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ABC 2015: Bill Shedd receives Eddie Smith award

Posted on May 13th, 2015
Written by **Chris Landry**

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WASHINGTON — Bill Shedd, president and CEO of AFTCO, the American Fish and Tackle Co., on Tuesday captured the Eddie Smith Manufacturer of the Year Award, which is presented by the Center for Coastal Conservation to leaders in conservation advocacy.

Eddie Smith Jr. is the longtime owner of Grady-White Boats and a pioneer and advocate for marine conservation. Shedd was honored at a luncheon at the American Boating Congress.

"I have been doing this for 40 years and I think the boating and fishing communities are united like they have never been before in a commitment to influence policy-makers on issues," Shedd told Trade Only after his nine-minute acceptance speech.

It was brief, but Shedd said a lot in those nine minutes, strongly confirming the boating and fishing industries' growing cooperation and calling for both to take their rightful place as leading conservationists.

"There is 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 the true 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 and 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 [this] was done by the boating and fishing community. None of [it] was done by the environmental community."

Shedd challenged the boating and fishing communities to "take back our rightful title."

"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."

Shedd gave credit to the leaders of the major fishing and boating associations — Thom Dammrich, president of the National Marine Manufacturers Association; and Mike Nussman, president and CEO of the American Sportfishing Association — for stepping up the cooperation between the two groups.

Shedd cited the challenge of successfully coordinating the marine fisheries efforts of separate associations with separate staffs.

"I think it is unique; it is awesome," he said. "All the good that has come from their leadership and their staffs — their staffs have improved tremendously in the past few years. Those of us involved in these battles, we see it; we know it. I would like for us to thank not only the leadership of Mike and Tom, but collectively their staffs for all they are doing for us."

Shedd also thanked Jeff Angers, president of the Center for Coastal Conservation. "Jeff's group ... is really the tip of the spear to present critical messages to folks here in D.C.," Shedd said, citing the many associations that are members, such as ASA, NMMA, IGFA, CCA and the Billfish Foundation. "I have been doing this for 40 years, and this is the most important thing in my mind for our community — to deliver our message. So I would like to thank Jeff for his vision."

Shedd is the son of Milton Shedd, founder of the Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute and SeaWorld San Diego. Shedd is chairman of its board of directors; a member of the International Game Fish Association's board of trustees, a board member of the Center for Coastal Conservation and the California Artificial Reef Enhancement program; and the winner of the 2014 Californian of the Year award from the Outdoor Writers Association of California.

In 1974, Bill Shedd joined AFTCO, and in 1989 he started the AFTCO Clothing Division. In 2004, Guy Harvey partnered with AFTCO for the manufacture and distribution of all Guy Harvey sportswear.

Shedd spends more than 500 hours a year providing leadership for the sportfishing community and ocean conservation efforts.

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Crystal May 13, 2015 at 11:46 am

As close friends of Bill Shedd, we've linked to this story on guyhavreymagazine.com. Thank you for recognizing the work of this great guy!

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