



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shari Hubbard, Vice President

Geiger & Associates Public Relations, Inc.

1846 Junwin Court

Tallahassee, FL 32308

Phone: 850/942-6685

Fax: 850/942-1057

E-mail: shari.hubbard@geigerpr.com

FRANKLIN COUNTY—AN ANGLER’S PARADISE

Franklin County, FL – Franklin County is renowned for both fresh and saltwater fishing opportunities. The unique topography of the Apalachicola River and Bay systems, in combination with the county’s gulf coast location, provides diverse marine habitats including the Apalachicola River basin, the estuary system, wetlands, four barrier islands, oyster bars, sand flats and seagrass flats.

According to The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Apalachicola River Basin is home to 186 species of fish, and the bay system serves as a critical nursery area for more than 95 percent of all species harvested commercially and 85 percent of all species harvested recreationally in the Gulf of Mexico. This estuarine system remains one of the most pristine and productive in the entire northern hemisphere.

More than a dozen local marinas are located throughout the county, providing access to the Gulf of Mexico, Alligator Harbor, Apalachicola Bay, Apalachicola River and its many tributaries, St. Vincent Sound, St. George Sound and Ochlockonee Bay.

The largest concentrations of marinas are found in Carrabelle and Apalachicola. Carrabelle is well-known as a deep water port and the only safe harbor between Tampa and Port St. Joe. Here, boaters will find six full-service marinas located on the Carrabelle River. Moorings Marina in Carrabelle and Scipio Creek Marina in Apalachicola have earned the “Clean Marina” designation from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, meeting both state and federal environmental regulations. (Please refer to the Franklin County Fact Sheet for a complete listing of local marinas and contact information).

For anglers who prefer to bring in their own boat, public boat access ramps are plentiful throughout the county; three are located on St. George Island (two within the state park), and another three are located in Carrabelle. Two public boat ramps are found on Alligator Point, and half a dozen creek access ramps are located on Highway 65 North.

Anglers who boat in, or pull a boat in, can easily find local accommodations to perfectly suit their specialized needs. From river-front hotels with marinas to gulf and bay-front rental homes, many accommodations are developed with boaters and anglers in mind, providing private docks with bay or river access. Local property rental agencies include search criteria such as “docks” and “bay front” in their online reservations systems to assist boaters and anglers.

Some 50 professional fishing guides call Franklin County home, and these experienced local guides generally specialize in inshore saltwater, offshore saltwater or freshwater river guide services.

Professional guide service and charter boat rental rates vary by fishing location and services provided. Most licensed captains charge half or full day charter rates, though professional guides are happy to tailor a fishing excursion to the specific needs of their charter. Charter pricing most often includes required fishing licenses; rods, reels or fishing poles; bait and tackle. Professional guides will recommend you to bring polarized sunglasses, beverages, snacks, seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear, sunscreen and hats. For bragging rights, a camera also is a good idea, especially on a catch-and-release charter.

Robinson Brothers Guide Service, based in Apalachicola, is headed by Captain Tommy Robinson, a professional fishing guide since 1978. Captain Chris Robinson joined the ranks in 1995, and they have been specializing in inshore and offshore fly fishing and light tackle trips for 14 years. Their professional guide service offers charters with 30 experienced area guides. The brothers have been featured in such publications as Field & Stream, Men's Journal, Outdoor Life and Sports Afield. They've also been profiled on ESPN Outdoors with Rick Ruoff and TBS Fishing Show, among others.

Fishing in Franklin County is available year round, with best opportunities in March through December.

Robinson Brothers Guide Service has compiled years of detailed fishing reports which are available on their website, www.floridaredfish.com. Report

records indicate that January and February are the most unpredictable fishing months, but the dedicated angler may well land trout, redfish, black drum, flounder and sheepshead during this time of year. With clear weather and calm winds, things pick up a bit in February and warmer water can begin to bring in Spanish mackerel and pompano inshore, with grouper fishing offshore on calm days.

With the advent of spring and warmer water, things really pick up! March will find Spanish mackerel and pompano increasing in numbers, as are the bluefish and Jack Crevalle.

April begins the spring migration and not just for birds—migratory fish including pompano, bluefish, ladyfish, Jack Crevalle, cobia and black tip sharks are on the move. Redfish and trout numbers also are rising.

May is an excellent month for saltwater fishing, with daytime temperatures averaging 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Redfish, trout, cobia black drum and pompano are here in large numbers.

Captain Robinson notes, “If you can imagine a species of northern gulf saltwater fish, you can probably catch it here this month. We have seen anglers with 12 species days, much better than a Grand Slam!”

The summer months of June, July and August are prime for tarpon fishing. Anglers should keep in mind that seasonal tarpon charters are very popular and often book up a year out.

The offshore captains will be booking charters for grouper, snapper, amberjack and more during summer season, and bay fishing guides will begin looking for tripletail.

According to Captain Robinson, the months of September through November are “historically the best time of year here for local flats and bay fishing for trout, redfish and flounder.” Additionally, this time of year is red snapper season for offshore captains.

December yields good flats fishing for redfish and trout on warmer, sunnier days. Bay fishing yields flounder and sheepshead, and anglers headed up river enjoy good bass fishing in the Apalachicola River. Offshore fishing conditions this time of year depend greatly on temperature and wind variations, but charters are generally available with short notice on mild days.

For the freshwater angler, the lower Apalachicola River, consisting of the main river channel and its delta distributaries, offers prime fishing for striped and sunshine bass; flathead and channel catfish; bream and shad. Multiple public boat access points are available, with best shoreline access from the public docks on the Apalachicola waterfront and at the city dock under Highway 98. Private launching facilities are available at any of the local marinas.

Two fishing piers also are utilized by locals and visitors. One is located in Eastpoint, and a second was created by leaving the end portions of the previous bridge from the mainland to St. George Island.

With more than 200 miles of shoreline county-wide, surf fishing is a popular pastime. Pompano, whiting, redfish and bluefish are among the yields visiting anglers can expect to reel in just outside of their gulf-front accommodations, or while visiting St. George Island State Park.

Many natural reefs are found offshore, and more than a dozen artificial reefs are located throughout the county. Artificial reefs are identified in the

“Boating and Angling Guide to Apalachicola Bay” collateral produced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This guide provides detailed maps of the area’s waters, and is an excellent resource for marinas, boat ramps and other features of interest to area anglers.

Given the exceptional year-round fishing, many tournaments are held in the area. A few of the more well-known tournaments include the Big Bend Saltwater Classic, held annually over Father’s Day Weekend in Carrabelle; and Carrabelle’s Gulf Coast Kingfish Invitational, LLC, and the Florida Catfish Classic Tournament based out of Apalachicola, both held each year in October.

Florida law requires either a freshwater, saltwater or combination license to take fish. Resident and non-resident licenses are available and can be purchased online at <http://myfwc.com/license.html>, or toll-free by calling 1-888-FISH-FLorida (347-4356).

**For Consumer Information, Contact:
Franklin County Tourist Development Council
www.anaturalescape.com
1-866-914-2068 (toll free)
1-850/653-8678
P.O. Box 819
Apalachicola, FL 32329**

###