

Voices

Traditional ways in peril

Sneads Ferry is a traditional fishing village perched on the banks of the New River and the Intracoastal Waterway.

The community's location, with easy access to the ocean and primary inland waterway is perfect for those who make their living harvesting from the water. Ironically, these very attributes may doom the very industry it promotes as more people move to the area to enjoy the vibrant waterway thereby reducing access and increasing pollution while at the same time increasing the cost of living for those least prepared for it- the traditional fishing families.

With increased population growth property values on or near the waterfront have skyrocketed in the past few years. As property values increase so do taxes.

Adding to the challenges of the traditional fishing families are increased competition from imported seafood and increased fishing regulations that make fishing too expensive to compete with these imports.

The alternative for these families is to sell out to the highest bidder and take up new jobs with a steady income and the possibility of health benefits; opportunities that rarely exist

in the fishing industry.

In Sneads Ferry many fishing families are holding on, working the waters the way their families always have. But they wonder if their children, and their children's children, will be able to continue this traditional livelihood.

The difficulties of the fishing families have not gone unnoticed. Matthew Barr, a professor of film-making at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, has concluded a film documenting the plight of the fishing community in Sneads Ferry.

Barr's documentary focuses on several Sneads Ferry families whose heritage is intertwined with the water. The film gives its viewers an insight into a way of life that is threatened.

The film will be shown at the Sneads Ferry Community Center on Sunday, July 30, at 3 p.m. Admission is free.

Everyone interested in the future of Sneads Ferry and the region should make an effort to see this important documentary.

As Sneads Ferry moves into the future it is important to understand the village's traditions, heritage and economy.