

Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.

Proudly serving the Commercial Fishing Industry for over 50 years!



Hotlines Online Edition



February 2004

FWC STRIKE FORCE AIMED AT CORTEZ, FLORIDA CAUSES DEEP CONCERN

A couple of weeks ago, a convoy of Fish & Wildlife Commission (FWC) law enforcement officers descended on the tiny village of Cortez to inspect several fish houses. It brought back memories of Elton Gissendanner's hard-nosed attitude against commercial fishermen in the 1980's as Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources. Occasions of intimidation or harassment by the Marine Patrol were likely to follow if any fish dealer stood up to



Recent Strike Force Raid in Cortez, Florida by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission to inspect two fish houses for quality, fish measurement and oyster tagging.

"Dr. G". Industry people on the scene in Cortez last month believe there were at least 10 FWC vehicles carrying 3 or 4

This newsletter is published by Southeastern Fisheries Association. Please pass it along and encourage others to be added to our mailing list.

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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

persons per vehicle. Some feel the strike force raid was in retaliation for an FWC vehicle tires being cut the previous week and intended to show those in Cortez how powerful the FWC has become. The exact number of FWC officers involved might not be determined without

a formal hearing by the Inspector General.

SFA intends to continue bringing the concerns of its members to the highest authorities in government. Besides being in the seafood industry, we are first and foremost citizens of the United States of America and have certain inalienable rights. We are not second-class citizens and will not be treated as such. We will not tolerate any law enforcement officer

intimidating us because they may not like commercial fishermen. Sending 10, or even 2 or more, cars full of armed officers is not an acceptable way to conduct a fish house inspection, unless there is serious probable cause of some major crime.

The professional businesses in the Florida seafood industry have worked to establish a relationship with FWC based on mutual respect over the past few years. The use of armed officers in great numbers to conduct fish house inspections is disrespectful and will pit the honest fish dealers against the FWC as it has in the past. There is no justification for this kind of treatment. If strikes like the ones in Cortez or St. Augustine are used to train new officers, then FWC needs to find a different way to train them instead of on the backs of the working people in the commercial fishing industry.

SFA intends to make its deep concerns known to the US Justice Department, members of the Florida Legislature and to the media concerning excessive and selective law enforcement by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission.

BACKDOOR SALES OF SEAFOOD UNABATED, THOUGH SOME CASES ARE MADE

The backdoor sale of seafood in Florida seems to be on the rise, instead of being stemmed, according to dealers who have

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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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to compete with the black market seafood sales. SFA did hear about a good case made in the Fort Myers area recently where a charter boat captain was seen loading fish from a day's trip into coolers and taking the fish home. The charter boat captain was approached by the FWC officer on the case and told the officer he was selling the bag limit reef fish his passengers had caught. The fish were confiscated and the perpetrator was issued a citation.

SFA applauds those FWC officers who are dedicated to enforcing the marine resources laws on all citizens, not just selected citizens. The sale of seafood through the backdoor of restaurants is illegal and the product is considered to be "fish from an unapproved source" by state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and as such, not fit for consumption. People who participate in this kind of cheating are putting the customers who eat the seafood at risk, are not keeping records that help in the management of the marine resources and are cheating the government (us) out of tax dollars.

FWC DISTRIBUTES SHRIMP RELIEF FUNDS

Kudo's to Dr. Ginny Vail and Bill Teehan for getting through the malaise of shrimp politics and distributing the fed-

eral shrimp relief funds to an industry in need. The professionalism of this FWC Division is a model for government. All meetings held on these funds were open to the public. The diverse industry selected among themselves the representatives of the different segments and together they tried to reach consensus. After the consensus (not unanimity) was reached, those who were not in the majority continued to put road blocks in the way for release of the federal funds. At one point in time Mr. Teehan was vilified before the Legislative Budget Commission (LBC). Thankfully, wiser heads prevailed and funds were released by the LBC and the rest is history.

SFA salutes all the FWC personnel who worked so hard and fairly on this project. The relief averaged around 7.5 cents per pound for all shrimp verified by trip tickets for the time period involved. As far as relief to the dealers, several larger companies either did not get the notice to send in their HACCP certificate or neglected to send a copy of it in and will not receive any compensation and there is no appeal.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LEGISLATION FOR SEAFOOD IMMINENT

Comments to USDA will be received until February 27 for country of origin regulations for seafood. The effective date for the regulations will be September 2004.. The requirement of country of

origin labeling has caused great angst among many of the major supermarkets in the country. There are some important proposed amendments to the regulations, particularly one that would remove liability from super markets for any mistake in labeling that occurred by middle men who sell them seafood. As soon as the final regulations are published, SFA will send out information packets and will also be available to consult with any member who wishes to engage SFA for particular company problems.

INDUSTRY CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPMENT IN APALACHICOLA

As is the case in all Florida waterfront area, developers are having a dramatic impact on the domestic seafood industry. There is no easy answer to this issue between development and environmental preservation. Property owners of any piece of waterfront have seen the value of their land skyrocket since St. Joe Corporation decided to develop their property in Northwest Florida. There is much at stake, including the ability to sustain the seafood industry and retain a high degree of water quality.

St. Joe Corporation or any other land owner has the right to use their property and should not be denied using it under proper and fairly considered zoning laws. By the same token, it is not unfair for a community to restrict certain activities that could jeopardize either the existing economic base or the almost pristine environment of Apalachicola Bay or any other body of water.

In Apalachicola, the oyster industry is the "canary in the mineshaft." The people who earn their living on the water see what happens in the Bay and are the first to sound an alarm. Shrimp boats, fishing boats, oyster boats and sport fishing boats need a place to tie up and dock. It is not imperative that every inch of waterfront contain a condo or retail shop. It is imperative that an adequate amount of waterfront remains available for the continuation of the domestic commercial fishing industry. Any responsible devel-

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oper should see the benefit of a diverse economy in our coastal communities and be willing to help preserve that diversity.

NEW FORMAT FOR SFA CONVENTION

SFA will use an American Assembly format for the General Session on Friday, June 4th at the Sarasota Hilton hotel in Sarasota, Florida. There will be round tables of 8 and a table leader at each one. An agenda for discussion of items of interest to the membership will be used at each table. Some of the issues will be HACCP inspections, FWC law enforcement, backdoor sales of seafood, wholesale dealer's licenses, penalties for marine violations, NMFS law enforcement and other issues of importance. Each registrant will be involved in trying to reach a consensus on major issues as a first step for establishing new policies for SFA. If there is any subject a member would like include on the agenda, please let the SFA office know.

LACK OF FDA INSPECTIONS UNDER FIRE AGAIN

Only 22 of the more than 100 wholesale seafood dealers are inspected for HACCP by either FDA or DACS in Monroe County. It is very difficult for those who are inspected on a regular basis to understand or accept why their competitors are not being inspected. This has been an issue for over a year but no relief is in sight under present circumstances.

SFA has great respect for the professional inspectors within FDA and DACS but will have to push this issue on up the chain of command. There is no justification for inspecting only part of the industry and letting the rest do whatever they want to do without any government oversight. This will be one of the major items

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for discussion at the 52nd annual SFA convention. Be there if you want to be involved in the solution.

NEW TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE PETITION FILED AGAIN

Southeastern Fisheries Association filed a petition with the USDA on behalf of Florida shrimpers asking for trade adjustment funds for qualified shrimpers. SFA

did not include rock shrimp in their calculations in this petition, as rock shrimp is not a species imported into the USA on a substantial basis. According to our calculations, if rock shrimp are removed from the petition then Florida *can* show there has been at least a 20% decline in shrimp prices in the years used by USDA in their calculations. As soon as SFA is notified on whether or not the petition is approved it will notify the industry.

PAST PRESIDENT BOBBY CANADY PASSES AWAY

SFA Past President Bobby Canady passed away on January 31, 2004, at the age of 78 at his home in Maggie Valley, NC. He was the 32nd President of SFA in 1983-84 and served as Treasurer for many years. Bobby was always a pleasure to be around. His smile and laughter were contagious.

He is survived by Pat, his loving wife of 51 years and his children, Marcia and husband Carl of Key West, Robert Canady of Maggie Valley, Patrick Canady and wife Allynda of Clyde, NC; Theresa Alayon, Ocala, Sharon Cordy and husband David, Tampa and Kevin and wife Auriole of Hendersonville, Tennessee. Five grandchildren, sister Josephine Hughes of Fort Myers as well as a nephew and a niece also survive him.

Bobby joined the US Navy right out of high school in 1943 and served as a torpedo man until his discharge in 1946. He began his career as a shrimp boat captain and was Vice President of Singleton Seafoods of Key West when he retired to the Carolina Mountains in 1991. Bobby was a true friend to all who knew him. He was an honest businessman in the seafood industry and will be remembered as the gentleman he always was. SFA sends its deepest condolences and prayers to Pat, the children, his family and all in the extended family. Anyone wishing to send a donation may do so to: HRMC Hospice, 560 Leroy George Drive, Clyde, North Carolina 28721. *May his soul and the souls of all the faithfully departed, Rest In Peace.*

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.

Full Corporate Member: *Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company*: Titusville, FL.: Sherri McCoy, Mike Merrifield, Rodney Thompson.

Dixie Crossroads, Inc.

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**11th ANNUAL B.J. PUTNAM
GOLF TOURNAMENT TO BE
EXPANDED**

SFA hopes to see over 100 golfers enter the expanded B.J. Putnam tournament. Half of all profits will be donated to the *American Brain Tumor Association*. One major sponsor has already been lined up, *Gunn-Allen Financial—Tampa, FL*, and others have been approached. We will need many sponsors to make this successful. Not only is this for a worthy cause, it also puts a caring light on your association.

This year we would like to see each golfer invite three friends to come to Sarasota for the fun tournament on Saturday, June 5, 2004 at the outstanding University Park Country Club. Please participate if you are a golfer or a hacker. Detail and registration forms will be mailed out within the next few weeks.



**SFA's 52nd
Annual Meeting
at the Hyatt
Sarasota on
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