NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 10, 2015

Contact:
Jackie Broach, public information officer
Phone: (843) 545-3164
E-mail: jbroach@gtcounty.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgetown County to host Bassmaster Elite Series tournament in 2016

GEORGETOWN COUNTY — Georgetown County will be the host site for a 2016 Bassmaster Elite Series tournament, bringing some of the nation’s top professional bass anglers to Winyah Bay, B.A.S.S. announced nationwide today. The Elite Series is known as the premier fishing tournament series in the world and has been shown to generate economic impacts of more than $2 million in other host cities.

“To fishing, this series is what the PGA Tour is to golf,” said Georgetown County Administrator Sel Hemingway. “Being selected to host an event of this caliber is a huge achievement for our community and an honor. This is the chance the county has been looking for to prove we can host a large scale, national event and not only compete with but outdo other jurisdictions that are competing for this type of event.”

The Elite Series will stop in Georgetown with tournament days of April 7-10. Official practice days for the anglers will be April 4-6. Many participants are expected to make trips to the area months ahead of the tournament to get familiar with the local fishery.

Making the announcement even more exciting for area outdoors enthusiasts, the 2016 Winyah Bay Heritage Festival will be scheduled to coincide with the event, making it a weekend not to be missed for anglers and other outdoorsmen.

Introduced in 2007, the festival celebrates the area’s rich outdoor heritage. While it traditionally brings together wildlife artists, conservationists and all manner of people with a love for the outdoors, many of its activities and displays are geared toward the interests of those with a passion for fishing and hunting.

Festival activities including a dock diving competition for dogs, a duck calling clinic and contest, retriever trials and much more are expected to return for 2016.

“For anyone who has an interest in fishing and the outdoors, Georgetown is where they’ll want to be next April,” Hemingway said. “Here’s a chance to watch some real stars in the fishing world during the tournament weigh-ins, which will be open to the public. Then you have the festival, which will be a fun thing with something to offer for every member of the family, from kids on up to parents and grandparents.”
More details about the tournament and festival will be made available as the events draw nearer, but there will be plenty of volunteer and sponsorship opportunities. Staff with the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce will be working with local businesses to help them make the most of the influx of visitors that will result from the tournament and festival. Additionally, B.A.S.S. will continue its popular marshal program during the Georgetown tournament, which will allow some lucky fishing fans to ride along and observe the Elite pros during competition.

While this is the kind of tournament Georgetown County hoped to someday begin hosting when it conceived plans to construct the Carroll A. Campbell Marine Complex, Hemingway said he expected it to be at least another two years before the county took on an event of this magnitude. Over the last year and a half, the county has had great success hosting smaller tournaments, including the Inshore Fishing Association Redfish Tour and the B.A.S.S. Nation Southern Divisional Championship, which took place in Georgetown this spring.

“We were working our way up to something like this,” Hemingway said. “The plan was to prove what we’re capable of as an event host with these smaller tournaments and I guess we did a good job, because we were encouraged by B.A.S.S. to accelerate our timeline. Tournament officials and participants from the beginning have been impressed with our facilities at the Campbell Complex, our water resources and with how they’ve been received by the community when they come into Georgetown County. We wanted to make sure they would want to come back and we were very successful.”

The Campbell Marine Complex will be the site for the tournament’s boat launch and weigh-in. Tournament waters will include all rivers that are reachable from the launch facility, including the five rivers that converge in Winyah Bay: the Sampit, Santee, Waccamaw, Great Pee Dee and Black rivers.

B.A.S.S.’s last stop in Georgetown County had an economic impact of about half a million dollars, with many anglers bringing their families with them for the trip. For the Elite Series, anglers will be in the area for a longer period as they get to know local waters and practice fish in advance of the tournament.

B.A.S.S. CEO Bruce Akin called the 2016 Elite Series location lineup one of the best the organization has ever put together.

“Our Elite anglers will find a lot to love about it, and we are expecting to attract new fans in new places this year. That’s the key to growing the sport,” he said.

Akin noted that the Elite Series has set new attendance records each of the past three years. The current record, set in August, is 156,765, up from 128,600 in 2014. The record is likely to be broken again before this year is over.

“There’s no question this is a great opportunity for Georgetown County and I have no doubt the community and our local business owners will embrace it and keep these groups wanting to come back,” Hemingway said.

For more information about the tournament, volunteer opportunities and more, contact Jackie Broach at (843) 545-3164 or jbroach@gtcounty.org.

###

*Photos from the 2014 B.A.S.S. tournament in Georgetown County are available upon request.*