

# Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.

*Proudly serving the Commercial Fishing Industry for over 50 years!*



## Hotlines Online Edition



November 2003

### GENERAL COUNSEL RULES THAT FWC CHAIRMAN EDWIN ROBERTS OF PENSACOLA DID NOT VIOLATE THE SUNSHINE LAW

FWC General Counsel James Antista, in a letter to Bob Jones dated November 3, 2003 said, *"I have reviewed this issue and have concluded in the attached legal opinion that Chairman Robert's e-mail does not violate the Sunshine Law. In my research, I consulted the General Counsel of the Attorney General and the Office of General Counsel in the Governor's office and I believe they will concur with the opinion. The Chairman's mail was not a discussion but a statement of position, sent to one commissioner and therefore, does not constitute a violation of the Sunshine Law."* The genesis of this letter was an inquiry made by SFA to FWC concerning an item on [WWW.DIVEMIAM.COM](http://WWW.DIVEMIAM.COM) that spoke of the e-mail in regard to the location of an aircraft carrier to be used as an artificial reef. The Miami divers and others wanted the aircraft

carrier sunk in their location and evidently felt that Chairman Roberts was using undue influence to have it sunk off Pensacola for his use. This is the second controversy surrounding the Chairman and the artificial reef program in his home county. A \$500,000 "secret" artificial reef has already been built in his county and nobody is supposed to know where this very large reef is located. The FWC has scheduled another hearing to select a site of the aircraft carrier so everyone will have a fair chance to compete under the approved military specifications.

### EPA WILL NOT PURSUE PAST VIOLATIONS OF 50 POWER PLANTS

It is ironic that EPA is pushing for a much lower methylmercury tolerance for seafood while at the same killing efforts to slow down the poison coming from power plants by changing the rules of litigation. The *New York Times* article said, "The changes grew out of recommendations by Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force, which urged the government two years ago to study complaints about its enforcement actions." This action was a major defeat for environmentalists, specifically who have been trying to reduce mercury emissions from power plants and a victory for those contributing millions of dollars in political campaigns. The real losers

though are all the citizens of America who have to live with dirty air from these power plants.

### METHYLLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)

Several fishermen in Daytona Beach were recently diagnosed with a staph infection. Infections from fishing have been around for as long as wounds have been exposed in an environment containing bacteria and pathogens. This latest infection problem is different because it seems to be more frequent and the severity of the infection is worse. Anyone who has spent much time fishing knows if you get a cut or break in your skin, you should clean it out immediately with alcohol, or if you don't have alcohol, use a 10% Clorox mixture to kill most infections. Southeastern Fisheries Association has devoted a lot of time in learning more about staph and has added a link on its website. If you want to learn more about this go to [www.southeasternfish.org](http://www.southeasternfish.org) and click on the staph link on the left side of the home page. As more information is collected it will be posted here. SFA is thinking about creating a database and listing the number and severity of cases involving commercial or recreational fishermen. At the present time,

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If you want to be removed from the list, please contact us.

SFA is a non-profit association founded in 1952, charged with maintaining a viable seafood industry in the Southeast.

Robert P. Jones, Editor

## Part of the Education Process of the PUBLIC:

On your next order for business checks from your bank have printed just above the signature line "**Commercial Fishing makes this payment possible**"



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scientists believe staph is not in fish, as it is a human disease. Yet staph has been found on porpoises and turtles according to some of the literature. Cleanliness and sanitation are two major areas everyone should concentrate on. Keep your vessels clean and keep your hands and bodies clean. The following information is from the FDA approved HACCP Curriculum:

### Potential Food Safety Hazard

"*Staphylococcus aureus* is highly vulnerable to destruction by heat treatment and nearly all sanitizing agents. Thus, the presence of this bacterium or its enterotoxins in processed foods or on food processing equipment is generally an indication of poor sanitation. *S. aureus* can cause severe food poisoning. It has been identified as the causative agent in many food poisoning outbreaks and is probably responsible for even more cases in individuals and family groups than the records show (Bennett and Lancette, 1998)." Control Measures "Hazards from *S. aureus* can be controlled by: minimizing time/temperature abuse of seafood, especially after cooking, and requiring that food handlers engage in proper hygiene (Ward et al., 1997)"

### SHRIMP RELIEF FUNDS STILL TIED UP IN TALLAHASSEE

After many months of wrangling, the proposal to disburse the federal relief funds went before the Legislative Budget Commission (LBC) recently with recommendations from the Senate staff and the Governor's office approving the funding as proposed by the FWC based on industry input.

Janie Thomas, representing a new east coast shrimpers association, was able to confuse the issue so badly that the members of the LBC committee deferred action and told FWC to go back and address several issues. After the LBC meeting further accusations were made that the meetings between all the shrimp groups in Florida did not comply with the Sunshine Law pertaining to proper notification in the Administrative Weekly and a new meeting will be held on December 2, 2003 in Kissimmee, Florida to discuss the issues again.

At the heart of the debate is the desire of the east coast inshore shrimpers primarily, to divide the federal relief money equally among everyone who holds a Seafood Products License and shrimp endorsement. This would mean that anyone who harvested as little as 10 pounds would be paid the same as an offshore trawler who harvested

50,000 pounds.

The amount of federal money allocated to Florida was based on the number of pounds landed. It doesn't make much sense to distribute any other way than on a prorated basis determined by the amount of shrimp landed and recorded on a trip ticket in Florida. Hopefully the truth will out and the federal money will soon be released to all those shrimpers who filed trip tickets and did not sell their shrimp for cash and kept no records. If you keep records, you should be allocated federal tax dollars. If you sold for cash and did not file trip tickets you have already been paid.

### SFA FILES TRADE ASSISTANCE PETITION FOR ALL FLORIDA SHRIMPERS

As a courtesy to all food shrimpers in Florida, Southeastern Fisheries Association filed a Petition with the USDA to allow eligible Florida shrimpers to apply for up to \$10,000 if they can show they have received less money last year for their shrimp as a result of imported shrimp products. As soon as the USDA accepts the Petition as properly written, SFA will issue a News Release listing the particulars involved in applying for these funds. Applications from shrimp harvesters must be received within 90 days after SFA has been certified eligible for TAA payments. Even though SFA will be doing all the preliminary work and making this help possible through its 501 c 6 non-profit status as an association, SFA will receive zero funds for all its work.

### CCA WANTS FELONY CHARGES FOR FISH VIOLATIONS

The Florida Coastal Conservation Association has been able to get the FWC to hold meetings with fishing organizations to discuss a CCA proposal placing fin fish violations of the net ban in

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the felony category. Southeastern Fisheries Association believes this is ill conceived until and unless the rampant sale of sport caught fish is stopped or at least curtailed here in Florida. It seems that law enforcement will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and thousands of man-hours to catch one mullet fishermen, while the recreational fishermen who are peddling grouper, redfish, swordfish, amberjack and red snapper just keep on doing what they want and continue to sell for cash through the backdoors of many restaurants. SFA would be hard pressed to ever support felony charges against commercial fishermen until the recreational element selling unreported fish is also brought under a felony charge.

**MEETING WITH MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM**

The Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) recently invited about 20 people from various groups to attend a meeting at Mote Marine Lab in Sarasota to talk about sustainable fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. There were representative from fishing, scientific, environmental, aquaculture and grass roots organizations who are interested in the Gulf of Mexico. The Monterey Lab representatives were highly qualified to conduct such a fact finding meeting and were very pleased with all they learned during the daylong meeting. Sal Versaggi and Bob Jones made a strong case that the Florida shrimp resource was sustainable and very important conservation efforts have been made such as setting aside 3,000,000 acres as a nursery area in Tortugas. The MBA hopes to have a Gulf of Mexico fish card by January informing consumers which fish in the Gulf are sustainable according to them. The process for gaining

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the sustainable designation is rigorous but many of Florida's species should make the list.

**SECRETARIAL GROUPE AMENDMENT**

The Secretarial Amendment on red grouper in the reef fish management plan has been released. The preferred recommendations of the Secretary include an 8.8 million pound Total Allowable Catch which is about a 9.5% reduction for the commercial fishing sector. For the recreational sector, there can only be 2 red grouper in the 5 grouper bag limit which should reduce the recreational catch by about 9%. A 10% reduction was recommended after the latest stock assessment. The Secretarial amendment could go into effect in the next few months but will be superseded by Amendment 18 of the reef fish FMP when it is finished. Amendment 18 will have some highly charged political issues in it.

**SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL PUSHES TO LET SPORT FISHERMEN SELL MAHI-MAHI**

The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council has caved in to the charter and party boat power base and is recommending that charter and party

boat operators be allowed to sell mahi-mahi that has been caught by sport fishermen on their boats.

Sport fishermen should fish for sport and if they are catching more fish than they will eat should catch and release. If they want to be a commercial fishermen then get the requisite licenses and make sure the fish go through a HACCP facility before being sold to the consumer. It is against the law for



sport fishermen to sell fish in Florida so what will the charter and party boat operators on the east coast do about that? Mahi-mahi is a histamine type fish and can make people sick if not properly handled on board and in the fish house. Commercial fish dealers have to probe a certain amount of each box of mahi-mahi to make sure the internal temperature is 40 degrees f. or lower when received or reject them.

**There is no justification for sport fishermen selling their catch!**

We invite anyone receiving this newsletter, who is not already a member of SFA to join us and become an activist for your business. We are here to respond to your business needs in the state capital and around the Southeast Region. We can help you only if we know you and correspond with you regularly.....We would look forward to serving you and your company!

**Welcome to SFA New Members:** SFA is proud to welcome the following new members into its growing family of successful seafood companies. We encourage each member to support one another for the overall good of maintaining an economic and cultural presence for commercial fishing in America as well as providing marine protein to the people.

**Special HACCP Member: On The Rocks Seafood & Charters:** Carrabelle, FL—  
Owner: Captain Bill McKendree

Rejoined: **Retail Market/Restaurant: Island Seafood:** Fort Myers, FL., Jeff Bonard

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### **SOUTH CAROLINA COASTAL CONSERVATION LEAGUE ENDORSES WILD CAUGHT SOUTH ATLANTIC SHRIMP**

The prestigious SC Coastal Conservation League has endorsed wild caught South Atlantic shrimp over pond raised shrimp. Part of their statement said: "We support the Southern Shrimp Alliance's efforts to increase the market for local shrimp. As a partner in the S.C.

Aquarium's Sustainable Seafood Education Project, we encourage local consumers and restaurants to take responsibility for their role in this market by avoiding shrimp grown in ex-mangrove forests in the world's tropical regions.



**SFA's 52nd  
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at the Hyatt  
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