

East Coast Coordinators: Above and Beyond

A project goal for 2009 was to increase samples from the East Coast and Florida Keys. The following captains stepped up to the plate to help meet the challenge.

Capt. Mike Badarack grew up in the small town of Satellite Beach on Florida's Space Coast and has been catching tarpon since age 10. Now a guide, he also serves as an East Coast coordinator and helps with sample collection and kit dissemination from his house and promotes the program through community events and the media. Capt. Badarack says, "The Tarpon Genetics Program is a perfect system that provides accurate data through DNA collection and doesn't harm the fish like previous methods. It's just a phenomenal program that benefits tarpon and lets anglers who are passionate about this great species be involved in ensuring their future."



Capt. Gary Giles grew up in the Miami area and has been fishing the inshore and near shore waters of Florida his entire life. He assists on several tarpon research programs in Florida and most recently started his own. Since 2004, Capt. Giles has tagged and released over 500 tarpon. He started sampling for and promoting this study in 2008 and of the many samples he has provided, one turned out to be one of the few documented recaptures along the East Coast.



Recreational anglers take the lead!

To every angler that actually catches a tarpon, congratulations. It is no easy feat. And providing your tarpon's DNA sample is invaluable to learning about this species. Recreational anglers on both coasts place among the top samplers in this study, out-sampling many professional guides. Mr. John Manuel and Mr. Jon Mallory, both retired and fishing fanatics, have provided a plethora of samples from tarpon they fish year-round.

Jon Mallory, trout fisherman from Owego, NY, moved to the Merritt Island area after retirement and developed a passion for fly fishing. He is a member of the Florida Fly Fishing Association. He learned of this tarpon study at a club meeting presentation in 2009, when he "realized how important it is to track the travels and development of the species." Since he enjoys fishing for ditch tarpon, he started fishing in earnest to aid with the research. Mr. Mallory is quoted as saying, "I hope that the samples and information I have provided to Mote Marine Laboratory will help with its project and give me some answers to the many new questions I have!"



John Manuel, from Naples, has sampled for the study since 2007. He wrote, "For over a century Tarpon have been a premier quarry of Florida sport fishermen. Whether wily behemoth or feisty juvenile, the take and aerobic fight are thrilling. Yet little is known about this splendid fishery that I, and so many others, love so much, and that is why it is a privilege to work with the dedicated scientists on the Tarpon Genetics Team who use modern techniques to track and better understand this ancient and precious resource."



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