

OUTDOORS

Reef builders team with lionfish killers

By Ed Killer

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It's going to take a lot more than whatever is left over from Tropical Storm Chantal to thwart the Martin County Reef Builders Fishing Tournament and Lionfish Roundup.

Tournament chair Betty Olliges said there already are 21 boats registered for the offshore fishing tournament, plus the Safari I party boat out of Pirates Cove Resort has all 22 spots sold out.

Entries for the lionfish roundup are ahead of last year's pace as well.

The National Weather Service Marine Forecast on Wednesday afternoon indicated little effect can be expected on the Treasure Coast from the remnants of Chantal as the rare early season storm has quickly deteriorated since Tuesday.

The forecast calls for winds out of the south at 10 to 15 knots with seas about 3 feet.

Olliges said organizers are looking forward to more entries signing up at Friday's final registration and captains meeting from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at The Reef Restaurant, 4290 S.E. Salerno Road, Port Salerno.

Anglers competing in the seventh annual tournament will vie for cash prizes for first through third place from \$1,000 to

\$250 for dolphin, kingfish, wahoo, grouper, snapper and cobia divisions.

Tournament entry is \$300 per boat.

Divers entered in the third annual Lionfish Roundup, and second lionfish event of three on the Treasure Coast this year, will compete for the most, smallest, largest and team lionfish harvested.

Last year, 12 divers hauled in 119 lionfish ranging from Hannah Boorman's 1½-incher to Joe Geiger's 15¼-incher. Geiger also collected the most with 68.

Divers can enter the roundup for \$50 per entry and will keep track of where their catches are harvested to assist researchers working on the invasive species.

Olliges said there also will be great trophies for the top junior angler, the top charter boat and the Kyle Conrad Memorial Trophy awarded to the event's top boat.

Proceeds from the tournament purchase materials and pay for services to construct artificial reefs in Martin County offshore waters.

In 2011 and 2012, reefs were sunk in honor of Kyle Conrad, a young man and avid diver and angler from Jensen Beach who tragically lost his life in December of 2010.

For more information, go to www.mcacreefs.org or call 772-223-1685.