



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Council Recognizes Law Enforcement Officer of the Year *North Carolina Marine Patrol Officer Jonathan Hall receives award*

Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council awarded its Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award to Jonathan Hall, Marine Patrol Officer with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Marine Fisheries Division. Officer Hall was presented the prestigious award by Council Chairman David Cupka during the Council's September meeting last week in Charleston, South Carolina. The award, acknowledging service above and beyond duty requirements, recognizes distinctive service, professionalism and dedication to enforcing fisheries regulations in the South Atlantic region. Nominees may be submitted from each of the southeastern state law enforcement agencies, the U.S. Coast Guard, and NOAA Fisheries. The Council's Law Enforcement Advisory Panel provided a final list of nominees for consideration by the Council.

"Law enforcement is an integral component of the fishery management process. To recognize its importance, the Council initiated the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award last year to recognize outstanding contributions made by law enforcement personnel," stated Chairman Cupka. During the ceremony to honor Officer Hall, Chairman Cupka announced, "Officer Hall went above and beyond the call of duty to enforce federal marine fisheries laws and to help conserve our important marine fishery resources. On behalf of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and our federal partners, I want to congratulate Officer Hall on being selected as the Council's outstanding law enforcement officer of the year for 2011. His efforts have contributed greatly to the conservation and proper management of the South Atlantic region's marine fisheries resources."

As a Marine Patrol Officer with the Marine Fisheries Division, Hall is assigned to Southport, North Carolina, covering the lower Cape Fear River, including the towns of Southport and Oak Island, and surrounding offshore waters. His assignment area includes several federally permitted seafood dealers and most of the commercially permitted hook-and-line snapper grouper vessels in the region. Officer Hall's duties are extensive and include boat, polluted area and endangered species patrols, dealer and license inspections, providing court testimonies, and community outreach on boating safety and other topics. Officer Hall extends his law enforcement capacity by working closely with personnel at the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Oak Island as well as embarking on joint operations with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. "He has demonstrated excellent leadership skills by providing assistance to both the public in his role as a marine patrol officer and to other younger members of his law enforcement team in his role as mentor," stated Captain Jim Kelly, with the North Carolina Marine Patrol.

Most recently Officer Hall's collaborative efforts resulted in the development of several significant cases working jointly with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. The joint cases revealed that a North Carolina licensed seafood dealer was under-reporting commercial catches, and some dealers were selling seafood without the proper licensing. Several cases were also made against recreational fishermen attempting to sell their bag limit of snapper grouper species, dolphin, and wahoo. Through his efforts, several cases resulted in both criminal and civil penalties. Officer Hall seeks innovative methods to observe fishing activity while on duty, including the use of web-based and modified concealed surveillance cameras, often spending many hours undercover watching fishing vessels unload in order to capture any illegal activity.

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Officer of the Year Award (*Continued*)

“Officer Hall has successfully cultivated strong law enforcement partnerships as well as good working relationships with the region’s fishing industry, exhibiting a high level of professionalism in his duties,” stated Captain Kelley.

“Receiving the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award from the Council is a great honor,” said Officer Hall, humbly responding to a standing ovation during the award presentation. “I would like to acknowledge my fellow officers and staff with the North Carolina Marine Patrol who provide support for me in my job and who work every day to help protect the marine resources in our state.” Hall continued, “Saltwater fishing has been a passion since my early teens, and I realized at an early age that I wanted to work to protect the resources for future generations. Now I have the job of my dreams.”

In addition to his law enforcement achievements, prior to joining District III, Officer Hall received a “Safety & Heroism” award when he and another officer performed an ocean rescue of two, 11-year old girls during dangerous sea conditions.

Other nominees acknowledged by the Council’s Law Enforcement Advisory Panel for their service include: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources Officer Sgt. Steve Pop of Pawley’s Island, South Carolina; Ranger First Class Hugh Cooper with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in Brunswick, Georgia; Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Investigator Jill Izsak of Jacksonville, Florida; and U.S. Coast Guard BM2 Seth P. Thorson, Boarding Officer, CGC YELLOWFIN, stationed in Charleston, South Carolina. “The Council will continue to solicit candidates to receive the annual award,” explained Chairman Cupka. “The award allows us to acknowledge the ongoing dedication of the men and women who enforce fishing regulations and protection of marine resources in often harsh environments and challenging economic times.”

<p>The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.</p>
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