

# Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.

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



## Hotlines Online Edition



December 2004



### **SFA PRESIDENT TESTIFIES ON THE ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT PLAN**

Bob Gill, Shrimp Landing of Crystal River and President of SFA, testified on the proposed Essential Fish Habitat Plan (EFH) at a Gulf Council public hearing in Tampa on December 7, 2004. He addressed some of the main points of the plan which will set aside areas that contain live, hard coral reefs as Habitats of Particular Concern (HAPC). The room was overflowing with people who turned out to be mostly from the Right To Fish group, who believe no restrictions should be implemented denying them recreational fishing rights anywhere in the Gulf of Mexico. They don't believe a million anchors can hurt the coral habitat and scoffed at a weight restriction for the fishing lines, even over live hard coral. SFA encourages everyone who depends on commercial fishing to keep current with the proposals of the Gulf Council to ban certain type commercial fishing gear.

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

Robert P. Jones, Editor

### **GROUPEL LONGLINE BUYOUT FUNDED BY CONGRESS**

Congress approved up to a \$35 million dollar loan to buyout Gulf of Mexico grouper longline vessels who voluntarily sign up for the federal buyout program. There are no hard numbers as to how many longline vessels would permanently and forever leave the grouper fishery but industry leaders predict as many as 50% of the longliners will seriously consider the program. Those longline vessels remaining in the fishery would pay back whatever amount was used to buyback the departing longline vessels over a 30 years period at a moderate interest rate. Prior to implementing the buyout program, several major changes would have to occur in the management of the grouper fishery and some of these will be discussed at the upcoming Gulf Council meeting in Baton Rouge on January 10, 2005 at the Sheraton Hotel. The language in the appropriation might be broad enough to include bandit rig grouper vessels but the driving force behind the program was SOFA and the original intent over the past four years has been aimed at the longline vessels. A buyout would guarantee year round grouper fishing unless NMFS gives more fish to sport fishermen.

### **ATTENTION: FLORIDA WHOLESALERS, RETAILERS AND RESTAURANTS**

Under legislation passed last year, purchase of seafood from an unlicensed person, firm or corporation who does not hold current licenses with the required endorsements and federal permits if applicable, is considered a major violation. The law provides for a minimum administrative penalty of \$2500 and a suspension of the wholesale, retail or restaurant license for up to 90 days.

Just recently a wholesale dealer was issued a letter setting the fine at \$2500 and a 90 suspension of his wholesale license unless he can show good cause why such suspension should not be implemented. The company will have a hearing before an FWC hearing officer and if he has to shut down his business for 90 days it would probably bankrupt him. These penalties are being assessed, in this specific case, for buying a few grouper from a sport fisherman who caught more fish than he needed. SFA hopes the FWC concentrates as much effort on apprehending anglers, divers and charter boats for illegal sales as it does on wholesale dealers.

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## FLORIDA FDA CONCENTRATING ON HISTAMINE TYPE FISH PLAN

Many Florida companies have been written up recently by the FDA for having inadequate HACCP Plans and records for histamine type fish such as tuna, mackerel, mahi-mahi, amberjack etc. There are probably changes needed in all SFA members' HACCP plans because FDA is making wholesalers prove through their monitoring records that histamine type fish have been kept at the appropriate temperature from the boat to the retailer. Many investigators call for vessel records and many dealers are now requiring them in order to comply with the FDA guidelines. A lot of records are required at the RECEIVING STEP including: Probe log records, Sensory Evaluation records, Properly iced at receiving records and Destroyed Product records.

There is great emphasis concerning fresh histamine type fish that have been transported for more than 4 hours. Special attention is also given to any Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP). Remember, pasteurized products must be kept at 38 degrees F. or less. FDA is calling for Time-Temperature-

Indicators (TTI's) and recording thermometers so records are available for the time a business might be closed (Sundays).

If you do not have your HACCP Plan in compliance and need personal attention please call SFA to set up a time for consulting with your company. SFA plans to spend a whole afternoon at the annual convention reviewing HACCP Plans and the changes occurring in the federal and state enforcement of this regulation.

## THE SHRIMP DUSTERS STRIKE AGAIN

Shrimp breaders argued to the US Department of Commerce that "dusted shrimp" should be excluded from the anti-dumping petition because "dusted shrimp" is not a consumer product but is more in line with breaded shrimp. The US DOC accepted this argument and now the Southern Shrimp Alliance might have to sue US DOC to keep the "dusted" shrimp on the anti-dumping list. Breaders have been more than a little successful in being able to put some bread on Chinese shrimp and then marketing them as "Product of the USA." This

has always been a very convoluted arrangement. Putting on a bread coating doesn't change the fact there is a shrimp under it. In most cases a breaded shrimp is not a product of the USA because breaders prefer cheaper pond raised shrimp to maximize their profit. Why don't breaders just properly label their shrimp from the country in which they were grown or harvested? Is this really too much to ask? Unfortunately for consumers and domestic harvesters, the Country of Origin regulations exempt breaded shrimp and a whole array of other fishery products.

## ADDITIONAL RED TIDE RESEARCH TO BEGIN

According to the *Bradenton Herald*, Mote Marine Laboratory will place remote sensors in the Gulf to detect the presence and movement of the red tides that have plagued Florida for centuries. Every year multiple red tides occur on the west coast of Florida killing billions of fish, fish larvae and even mammals, yet stopping or even fully understanding red tide has eluded researchers and state and federal government agencies. The red tide has serious economic impact on Florida's economy. On the one hand it would be helpful for anyone who fishes to know the red tide is in a certain location and where it is headed. On the other hand, tourists would surely shy away from the area where red tide is predicted to come ashore jeopardizing many tourist oriented businesses to the point they might not be able to survive financially.

Florida does need to "Turn the Tide" on this naturally occurring

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## FWC SELECTS NEW LEADERS



The Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission has elected H.A. "Herky" Huffman of Enterprise as the new chairman and David K. Meehan of St. Petersburg, as the new vice chairman beginning on January 1, 2005. These are veteran Commission members who have been through

the growing pains associated with this new agency. SFA salutes Mr. Huffman and Mr. Meehan and looks forward to working with them during the coming year. The next meeting of the FWC will be in Panama City on February 2,3 & 4, 2005.

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phenomenon and find a way to disburse it if such is possible. Some blame coastal development and industrial waste entering the Gulf as exacerbating the red tides growth because of the high volume of nutrients coming from these anthropogenic activities. Fishermen have felt for years red tides kill more individual fish than are caught by both the recreational and commercial fishermen. There has not been much work done on counting the number of fish killed. When this idea has been proposed by SFA over the years, researchers eyes glaze over and they become mute.

Unfortunately for Florida fishermen, there is currently a 400 square mile red tide bloom about 30 miles west of the Everglades. If and where it will hit the shore is not known at the present time.

**GEORGIA PROCESSOR  
BLASTS DOMESTIC SHRIMP  
INDUSTRY**

According to transcripts from the hearing before the International Trade Commission, shrimp processor Russ Mentzer blasted the US domestic shrimp industry from several directions. Mentzer` said, *“domestic suppliers (shrimp) cannot produce the types of shrimp or the quality of shrimp that we need, and this problem is, by no means, isolated or sporadic and I give you a few examples to prove my point.”* He testified that of the randomly

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tested 28 lots of shrimp his company tested, 27 of them failed one or more of his specifications. The domestic shrimp he bought was short-weight, excessive broken pieces, improper deveining, shrimp not round in shape and seven lots failed because of too much moisture (STPP). Mentzer closed his testimony by saying, *“This is not a situation where we buy imported shrimp because it is cheaper. Domestic shrimp is not available to us in the quantities and the quality that we need at any price.”*

Mr. Mentzer challenges the domestic shrimp industry to prove him wrong. He believes there are no domestic shrimp at full-weight, proper



count and high quality available to him at any price. SFA knows there are domestic

shrimp available that are full weight, not pumped up by excessive use of SSTP, honest count and are of high quality because the shrimp are handled properly from the boat to the retailer. Mr. Mentzer works for King & Prince Seafood Corporation and can be contacted at: 800.841-0205 or King & Prince Seafood---#1 King & Prince Blvd.—Brunswick, GA. 31520-8603

**TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE**

SFA is again making arrangements to qualify Florida shrimpers for financial assistance from the US Department of Agriculture. Florida was rejected for the first year of filing because the value of Florida caught shrimp was not 20% below the threshold for that year. SFA successfully filed for the subsequent year without using rock shrimp landings because rock shrimp is not an import problem. The Florida shrimpers catching the other species were then qualified by USDA but this put Florida a year ahead of the rest of the Gulf and Southeastern states. We are tying up some loose ends and intend to get the necessary papers filed before the first of the year. This is another service by SFA for the entire Florida shrimp industry although funding for these special shrimp efforts come from just a few contributors.

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!



A fact sheet on FDA's New Food Terrorism Regulation: Establishment and Maintenance of Records, is available on line at:

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fsbtac23.html>



### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The staff of SFA wishes all its members Happy Holidays and a safe and prosperous New Year. We appreciate the support received by all the members. The New Year will bring some changes to all of us because "the World Moves On" as a well-known author has written. Change is inevitable and those who move and flow with it will survive. Those who insist on doing things the way they have always been done just to maintain status quo will be behind the curve.

All of us here in Tallahassee stand ready and willing to help all the members.



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