

Since I took some shots at CCA in my last blog, I think it's only fair I give them credit for doing something good when I become aware of it. I went to Austin yesterday to speak at a CCA chapter meeting there, and I did offer some alternative ways in which the trout division of the STAR could be run. While there, I had conversations on various topics with several leaders of the chapter, including Scott Sanderson.

During our discussions, Scott made me aware of his excitement about a pledge CCA recently made to aid in the creation of a Sportfish Research Center within the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M/Corpus Christi. CCA's pledge of \$500,000 is accompanied by other commitments.

The University is expected to approve the project as soon as an operational plan is finalized and submitted. Significantly, the Research Center will be directed by Greg Stunz PH.D., a well-respected biologist in the local angling and scientific communities.

I applaud CCA's commitment to this project, and agree with Larry McKinney, executive director of the Harte Institute, who asserts that this kind of facility could greatly enhance scientist's knowledge of our local fish. In doing so, the research carried out here could surely aid the state in making better plans for managing coastal fish populations.

To read more on this topic, see:

<http://www.caller.com/news/2012/nov/13/coastal-conservation-association-texas-pledge-500/>

For the record, I do have one concern with what I read in the article referenced above. Mention is made about the hope of expanding the capability to track the movement patterns of various fish in the future, by expanding the system of towers which record electronic pings sent by devices inserted in fish. This method was used in the recently-completed three-year study tracking the movements of speckled trout in the Laguna Madre and adjacent coastal waters.

While I agree it would be a good thing for scientists to know more about where the fish go and what their movement habits are, I also see a potential problem with creating and implementing this kind of "infrastructure". In the wrong hands, it could become damaging to the fishery. Texas Parks and Wildlife needs to be proactive in working to prevent the possibility of private entities gaining the capability to track fish in the manner done in the study. If information about the specific locations of fish becomes available (as, for instance, a phone app or an internet subscription) the negative effects on the fishery could (and likely would) far outweigh any benefits gained through research done by scientists.