

Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.

Proudly serving the Commercial Fishing Industry for over 50 years!



Hotlines Online Edition



September 2004

HURRICANES DEVASTATE FLORIDA'S SEAFOOD ECONOMY



No sooner had *Charley* dissipated and the clean up far from complete in many areas, *Frances* appeared, forcing one of the largest mandatory evacuations in Florida's history. Many major airports were closed causing great loss to the tourism industry. In Florida, everything is affected by tourism. Much of our seafood is sold in restaurants and hotels. Without customers this loss in sales is pushed back all the way to the harvesters. The Tampa shrimp docks lost power for an extended period of time but all products had been moved to other facilities. The lack of fishing throughout Florida and the fact most restaurants are doing very little business impacts the

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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

whole seafood distribution chain from harvest to consumption. Just when we thought the worse was over, *Ivan the Terrible* struck the Panhandle of Florida and Alabama. This was a monster storm and did extensive damage to commercial as well as recreational fishing along the northeast Gulf of Mexico. The extent of the damage on vessels, reefs and wetlands and general infrastructure will be long term and difficult to quickly assess. Governor Jeb Bush and the Emergency Management system throughout the state are doing a great job. The biggest saving grace is Floridians are a tough breed and will rebuild just as soon as the winds and rains stop. Estimates of total loss to the Florida seafood industry will top \$10 million dollars.

RECREATIONAL ANGLERS TAKE 64% OF AT-RISK FINFISH IN GULF OF MEXICO.

Felicia Coleman, FSU ecologist/biologist along with *W.F. Figueira, J.S. Ueland & L.B. Crowder* completed an analysis of fish landings over a 22 year period proving recreational fishing is a major factor in the decline of certain species of finfish. In the Gulf of Mexico recreational anglers take 64% of the at risk species and in the South Atlantic recreational anglers take about 33% of the at-risk species.

Throughout the years leaders of the sport fishing industry have claimed anglers only harvest 2% of the fish in the US. That is a half-truth. What these recreational lobbyists don't tell the general public, fishery

managers and legislators is 4 BILLION POUNDS of the fish used to make the comparison are pollock harvested in the Northwest part of the country. Also, add pollock to the BILLION POUNDS of menhaden and it is easy to see why sport fishermen want to use these 5 billion pounds for comparisons in their propaganda saying they don't catch many fish. But if pollock and menhaden, which are not at-risk species and which there is no sport fishing are removed, and compare the harvests of grouper, snapper, redfish, swordfish and other at-risk species under state and federal management, the catch by anglers of edible finfish far surpasses the harvest by commercial fishing in our region of the country.

The best way for a non-fishing person to understand this debate is to look at the allocation of marine fishery resources between commercial and recreational fishermen. In the Gulf of Mexico, recreational fishermen are allocated 68% of the king mackerel, 100% of the redfish, 80% of amberjack, 50% of grouper and 50% of red snapper and other at-risk species.

Couple the official governmental allocations with the net bans in many of the states in the Gulf of Mexico and anyone not blinded by CCA or Florida Sportsman magazine's propaganda easily comprehends why the recreational catch is so much higher than commercial harvests for these species. One of the most ridiculous statements made in this debate was by Karl Wickstrom, publisher of the Florida Sportsman who said words to the effect that, "the study used fish like redfish which

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

the commercial fishing industry is not even interested in." Wickstrom considers commercial fishermen not interested after he and the CCA stole the redfish from non-boaters and gave them to their customers. The commercial fishing industry always has been and still is very interested in redfish. The non-boaters should be allocated at least 25% of the available harvest so those citizens without a boat and motor could purchase and enjoy redfish as well as those who belong to the CCA and own their own boats.

The *Recreational Fishing Alliance*, a dirty tricks sort of a group called the Coleman report published in *SCIENCE Magazine* "Junk Science." Junk science is in the eye of the beholder and this group of anti-commercial fishing folks wants to stay under the radar when it comes to showing the public how much impact recreational fishing really has on fishery resources. They want fishery managers and legislators to think their industry is just a small little Mom & Pop industry where a few families take a few fish home to eat and release alive all other fish. If anyone ever thinks this is a mom and pop industry they should stand on the Mayport shoreline when over 1,000 very expensive offshore sport fishing boats speed out of the St. Johns River to the Atlantic Ocean to catch the biggest, mostly female king mackerel, hoping to win \$150,000 in prizes. There are almost a million recreational boat licenses sold in Florida and the industry itself claims at least 5 million participants

each time they try to show why all fish should be allocated to them.

In the reef fish fisheries, all sportfishing boats have anchors with long chains to stay anchored over their favorite rock or coral bed, yet NMFS, FWC and all other regulators don't seem to consider anchoring harmful to the bottom. Millions of anchors dropped over and over again on these coral rocks in a year must have some negative impact. SFA believes the impact is far greater than any commercial gear used; yet only commercial fishing gear is ever considered for management or prohibitions. Will the regulators ever address this issue?

GULF OF MEXICO COUNCIL CONSIDERS TRIP LIMITS FOR GROUPE

The Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council will take public testimony on a proposal to require trip limits for commercial grouper in Panama City in October. The Council has refused to enact trip limits on several occasions already but maybe the proponents feel the third time is a charm. There is no valid scientific research to support a 5500-pound trip limit for commercial fishing. Such a limit only hits the high liners who have historically caught more than this arbitrary limit. It lets the bandit gear boats continue to fish without any additional regulations.

This arbitrary trip limit is just another way to ban/curtail longline fishing. Hopefully the National Marine Fisheries Service will

again operate under the Rule of Law and not cave in to pressure by those who want everyone to fish like they fish. If it wasn't for Southeastern Fisheries Association, Southern Offshore Fishing Association and the participating longliners taking the lead and gotten more science into the management decisions originally proposed, the red grouper fishery would have been saddled with a 1.9 million pound total allowable catch. SFA is strongly opposed to trip limits that are really only trip limits for longliners.

If trip limits are the answer then figure the decrease each longline fisherman would be forced to accept if reduced to this artificial level of 5500 pounds then apply the same percentage reduction in trip limits to all other commercial reef fish fishermen. If a longline fisherman is going to take a hit of a 25% reduction in his landings as verified through his trip tickets, then bandit rig fishermen should be reduced to a trip limit taking a hit of 25% of their landings as well. Why make Fisherman A take a hit of 25% while Fisherman B takes a hit of 0%? Using the latest information concerning red grouper populations, even NMFS number show a 9,000-trip limit would have kept the fishery open all year.

Savaging the longline fisherman is surely not equal protection under the law. It's more like arbitrary and capricious actions of one group trying to remove their competitors. Looks like a CCA program to most observers.

NMFS BUSINESS PLAN MEETINGS HELD IN SOUTHEAST

NMFS unveiled its Shrimp Business Plan to the industry immediately after sharing it with Congressional Committees. The initial reaction was negative by many who feel there is an agenda behind the plan to reduce the number of vessels in the domestic shrimp fleet. Most shrimpers would prefer things to be like they were in the past where they fished hard and made a good living. Making a living as a shrimper is getting more difficult every year mainly because of excessive amounts of imported shrimp, more government regulations and

(Continued on page 3)

FDA TIGHTENS HACCP PLANS FOR HISTAMINE TYPE FISH

If you haven't looked at your HACCP Plan for histamine type fish in a year or so, you had better break it out and see if you have **all** the necessary requirements including how you handle histamine type fish that have been transported for more than 4 hours. If you have questions call SFA for more information. Corporate members can receive the latest information as part of their dues package. Other type memberships will pay a nominal charge for HACCP updates.

(Continued from page 2)
high fuel costs.

If the domestic shrimp industry could increase their market share and reduce the cost of fuel somehow, the odds for sustaining the industry would be increased. Within the shrimp industry there are some who would like to know more about a vessel buyback, fuel subsidy or tax credits for cost of equipment replacement and repair. Others feel the shrimp fishery should be "open access" and whoever wants to take the chance and enter the fishery should have a right to do so. There are also those who would support a moratorium on new entrants and would be willing to sell their vessel if the price was fair. The Shrimp Business Plan will be on the table from now on until come changes are made. SFA encourages everyone interested in this issue to participate and let your opinions be known to NMFS by contacting Dr. Roy Crabtree at 727-570-5301.

RESTAURANT PURCHASES OF SEAFOOD FROM UNLICENSED FISHERMEN IS A CRIME.

Remember, if a restaurant buys seafood from an unlicensed person, the seafood is automatically adulterated under federal and state laws and cannot be sold or served to consumers. It is very difficult to prevent backdoor sales of seafood when there is a willing seller and a willing buyer and the cover of darkness, but such activity is a crime and those who participate in this underground economy are subject to criminal penalties. These illegal sales are a food safety problem, a tax problem and a management problem. If anyone has any information that could be used to inform the state and federal agencies, call SFA's office and your information will be passed on as an anonymous tip. The crooks who are selling seafood without all requisite licenses and inspections are hurting legitimate dealers and restaurants.

Southeastern Fisheries Association will customize your company's HACCP Plan!

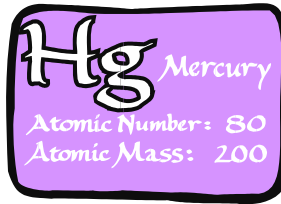
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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES DRAFT METHYL MERCURY GUIDELINES

The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) recently issued a DRAFT of guidelines they intend to publish concerning the consumption of freshwater and marine fish. The guidelines list most of the



lakes and rivers in Florida. The report tells which fish should not be eaten by anyone, which fish should not be eaten by women of child-bearing age, which fish should be eaten once a week and which fish can be eaten once a day. SFA is not privy to the PPM level FDOH used as a basis for making their recommendations on which fish to eat and which fish not to eat. There is a significant difference between the FDA's 0.5 PPM and the EPA's 0.19 PPM concerning methyl mercury in fish. The FDOH did not hold any informal meetings with interested persons to

(Continued on page 4)

DACS BUREAU OF MARKETING DOING OUTSTANDING JOB

Kudos to Joanne McNeely, Bureau Chief of the Seafood Marketing bureau of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The TV ads touting wild caught Florida shrimp have been seen by millions of potential shrimp buyers. The incentive program offered to retailers has moved large volumes of Florida shrimp and that is what needs to happen to set up a profitable situation for domestic harvesters, processors and retailers. Commissioner Charles Bronson has been very supportive of the domestic shrimp industry every step of the way. SFA is grateful to the Commissioner for his continued support.

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!

(Continued from page 3)

gain input or insight into what they recommend so the industry does not know as much about how they made their decisions. They do recommend that no king mackerel over 31 inches fork length or any shark over 43 inches be consumed by anyone. FDOH does admit that eating fish is healthy and they follow the American Heart Association's advice that 2 meals a week of fish is good for the heart. The healthy aspect of eating fish was further quantified when on September 8, 2004, the US Food and Drug Administration issued a decision saying fish containing omega-3 fatty acid can be labeled as a possible way to reduce heart attacks. This was very significant.

FLASH

PUBLIC TESTIMONY TO BE ALLOWED ON GROUPER QUOTAS

The Gulf Council will meet at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, Panama City Beach, October 11-15. They will convene the Reef Fish Management Committee from 11:00 AM to 5:30 PM on Tuesday, OCTOBER 12, 2004 to hear from the public.



All persons interested in the grouper fishery are urged to attend. There will be a proposal to put a 5,500-pound trip

I'm just looking
for a nice
warm plate!

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