



THE DAILY NEWS/RANDY DAVEY

Plight of coastal fishing villages: Matthew Barr, producer of a documentary on Sneads Ferry fishermen titled, 'Wild Caught: the Life and Struggles of an American Fishing Town,' talks about the film Sunday with Terri Huie and her husband, Paul, of Sneads Ferry.

Film receives a thumbs-up

Documentary on Sneads Ferry fishing community draws subjects' approval

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SNEADS FERRY — The life of a fisherman is not glamorous.

The hours are long, the work is back-breaking and the pay is meager. Getting a good catch is hit or miss — sometimes the fish are biting, but other times there is a draught of weeks or even months.

Fishermen worry about increased imports and the recent boom in coastal development that is disrupting the natural habitat. New regulations are being set that cut into the hours and areas they can work, causing even longer days and even less pay. And every year, there are the storms.

But there is no doubt that fishermen love the open waters and the job. It's in their blood.

Sneads Ferry fishermen have had the chance to express those views and many others over the past seven years in a way that has already reached hundreds of people around the state.

Soon, their voices could be heard around the country.

That's due to a recent documentary produced by Matthew Barr, associate professor at the University of North Car-



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Their lives' story: Sneads Ferry residents gather to view a documentary by UNC-Greensboro professor Matthew Barr about their fishing community on Sunday.

olina at Greensboro. After a number of vacations to the area, Barr came to find such aspects of Sneads Ferry intriguing.

He found them so intriguing, in fact, that he felt the need to capture them before they were lost. The 90-minute documentary, entitled "Wild Caught: The Life and Struggles of an American Fishing Town," closely follows Sneads Ferry fishing families over the past seven years. It aired for the first time in Sneads Ferry on Sunday and could be featured on PBS and at the Sundance Film Festival.

The documentary, which received a standing ovation, left some with salty tears streaming down their faces and oth-

ers with laughter on their lips. Families hugged, shook hands and talked about the "old days."

The documentary, they say, captured Sneads Ferry life in a perfect snapshot.

"I think he did an excellent job telling our story," said fisherman John Edens, who was featured in the film along with his family. "Not only did he do a good job, he's come to be a close friend."

Edens' wife, Betty, said she hopes the documentary will educate others.

"I believe it speaks volumes," she said. "It's how we feel and he captured it."

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The film was just what Sneads Ferry needed, according to Terri Huie.

"He interviewed us and I think he really portrayed our fishermen and our town," said Huie, wife of fisherman Paul Huie.

"Maybe people will start seeing the issues now."

Fisherman Mack Liverman, also featured in the film, said he hopes the documentary will help clear up misconceptions about the job.

Refuse to give up

"I hope it will make the issues more understandable," he said. "The price of shrimp is lower than ever, and fuel is higher than ever. Nobody wants to do this work anymore. But the bills don't stop."

He and a few others recently pulled in 8,600 pounds of shrimp, he said. After all of the expenses were extracted, however, the fishermen shared a mere \$500 between them.

Nonetheless, fishing is some-

thing Liverman, Edens, Huie and many others refuse to give up. It's all they've known, and it's a part of their heritage.

Barr is scared for the future of the local business, and he hopes his film can serve for the advocacy of it.

"The documentary shows everything the fisherman can do — from mechanical work to reading the wind," Barr said. "We're in danger of losing that."

His nonprofit project, called "Unheard Voices," is aimed at preserving such heritage.

"It's very important to preserve the old ways because we're going to have to come back to them," he said. "This is also a celebration of community."

In Sneads Ferry, everyone knows everyone.

"I think everybody fares the same," Liverman said in the documentary. "Nobody has anymore than anybody else."

It's something that locals say has helped them "keep

on keeping on" despite tough times.

"I'm never going to have any money, but I'm rich because of my family," said crabber Johnny Wayne Midgett in the documentary.

Described as "stewards of the sea," the fishermen spoke of the importance of community, family, God and their boat. They shed tears as they told of family members who were lost at sea. And they laughed as they told stories of the good memories they share.

"I think fishermen are dreamers to a point," Liverman said in the film. "What would this country be today if you didn't have dreamers? I think most fisherman have to be to survive."

But they will survive, he said. Fishermen — and Sneads Ferry — somehow always manage to survive.

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