



THE FISHIN' INSIDER

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This a bit late, but a lass by the name of Benazir Bhutto will be speakin' at Taco Tech in the Science and Engineering lecture hall at UTB-TSC if it's Friday when ya read this mess. She's round four of the best ideas the well heeled round these parts have ever come up with: The Distinguished Lecture Series which has exposed the well heeled as well as bunch of kiddo's to the likes of Bob Ballard and David Breashears. The ticket be a bit steep at \$150 a pop, but for those interested in what the first woman to be elected Prime Minister of an Islamic nation (Pakistan) has to say it should be well worth it. Don't know this for a fact, but the usual plan for these to-do's is for us to pay the tab so the school kids in the area can broaden their education and perhaps their understanding of how the world such as it is, works cuz she'll be talkin' to the kiddos at the Jacob Brown Auditorium before the soiree.

This lass is interesting in that she was twice elected then deposed by a male dominated culture that wrongly accused her of corruption. She was educated here and in Europe. The Taliban took hold after her departure in neighboring Afghanistan.

The phone rang the other morning. On the other end was a gent I'd not heard from in quite awhile. Jim Smarr is a bit of a firebrand and loyal member of the Democrat machine. A devout follower of the LBJ creed for democracy, "Better to have everybody in the same room durin' a pissin' contest cuz you can't control the flood with'um pissin' in through the windows". He's also the firebrand behind the Texas chapter of the Recreational Fishing Alliance and he was about as down in the dumps as I've ever heard him. This is October, the most kick ass month of the year as far as fishin' is concerned, but at the end of the month the recreational red snapper season closes in federal waters, again.

This horse has been flogged so long, hard, often and intensely that I'm surprised there's a carcass much less any hide left to beat on. But here goes anyway. Back in the



34" South Bay Snook. Thelma & Danny Gallegos fishing with Captain Gilbert Vela.

mid-90's the east of the Mississippi cabal on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council were told by some bean counters at NOAA-National Marine Fisheries Service with really bad stock assessment information that the quota was gonna be cut severely. Since they were the majority in the democratic process they decreed a closure for red snapper from November to April gulf wide. The closure devastated the Texas charter/headboat industry cuz snapper are about the only reliable critter you can fish for during the winter offshore. To make matters worse, at the end of the nineties the Texas Shrimp Association filed a complaint with NOAA-NMFS that the recreational sector had exceeded its quota and the fishery should be shut down in early summer. The idiots on the council and at NOAA-NMFS decreed in order to keep fishin' they'd raise the minimum size for keepers to 18 inches. A true pogrom followed cuz snapper can't survive the ride up in ninety feet of water after they've developed a swim bladder which they usually do at around 12-13 inches. Outrage and a lawsuit followed thanks to Jimmy Smarr and the RFA to examine NOAA-NMFS management practices in federal court. Though Judge Hayden Head was sympathetic he couldn't allow a mortality study to be entered as evidence because it came in a day late.

Fast-forward to today... the closure continues to devastate Texas, the minimum size is down to 16 inches but the trail of tears from dead discards continues. We have a deep-water fishery, Florida is shallow. Thanks to the RFA and Sol Ortiz about two million bucks worth of studies have been done mostly at federal expense. The conclusion is that the Gulf should be split. The Gulf Council and NOAA-NMFS are ignoring all this. It'll take another trip to court. Jim and the guys have support in Port Aransas, but they're needing support from this area as well as Galveston to make their case. Go to the RFA-Texas web site to see what you can do to help.

We welcome your fishin' photos. Drop them by 2600 Padre Boulevard on the Island, or mail them to I.B. Hooked, c/o Coastal Current Weekly, P.O.Box 2429, South Padre Island, Texas 78597. Be sure to include the name of the angler, weight and type of fish, where caught, and name of boat if applicable. Photos with SASE will be returned.