



SOUTHEASTERN FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

H O T L I N E S

DECEMBER 2005

RANDOLPH HODGES DIES ON NOVEMBER 29, 2005

Recently, on page 15 of the *Tallahassee Democrat* there was an obituary reporting the death of Randolph Hodges of Cedar Key, Florida. The opening sentence of the very brief announcement read, “*W. Randolph Hodges, 91, a retired ice-plant owner and former member of the Florida Senate...*”



Randolph was a former ice-plant owner and was proud of it, but he was also so much more, especially to the betterment of

Florida in general and to the Florida seafood industry in particular.

Randolph Hodges hired Bob Ingle to create the world-class lab now known as the *Florida Wildlife Research Institute*. In those days it was just Ingle’s Lab, as it started with one employee with the same vision as Randolph, that fisheries should be managed with science as the basic tenet.

Randolph also started the Florida Seafood Marketing Bureau and hired Harmon Shields to be the first chief. This bureau went on to become the best in America. Randolph was instrumental in starting programs to purchase land by the state to be set-aside for the future. He was a leader in protecting water resources in the rural counties of Florida, knowing one-day water would hold the key to sustainable communities.

The obituary also mentioned Mildred, Randolph’s loving wife of nearly 72 years, had died in August of this year. Mildred Hodges was a lady without peer. A kinder person would be hard to find.

During our short time here on earth we sometimes strive to become important and wealthy and our ego drives us very hard in directions we

don’t always enjoy. In the final analysis, it makes sense that Randolph would have been very proud to be remembered as an ice-plant owner, who provided something vital to his people in Cedar Key. It was, after all, his heritage and he never tried to hide it.

Stephen King in his greatest novel, *The Dark Tower*, wrote about going to “the pasture at the end of the road.” Randolph and Mildred have gone to their pasture at the end of the road, a place where all of us must go one day. May their souls and the souls of all the faithfully departed Rest In Peace. Amen.

COMMERCIAL BOAT CAPTAIN WINS FLORIDA LOTTO

Larry Lopez, Pine Island, Florida, is a 61-year-old Vietnam veteran. He won the \$9 million dollar Lotto and opted for a one-time payment after taxes of over \$5 million dollars. Captain Lopez said he planned to help his family, particularly his 88-year-old mother and then invest the rest of the money for the future. Congratulations Captain Lopez.

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

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

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ANGLERS WANT ALL GROUPEL FOR THEMSELVES

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will have discussions in Corpus Christi, Texas, at their January 2006 meeting concerning taking the consumer share of grouper away and giving it to anglers and charter boat owners. The thinking seems to be because so much hatred exists between anglers and longliners and longliners and fishermen using a bandit rig that now is the time to divide and conquer and take the fish for recreational fishing and run. There are no doubt the harsh words and personal attacks have created yet another division in the commercial (consumer providers) fishing sector. Throughout history many fishermen have felt if you don't use the same gear I use and fish the same way I do, you are not fishing right and need to be stopped. This thinking is not limited to grouper fishing nor is it limited to the Gulf of Mexico.

What is at stake here are the actions of the Coastal Conservation Association members and friends to continue taking all the fish at the expense of everyone else. It is not a new philosophy nor are they ashamed of how they have savaged the commercial fishing industry over the years since they were founded. Their Florida lobbyist has said on many occasions "the way you eat an elephant is one bite at a time", and this grouper scam is just another bite of the elephant. Sometimes it seems the state and federal agencies are intimidated by the Coastal Conservation Association and do anything they can to avoid

being written up in one of their magazines or by some outdoor writer who works with or for the CCA. But we are a nation operating under "Rules of Law" and if correct, then this latest "grouper scam" will not be perpetuated by the members of the Gulf Council nor the National Marine Fisheries Service or NOAA Fisheries as they prefer to be called.

BASA/SWAI/TRA IMPORTS COULD REACH 500 MILLION POUNDS BY 2008

In 1999, 7.2 million pounds of Basa were sold in the United States. By 2002 nearly 47 million pounds were sold and by 2004, 183 million pounds were served to US customers. Projections indicate over 250 million pounds will be consumed in America this year and with a 33% increase possible Basa could reach 500 million pounds by the end of 2008. An article in *Seafood Business* pointed out the difficulty Basa is having in the South because of the ongoing fight with domestic catfish. Three states, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have halted the sale of Basa in their states because banned antibiotics have been found in farmed fish from several exporters. But even with the southern ban in place, Basa is showing up nationwide. Deep-fried Basa has been substituted for "grouper sandwiches" in Florida (and probably in other states) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have issued several warnings to vendors. Because Basa can be purchased for less than \$3.00 per pound, it becomes very tempting for some restaurants to offer Basa for grouper. SFA encourages anyone who is not sure of what kind of fish they are being served to at least ask the waiter to check with the chef and see what he/she says. If the answer comes back that the fish is "pond-raised Mexican grouper", chances are it is anything EXCEPT grouper.

NO REPORTS AVAILABLE ON BACK DOOR SALE OF GROUPEL

If any fisherman is selling fresh, domestic Gulf of Mexico grouper, they are breaking the law. If any restaurant is selling fresh, domestic Gulf of Mexico grouper, they too are breaking the law, as commercial grouper fishing has been closed for a month and will not open again until January 1, 2006. There has been no feedback from the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission on any activity related to stopping backdoor sales. Hopefully there is still effort being made to prevent seafood from an unapproved source from reaching the consumers who depend on restaurants for safe, high quality seafood.

STILL NO DIRECT AID TO FISHERMEN/DEALERS HURT BY STORMS

There just isn't any state or federal agency with responsibility to offer assistance to commercial fishermen and dealers savaged by recent natural disasters. This lack of needed assistance has gotten the attention of several US Senators, trying to get funds appropriated to assist the fishing industry. There is even a suggestion that commercial fishing come under the USDA, but such a proposal could set off a very heated turf battle between USDA and USDC. The Commerce Department doesn't really seem to want the fishing industry, but to remove it would decrease their appropriations and in Washington, such a proposal is usually dead on arrival. It doesn't really matter that the industry is suffering to protect their base of the regulators.

SEAFOOD RESTAURANT ALLIANCE PROGRESS

The SRA is moving forward in the development of a Power Point teaching aid to be available for all members of the Alliance. The seafood

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safety and quality training offered by SRA will encompass much more than the basic information currently being taught. Product recognition, proper weight and count and methods to track the seafood product from the water to the waiter will be offered. One of the first issues the Alliance has become involved in is to take action to prevent the angler groups from taking the grouper quota away from the commercial fishermen, who are the conduit by which the seafood restaurants can offer fresh seafood. Anyone who likes seafood can readily see the customers standing in line on most nights and especially when the tourists arrive. The US law regulating seafood in federal waters assures the consumers a proper share of all the seafood that is harvested. For more information on the activities of the SRA please contact Bob Jones at 850.224.0612.

BLUE CRAB REGULATIONS APPROVED

The rule, recommended by FWC's Blue Crab Advisory Board, established a blue crab limited entry endorsement program limiting the total number of commercial blue crab fishermen and allowing each qualified fisherman to use



up to an equal number of traps. The rules approved by the FWC allow qualified fishermen affected by the 1995 net limitation amendment, and stone crab and shrimp fishermen who harvest blue crabs as bycatch in their fishing gear, to obtain a non-transferable blue crab

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limited entry endorsement. This lets displaced net fishermen use up to 100 traps to harvest hard shell blue crabs, and gives shrimpers and stone crabbers a daily bycatch allowance of 200 pounds of blue crabs. An incidental take endorsement to allow harvest of a limited amount of blue crabs from shrimp and stone crab fishing gear also was approved by the Commission, and the 2006 Legislature must approve a proposed \$25 fee for this endorsement. The new rules also allow blue crab harvesters to obtain permission from the FWC Division of Law Enforcement to let another person transport, deploy or retrieve his/her traps on a short-term basis under certain conditions for reasons of hardship. These rules will take effect next month.

RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT FOR RED GROUPEL REDUCED BY FWC

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) today approved a rule lowering the recreational bag limit for red grouper in Gulf of Mexico state waters from two fish daily per person to one fish. The new limit takes effect in January. When federal waters reopen

to red grouper harvest in January, a one-fish daily limit also will apply to recreational anglers. The recreational five-fish daily aggregate grouper bag limit and the 20-inch total length minimum size limit for red grouper remain unchanged in both state and federal waters.

MARK-UP OF MAGNUSON ACT SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 15

The Senate Commerce Committee under Senator Ted Steven's efforts will mark up the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act on December 15. There is no work on when the House will mark up their bill. Efforts are being made to require more scientific input on decisions, which will be very helpful to the seafood industry. Through some amendments there will be efforts to better balance the membership on the management councils, even though one amendment would require Governors to submit at least one commercial person, one recreational person and one charter boat person. Again, the recreational interests will get two bites of the apple and give special status to charter boats and not

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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.

Associate Members:

Fulgi's Seafood & Meats, Inc., Naples, FL , Fulgencio Valmana

Retail Market/Restaurant Members:

Fishermen's Seafood: Hudson, FL , Ronald Birren & Austin Bass

Crabby Lady Seafood, Goodland, FL Nadine Carroll

to any other single type of fishing platform or fishery. Hopefully the Congress will not authorize this special status for the charter boat owners unless they authorize the same status for other specific fisheries.

Tackle Shop fined for buying recreationally caught fish

NOAA Administrative Law Judge Walter J. Brudzinski upheld the Agency's \$105,000 NOVA and 300-day permit sanction on *Mastry's Bait*

and Tackle, Inc. of St. Petersburg, Florida. Mastry's has 30 days to appeal the judicial decision.

In a May 16, 2003 NOAA News Release Mastry's was charged with unlawfully purchasing reef fish harvested in federally managed waters from recreational fishermen fishing aboard the head boat FV Florida Fisherman II. Kudos to FWC and NOAA for trying to stop illegal sale of seafood by recreational fishermen. This is but a tip of the iceberg.



**Merry Christmas,
Happy Hanukah and
Season's Greetings
to all**



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