

Sean Turner – Age 12

"Woo Hoo! Cocodrie, baby!" I shouted when my dad told me that he'd planned our first fishing trip of the summer. School was out, and it was time to get back on the water! I was really excited about this trip because we would have two charter guides on the boat with us, Capt. Elton Rodrigue of Catch Dat Charters and Capt. Tommy Pellegrin of Custom Charters. They both are great fishermen and great friends. They're both really funny, too.

We planned to stay two nights at CoCo Marina so we could have an extra day to hang out and cook with the captains. We were supposed to fish the first morning, then cook the next day. BUT, at 4:30 in the morning on the day we were supposed to fish, I woke up to the sounds of the wind howling and my toddler brother screaming and running around the condo because of thunder! With him running all over the place and the wind blowing 60 miles per hour, that camp was shaking! So I got up, tried to help calm my brother down, and we all snuggled on the couch to watch the storm blow through. My mom picked up her phone to look at the radar, and there was a text from Captain Elton telling us to stay in bed. Too late! Well, we stayed on the couch in the dark for a while, watching the lightning over the water. I was glad we weren't going out there and had another day to fish.

The next morning, I was so sound asleep when the alarm went off, my dad had to kick my butt to get me awake and out of bed. When I realized it was a fishing day, I threw my clothes on like they were about to leave me. But they wouldn't, because I always catch the most fish. I hopped on the boat with my dad and the captains and took a 30 minute ride out to a spot they called "The Pole." It was just a big, white pole sticking out of the water. When we pulled up, Capt. Tommy rigged up my fishing rod with a shrimp to get me going. I know how to bait my own hook, but I just went with it. Two seconds later, I hooked a big fish and fought it all the way to the boat to find out it was a big, nasty gafftop. On my second cast, I caught a big speckled trout. I was just happy it wasn't another dang gafftop! Capt. Elton was as hardheaded as the catfish, and wanted to use plastics instead of shrimp. He didn't catch anything until later, but kept throwing those plastics.

After about 30 minutes, some dolphins pushed a big school of trout toward us. We started catching them so fast. We had double rigs going, with shrimp and plastics, and we were catching them every cast, sometimes two at a time! Capt. Tommy said this was a good place to fish because The Pole marks a place where there is a lot of structure from rocks and debris. He said it used to be an island, but it's all

water now. There's a lot of places in Louisiana that used to be solid land, but now they're just water.

I love fishing these great areas, but it's so upsetting to know how much of our coast has been lost. Lakes are now bays, islands are now water. That's why I'm trying to help restore our coast. Capt. Tommy was telling me about Cat Island that is washing away. Pelicans need the islands for their nests or they can't lay their eggs. They can't nest in water! The pelican is our state bird and I want to keep it that way. I'm going to keep volunteering for our coast, and keep fighting to make sure that we can build land and protect the marshes because I don't want Louisiana to be underwater!

On this trip, we caught our limit of 100 trout (with some being white trout) by 10:00 a.m. The dolphins tried to steal some of our fish, and we lost a few due to technical difficulties. One of them jumped out of Capt. Elton's hands when he was holding it for a picture. Capt. Tommy threw one of my dad's fish back in the water as a joke when my dad asked him to take it off his hook for him. "I bet you don't ask me to do that again," he said. I laughed so hard, but my dad had a tear in his eye for that fish. But it was okay, because there were plenty of fish in the sea!