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Bill Shedd: 2015 Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year

Visionary volunteer leader: Take Back Our Rightful Title as Conservationists

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Center for Coastal Conservation has honored Bill Shedd with its Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year Award. Shedd is the President and CEO of the American Fishing Tackle Co. (AFTCO) and a volunteer leader for marine conservation respected from coast to coast.

“Bill Shedd has championed the conservation of America’s marine resources throughout his career,” said Jeff Angers, president of the Center for Coastal Conservation (Center) during the presentation. “His commitment to voluntarism and stewardship inspires anglers across the country.”

Shedd oversees AFTCO’s fishing tackle and clothing divisions. He volunteers over 500 hours a year on marine resource and recreational fishing industry issues. He is Chairman of the Hubbs/SeaWorld Research Institute (HSWRI) and serves on the board of the Center, the International Game Fish Association, and the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation. Shedd chairs the American Sportfishing Association’s Government Affairs Committee and is the founding Chairman of Coastal Conservation Association California.

At the presentation, Shedd challenged the recreational fishing and boating community to “take back our rightful title” as *America’s conservationists*.

“There is a misperception here in Washington, D.C., as to just who our community is,” Shedd said. “In many ways we are looked at as the takers of the resource - the negative guys toward the resource. And the ‘environmental community’ is looked at as the givers of the resource, and they are looked at as conservationists. The truth is that is just not accurate.”

“Major fisheries conservation efforts can be traced back to the boating and fishing communities, including gill net bans that revived fish stocks; the building of saltwater hatcheries; tens of thousands of artificial reefs; the striped bass conservation effort, and the more than \$1 billion that the fishing and boating community spends every year through our excise taxes and license fees that goes to states that help their fishery resource issues,” Shedd said. “All done by the recreational boating and fishing community. None by the environmental community.”

“We have worked for it; we have paid for it; we deserve it,” he said. “And with better identification of that title, we will be much more effective in our efforts, not just here in Washington, D.C., but in the states as well.”

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Shedd co-founded United Anglers of Southern California, where he led the group's efforts to develop the white seabass grow-out facilities. He started the AFTCO TAG FLAG program in both the Atlantic and Pacific, which for 15 years helped to increase awareness of and participation in tag and release. Shedd played a leadership role in eliminating the use in California of destructive fishing gear such as long lines and gill nets. He has also helped to fund efforts that bring about a more rational approach to the development of Marine Protected Areas that recognize the valuable conservation role sportfishermen have long played.

The Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year award was established by the Center to honor extraordinary commitment to conservation by manufacturers. An icon in marine manufacturing, Smith served on the boards of National Marine Manufacturers Association; Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation; IGFA; Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council, and the Sport Fishing Institute. He was instrumental in founding CCA North Carolina. Well known as the owner of Grady White Boats, Smith received the first-ever ASA Lifetime Achievement Award and is a member of the NMMA Hall of Fame.

Past recipients of the award include Bass Pro Shops' Johnny Morris; Grady White Boats' Kris Carroll; Maverick Boats' Scott Deal, and Yamaha's Phil Dyskow.

The Center for Coastal Conservation brings under a single umbrella the leading advocates for marine recreational fishing and boating. The organization promotes sound conservation and use of America's ocean resources by backing federal legislators who support its goals. For more information, visit www.CoastalConservation.US.

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Editor's note: Link to high-resolution photograph of the presentation:

http://www.CoastalConservation.US/docs/Shedd_Honored.jpg

Cutline:

Bill Shedd, President and CEO of the American Fishing Tackle Co. (AFTCO), receives a 150-year-old antique octant commemorating the 2015 Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year Award from the Center for Coastal Conservation. Presenting the award at left is Grady White Boats President Kris Carroll. (Photo courtesy of John Nelson Photography.)