

On The Line

Fishing with Capt. Ron

By Capt Ron Blago

Water LIFE Senior Staff

Well boys, it's time to open your wallets again - the price of fishing has just gone up. As of July 1 the fee for registering your boat in Florida has increased 50-percent. Since there are over 1,000,000 boat registered in Florida each year; and the average statewide registration fee is about \$35; the legislature just gouged an extra \$17.5 million out of the hide of the poor boaters. Of course if you don't own a boat, or have to pay a boat registration fee, this fact will fly right by your personal radar. I, on the other hand, am starting to notice every little price increase that is coming my way. I guess that as I rapidly approach the expiration date of the useable shelf-life of my life, I'm starting to wonder if I can still afford to go fishing.

Someone should come up with a Fisherman's Price Index (FPI) that shows the increase in the price of fishing and boating; sort of like the CPI, Consumer's Price Index that tracks the change in the cost of the stuff we buy. That way we can show mathematically and scientifically the level of screwing the average boater and fisherman has to put up with as time goes on. As with any good economic indicator, the index has to contain many components. Just off the top of my head, you would have to factor in the cost of a fishing license, which went up this year and the new boat registration fee increase and of course the price of gas at the marina which is taxed higher than at the gas station. Throw in the federal excise tax you pay on all fishing supplies and include the sales tax we pay on everything and you start to generate some real data. You would have to include

the price of commodities- you know, the staples of fishing- the price of a dozen shrimp, the cost of a Mirrolure fishing plug, and lets not forget the price of a pack of a non-stainless circle hooks you now have to use for offshore fishing. All these little things add up. Just for once, when someone, sarcastically calls me a poor boater; I can whip out a graph of my FPI Index and show him just how poor I really am.

Just when you thought you had all the fishing laws down pat, the FWC just made it illegal to feed a brown pelican in Florida. This just makes me laugh. Anyone who has ever fished on a pier has seen some poor kid with a pinfish, being chased by a herd of 8 pound pelicans with a 7 foot wing span. If that kid doesn't give up that fish, those birds are going to take it from him- by force if need be. I'm sure they had a good reason for passing that law; which by the way involves a big fine and a possible 90 days in jail; but who is going to tell those pelicans they can't have those fish scraps that are coming off the cleaning table. When I was a kid in grade school, I had one of my teachers tell me if I didn't wise up I'd wind up broke and in jail. Lately I've been having a nightmare where I am standing in front of a judge explaining why I'm broke: it's because I fish and



Simon Baber tries to get 14-year old Megan Madison to hold a 10-pound 4 oz pacu that her father Mike caught in the canal behind their Port Charlotte house. Megan's mom Angela looks on. The fish was 22.5 inches long. There are plenty more of these around here, Mike said. The pacu is an invasive species.


I'm in jail because I fed a pelican.


With plenty of white bait in the livewell it's easy to find the fish. In the mangroves, in channels next to sea walls and under docks, all have been pretty productive. I've run into a lot of big jacks in these areas too. Actually too big; they have been tearing up my 30-pound fluorocarbon leaders. I've been reading reports about redfish in the flats of north Lemon Bay but I can't find them. I guess someone is going to have to show me where they are before I believe them.

Capt Ron can be reached for questions or charters at 941-474-3474

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