

Governor appoints local resident to MFC

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ORIENTAL - A scientist by profession and an advocate by nature, Anna Beckwith will now put two of her strengths to the test as the newest member of the Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC). Appointed by Governor Beverly Perdue, Beckwith will serve as one of the two required at large members on the Commission. In total, MFC consists of nine members: two commercial

fishermen; one dealer, processor or distributor; two recreational fishermen; one sport-fishing industry representative; one scientist; and two at-large members. For Beckwith, the at large designation suits her background perfectly.

"My back-
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Anna Beckwith is no stranger to the issues facing today's watermen.

MFC

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ground as a scientist compels me to study the data," Beckwith said. "I have no set viewpoints on issues, only the promise to focus on the resource."

Charged with laying the groundwork for the Commission is the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). According to Louis Daniel, DMF Director, Beckwith is off to a great start.

"Anna has been in here (DMF offices) numerous times to pick up data," Daniel said. "Obviously she is jumping in with both feet."

"She is excited about this new endeavor and it shows," Daniel said. "Someone with Anna's background will understand the data and be a good interface with our staff."

Beckwith graduated from Florida International University with a BS in Environmental Science and Policy and went on to North Carolina State University where she did her post graduate work earning an MS in Biographical Oceanography.

Beckwith, an Oriental resident and manager of Down East Guide Service, believes there's only one way to approach a task.

"I take things on 100 percent," Beckwith said. "I'm

reading as much as I can and attending lots of meetings in preparation."

There's little doubt Beckwith and fellow Commissioners will have their work cut out for them. The MFC is charged with the task of "protecting, restoring and developing marine and estuarine resources within state waters" - a task that obviously brings out the scientist in Beckwith.

"It is no doubt a daunting job to assure the health of the resource," Beckwith said. "But it is the right thing to do and I am working very hard to get my head wrapped around each and every issue on the table."

At the heart of the state's fisheries process are Fishery Management Plans (FMP). Mandated by the 1997 Fisheries Reform Act, DMF is required to prepare Fishery Management Plans for review and adoption by the MFC. An FMP describes the nature and problems of a particular fishery and makes regulatory recommendations to preserve that fishery. As of fall 2006, the MFC has asked DMF to develop 15 plans, including river herring, red drum, oyster, clam, striped bass, blue crab, southern flounder, striped mullet, shrimp, bay scallop, kingfishes, spotted sea trout,

yellow perch and catfishes.

The process of developing an FMP is a collaborative effort between fishermen, scientists, and environmental groups and other state and federal agencies. The MFC chairman appoints members of each FMP Advisory Committee.

The governor has sole authority to make all appointments, but the breakdown of interest groups represented is legislatively mandated and the commission must include representation of women and minorities. Additionally, five of the commissioners - both commercial fishermen; the dealer, processor or distributor; one of two recreational fishermen; and one of two at-large members - must represent each of the three coastal regions. All members serve three-year, staggered terms and may be reappointed to any number of successive terms. The MFC meets at least once a quarter, and at least three of the four meetings will be held in coastal regions. The MFC generally meets up to six or seven times per year. All meetings are open to the public.

The next scheduled MFC meeting will be held Sept. 23-25 at the Clamdigger, Pine Knoll Shores.