

# Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.

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



## Hotlines Online Edition



**February 2005**

### **COLLECTION OF DUTIES FROM SIX NATIONS IMPLEMENTED**

The US Department of Commerce has issued orders to the US Customs and Border Protection to start collecting cash duties from importers in the US who purchase products from the six nations who have been dumping shrimp on the US market. The six countries that have been found guilty of dumping so far are: Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Thailand and Vietnam. There are efforts to force the US Dept. of Commerce to begin a "changed circumstances review" because of the tsunami disaster, which could lead to lower or no tariffs from Thailand and India. This has been a hard fought and bitter fight between the US harvesters and the importers. Had there been any kind of recognition that the domestic industry was facing a real disaster by the leaders opposed to tariffs two years ago all of this could have been avoided. The US industry doesn't want all the market, it just wants to have a small part of it, and big enough so their wild caught or domestically

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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

pond-raised shrimp can be sold for a profit. The domestic seafood industry will never be able to compete with seafood industries subsidized by their government.

### **TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PROGRAM UPDATE**

The TAA Program provides relief to commercial fishermen from domestic price declines resulting from imports of similar aquaculture products. Many Florida shrimpers qualified for assistance under the TAA Program last year based on declining shrimp prices for 2003. Because Florida pink shrimp are more valuable than species of shrimp in other states, the price decline in Florida was less than other states and the amount of assistance was very low when compared for instance with Texas. Florida shrimpers were actually denied assistance for 2002 because they could not show a decline in price of at least 20% for all shrimp species from the previous year. Excluding rock shrimp, for which no cultured imports exist, resulted in a price decline above the 20% threshold.

Many other states have already been approved for the coming year based on the prices paid in 2003 but Florida has to use the prices based on 2004 because it is a year ahead of the other states (due to the original petition re-

jection). The recertification of Florida for the TAA program will have to wait until a complete set of data for 2004 is available.

Because heavy production of shrimp after the hurricanes in Florida, there is speculation only about 5% of the fleet will qualify because they made more money in 2004 than they did in 2003. Even though cost of fuel and other expenses are figured into the formula used for this program so the bottom line might be lower, the fact that more net income was generated might disqualify many Florida shrimpers. The Congress needs to take a close look at this program and fix some of the glitches that make it so difficult for shrimpers to qualify.

While Florida is waiting to be recertified, Florida shrimpers landing shrimp in other states can apply now for benefits associated with those landings. The deadline for landings in Texas, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina is 28 February 2005. The deadline for Louisiana and Alabama landings is 11 April 2005. Details on the application process can be obtained by contacting the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Or, call the Florida FSA office (352-338-3400) for more information.

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## **KING MACKEREL TRIP LIMIT INCREASED TO 75 FISH PER DAY**

The daily vessel trip limit is increased to 75 fish beginning 12:01 a.m., February 1, 2005, for commercial hook-and-line vessels fishing for Gulf group king mackerel in federal waters of the Florida east coast sub zone. From November 1 through March 31, the Florida east coast sub zone for Gulf group king mackerel is the area north of 25° 20.4' N. lat. (a line directly east from the Miami-Dade/Monroe County, Florida, boundary), and south of 29° 25' N. lat. (a line directly east of from the Volusia/Flagler County, Florida, boundary). There is no provision under the Florida Administrative Code authorizing the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to similarly increase the trip limit in state waters. Therefore, the daily trip limit for king mackerel harvested in state waters off the East coast of Florida will remain at 50 fish. So if you fish 3.1 miles off Fort Pierce you can catch 75 king mackerel, but if you fish 3.0 miles off Fort Pierce you can catch 50 king mackerel.

It seems like most fish will now be claimed to have been caught in federal waters. What a nightmare for law enforcement that will be. Several industry leaders observed, "*The king mackerel stock must really be in good shape for the commercial fishing industry to be given an increase in anything by the feds.*"

## **POACHING IN THE TORTUGAS SHRIMP NURSERY UNSTOPPABLE**

According to Florida shrimpers who routinely fish near the Tortugas nursery area boundary, out of state boats constantly shrimp inside the Tortugas nursery line with pure abandon. It's as if the poachers know when there will be an enforcement presence and are willing to take their chances with a heavy fine and loss of shrimp in order to make astounding catches. The atti-

tude of some of these poachers is, "if I make ten trips inside the line and only get caught once then I am still ahead of the game." It has always been a hard assignment to stop poaching of shrimp so far offshore but efforts should not be abandoned.

There was a government system for monitoring the shrimpers activities near the shrimp nursery area, but NMFS pulled the funding for that project and the surveillance program ended. Industry leaders feel that if just a small portion of the funds used to save the salmon industry was used to protect the number one fishery in the United States, the poachers could be caught and prosecuted to the full extent of the law including seizing the vessel.

The legitimate shrimpers who obey the Tortugas closed shrimping regulations feel they are getting a very raw deal from the government who on the one hand is trying to remove as many vessels as possible and on the other hand turns a blind eye to massive poaching of the shrimp resource. The Tortugas Nursery area is as important as any other closed areas the government protects, maybe even more so. The nursery area supports diverse bottom growth including corals and yet very little effort is made to keep this 3,000,000 acre shrimp MPA off limits to poachers. Perhaps Congress should look into the lack of enforcement in this area.

## **HOW MUCH RECREATIONAL CAUGHT GROUPEL WAS SOLD DURING GROUPEL CLOSURE?**

The Tampa Tribune reported in a story that a restaurant in Tampa bragged how it was able to keep on getting fresh grouper during the recent closed grouper season that lasted from November 15, 2004, to January 1, 2005, in the Gulf of Mexico. The manager, who was identified in the article, said he bought his grouper from day boats who were not affected by the closed

season. He of course is just one of thousands that buy grouper and other fish from sport fishermen.

The sale of sport caught seafood in Florida is rampant. Any place in Florida with a public ramp and many private docks in the state is where this illegal seafood is landed and often times sold under the cover of darkness. There are some very legitimate divers who have all the requisite permits and obey the state and federal regulations. There is also a plethora of divers who look at selling their catch as a God-given right and they do not need a license or anything else.

SFA members are again urged to make sure the fish you purchase is from someone who has all the required permits. Don't take shortcuts or you will be facing a formal hearing in front of FWC officials asking why your wholesale or retail license shouldn't be suspended. The purchase or sale of illegal seafood is considered to be a major offense for a first violation with an automatic fine of \$2500 and the possible suspension of your licenses for 90 days. Think about this.

## **GROUPEL BUYOUT PROGRAM BEING FINALIZED**

The Florida grouper industry is holding meetings with federal and state officials to determine if an acceptable buyout program can be designed that would benefit the fish, the fishermen and the economy. One goal of the buyout plan is to reduce the number of longline fishing vessels by as much as 40%. Another goal is to maintain a sustainable year round grouper fishery. There is strong support for developing this program but there are also detractors who want to keep things like they are or just remove commercial fishing vessels with no consideration of a buyout or anything else that would help. In this particular instance, Congress wants a buyout, NMFS wants a buyout and a

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significant number of fishermen in the grouper industry want a buyout.

The problem now is whether those that remain in the fishery will support it. While the initial thrust is to buyout the longline vessels, there is language in the appropriations bill that would allow for vertical line boats to also participate in the program under certain circumstances. The Gulf Council has established a cutoff date but has not accomplished much in reducing latent effort. Unless there is a cap on effort the fishery will come under undue stress as more and more anglers join in catching their bag limit.

**53<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION TO BE OUTSTANDING**

Tom Hill, *Key Largo Fisheries*, will be installed as the 53<sup>rd</sup> President of Southeastern Fisheries Association. He follows in the footsteps of his father, Jack Hill who served from 1991 to 1992.

Thursday evening June 16<sup>th</sup>, Bob & Malinda Jones will host the attendees to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They have been with SFA for 42 of those 50 years. Be there if you can. Major issues facing the industry will be discussed on Friday morning, June 17<sup>th</sup>, in the same format as used last year. Dr. Felicia Coleman, FSU, will tell us all about the enormous impact of recreational fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Experts will be seated at different tables so that one on one conversations, questions and answers can be given. The afternoon will zero in on real fishery inspections programs and problems. Dr. Steve Otwell, IFAS, is Chairman of the Convention Steering Committee and hopes to have Coach Urban Meyer attend the Friday night seafood buffet. Other U of F officials will be

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our guests on the Touchdown Terrace to meet with our attendees. Plan now to wear the colors of whatever college you like. There will be some special prizes for the folks with the most spirit and best looking outfit.

DACS Commissioner Charlie Bronson will be recognized with a special award during the Friday night function for all the help he has given the fishing industry over the years. We need a strong turnout for this meeting. Mark your calendars today.

It has been rumored that Eugene Raffield will perform some of the sounds he used to entertain the Japanese industry when he was on a Seafood Trade Mission in Tokyo. Karaoke was mandatory every night on the mission and Eugene won all the prizes. You don't want to miss Eugene and his one-man band. The golf tournament will be held at one of Gainesville's premier locations and will be held Saturday morning June 18th. Sponsorship letters for all our events will be in the mail soon.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED ON SHRIMP AMENDMENT 13**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a series of public hearings to receive public comments on "Amendment Number 13

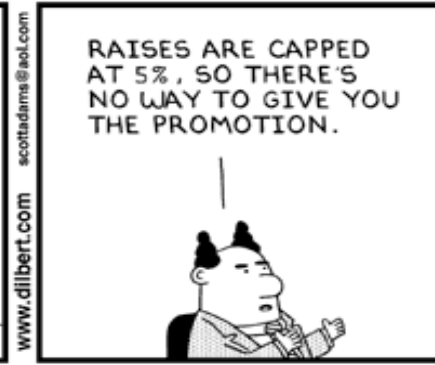
to the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, U.S. Waters with Environmental Assessment, Regulatory Impact Review, and Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis." Amendment 13 contains alternatives to: (1) Establish a separate vessel permit for the royal red shrimp fishery or an endorsement to the existing federal shrimp vessel permit (Action 1); (2) Define MSY, OY, the over-fishing threshold, and the over-fished condition for royal red and penaeid shrimp stocks in the Gulf (Actions 2 through 7); (3) Establish bycatch reporting methodologies and improve collection of shrimping effort data in the EEZ through the use of logbooks, electronic logbooks, and observers (Action 8); (4) Require completion of a Gulf Shrimp Vessel and Gear Characterization Form by at least a subset of shrimp vessel permit holders (Action 9); (5) Establish a moratorium on the issuance of commercial shrimp vessel permits (Action 10); and (6) Require reporting and certification of landings during a moratorium (Action 11). For each action, a "No Action" alternative may also be considered. The Council is soliciting public comment on alternatives under each of these potential actions, and for other alternatives, that should be considered by the Council. The Council is

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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!



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soliciting public comment on these issues through the public hearings, by mail and by e-mail; and must be received by the Council on or before March 4, 2005. The public hearings will be held beginning at 7:00 p.m. and concluding no later than 10:00 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

Key West - Feb. 15 - Doubletree Grand Key Resort, 3990 So. Roosevelt Blvd. and Tampa - on Feb. 17 at the Doubletree Guest Suites, 3050 North Rocky Point Drive.

SFA will hold the second annual 50/50 drawing to raise funds for the association's efforts. Half of all proceeds are prorated back to three winners. Last year's drawing totaled \$12,800 with \$6400 going to the recipients. Let's try to reach our maximum goal of \$20,000 this year. You do not have to be present to win. Tickets have been mailed out to the Directors and some members. You may contact these people or call 850.224.0612 and speak to Marie and we can send you a ticket from the office.

We hope you will participate, as this is SFA's only request for voluntary contributions.

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