Admitting it sounds “hokey,” he said if disparate views aren’t hashed out, “you create hostility and hard feelings.”

Pappalardo grew up professionally in the organization, which was basically being run out of one of his closest friend’s basement when he got involved in 1995 at 23, and now he plans on giving back.

After having worked on fisheries problems all over the region, nation and world, he wants to come home and concentrate on Chatham.

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