



# SOUTHEASTERN FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

## H O T L I N E S

### JUNE - JULY 2006

#### SFA'S 54TH ANNUAL MEETING SUCCESSFUL

Over 100 attendees at SFA's annual meeting came away satisfied with the up to date information on all fisheries sectors. **Robert Aylesworth**, Aylesworth Fish and Bait Inc., St. Petersburg was installed as SFA President by Past President Bobby Bell also of St. Petersburg. President Aylesworth plans to build better relationships with all marine users during his 2-year term. **Eugene Raffield**, of Port St. Joe was elected Vice President, **Jim Clary** of Jacksonville was elected Secretary and **Grant Erickson** of Fort Myers was elected Treasurer

Product substitution was the most talked about issue this year. **Mark French**, DACS, explained how the state food lab is gearing up to have many new DNA profiles of fishery products to determine if catfish, for example, is being substituted for grouper. Mr. French showed slides concerning a recent arrest proving the "grouper" were actually pangasius

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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

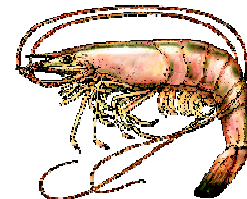
(catfish). Not only will this have an impact on what the state law enforcement agencies do, competitors will now be able to buy a product and have it tested to determine if they are competing against similar species. If a company for instance, can sell Key West pink shrimp for \$2.00 less than market price, chances are they are not really Key West pink shrimp.

Profiles for all Florida shrimp species are in the works in order to prevent any company from mixing foreign shrimp with domestic shrimp and labeling them as Product of USA. These efforts at leveling the playing field are critical to the success of the Wild American Shrimp (WASI) marketing program.

One of the reasons cited for increased efforts in curtailing product substitution is for state regulators to be ahead of the curve if 20/20 or 60 Minutes or some national network producing documentaries, takes an interest in all the product substitution going on in Florida and throughout the United States. A documentary would look at this as blatant consumer fraud by charging an unsuspecting tourist or local seafood consumer for a Florida grouper sandwich and using some pond raised product from Timbucktoo. The law enforcement agencies do not want to be told by an investigative reporter there is a problem in Florida

and then asked on camera what they are doing about it. Some of the pond-raised catfish from countries with strict HACCP regulations are good fish and efforts should be made to promote them on the menu and let the customers make up their own minds. Several SFA members already have Basa listed on their menu and they have found the fish to be acceptable to many customers and at a lower price.

**Colonel Don Holway**, FWC gave an update on the "No More Backdoor"



enforcement program within the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission. There were several videos showing the sting operation at several restaurants where snook and other exotic fish was being sold right through the backdoor. One video showed stone crabs and blue crabs being transferred from a crooks truck to the truck being used in the sting operation, in broad daylight and in a public mall parking lot. Such arrogance begs the question, "How much illegal fish products are sold through the backdoors of restaurants under the cover of darkness?" The fines for backdoor sales are too low and there is not enough "risk" for restaurants to be too concerned. We saw in one case where the fine was less than \$1,000,

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### Southeastern Fisheries Association Thanks the 54th Annual Meeting Sponsors

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which could be written off as the cost of doing business. However, if the license for the restaurant was at risk, the entire dynamics would change and only the hardcore would continue to substitute seafood products.

#### **AWARDS PRESENTED DURING THE 54<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**

The Heber Bell award for Excellence in Ethical Business Practices was presented to *Doug & Elsie Carter, Delaware Chicken and Seafood Market, Hollywood, Florida.*

The Ralph Aylesworth Award for Outstanding Services by a Government Employee went to *Dot Williamson, FDACS Marketing Bureau.* The Gene Raffield Humanitarian Award went to *Leo and Mutt Cooper* now living in *Alabama.* The Member of the Year Award was presented to *Steve Cox, Cox Wholesale Seafood, Tampa, Florida.*

The 50/50 prizes were awarded to *Cape Canaveral Seafoods of Titusville* winning the 1<sup>st</sup> place prize, *Ranell Henderson* winning the 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize and an anonymous donor winning the 3<sup>rd</sup> place prize. This fund raised is very

important to SFA and hopefully more people will participate next year.

#### **FEDERAL DISASTER MONEY ASSISTS THE OYSTER INDUSTRY**

Congratulations to the Gulf of Mexico oyster industry for obtaining \$90 million dollars to replant oyster beds damaged by last year's hurricanes. The oyster industry deserves the help and we are glad they got it.

By the same token the rest of the industry was totally ignored and no help came to those whose boats are still up on land or damaged in canals or to the trap fishermen in the Keys who suffered so much from two different hurricanes. And while NOAA does need to have an up and running lab in Pascagoula, was this the right vehicle? And why did so much money go to marine surveyors and why did so much go to assist in getting better estimates on damage in the future?

We appreciate all the help Senators Cochran & Lott of Mississippi, Vittner of Louisiana, Shelby of Alabama and Nelson of Florida gave, but are puzzled why Senators Sessions of Alabama, Hutchison of Texas and Martinez of Florida voted to delete the small

amount of money that would have gone to state marketing programs. We also appreciate the leadership of Congresswoman Lehtinen in getting several members of the Florida delegation to sign on a letter asking for help to the fishermen.

It seems to most of the fishermen and dealers who were savaged so badly by natural disasters there really isn't enough interest in helping domestic seafood producers. A nation that cannot produce its own food is headed for hard times and much misery for the citizens. The fishing industry doesn't even know if Congress has a policy to preserve food producers for the good of the nation. Hard times and sad times for the men and women who put seafood on other people's tables.

#### **GULF COUNCIL PROPOSES MAJOR CHANGES IN RED SNAPPER FISHERY**

The Gulf Council has established a set of options for red snapper under a 7.0 million pound Total Allowable catch (TAC) and a 5.0 million pound TAC. Calculations concerning how many fish at various size limits will determine the number of day's recreational red snap-

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per fishing will be allowed. A 7.0 mp TAC using a 15-inch size limit and 2 fish bag limit gives 153 fishing days from May 15 – Oct. 15. Under a 5.0 mp TAC using a 16-inch size limit and 2 fish bag limit gives 107 days from June 1 –0 Sept 15. There are a series of other considerations going to public hearings.

The Council also voted to support House Resolution 5018 (Pombo Bill) pertaining to developing ecosystem-based plans. The bill also speaks to peer reviewed science and that the regulated community (us) can provide input during the review process. Finally the Council supported proposed language to implement a federal marine recreational registry for those states that do not have a state saltwater recreational fishing license.

**FLORIDA BAITFISH ALLIANCE FORMED**

Southeastern Fisheries Association and other marine resource users met in St. Petersburg recently to discuss the baitfish and Harmful Algal Bloom situation. Baitfish is one of the most important components of the sportfishing experience. Baitfish is a vital part of Florida tourism. Everyone knows tourism is the engine that drives the economic health of the Sunshine State.

A steering committee has been formed to address all aspects of the baitfish industry. Millions of fishermen depend on bait to make their fishing trip a success. When the net ban regulations were implemented, baitfish production was cut by over 70%, which is why the price of baitfish increased. Some of the questions to be answered are what, if any, impact does red tide has on the

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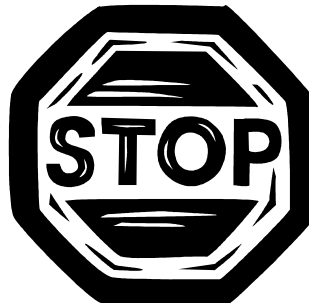
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baitfish stock? Are the stocks within historical ranges? Has the size and quantity of baitfish changed over the decades? The Baitfish Alliance will be composed of commercial, recreational, environmental and tourism representatives and will be chaired by **Robert Aylesworth** of St. Petersburg. If you are interested in this issue let SFA know and you will be added to the distribution list.

**SYSCO CORP. SENDS STERN WARNING TO SUPPLIERS**

In response to a newspaper article-alleging Sysco knowingly purchased Basa labeled as grouper, Sysco made it crystal clear that “any purchase of mislabeled or short weight products will not be condoned or tolerated”. The article in their **Fish Tails** newsletter went on to show real domestic grouper has an “off the knife” value of almost \$8.00 a pound and if any supplier is selling grouper to them for \$3.50 per pound



you can be assured it is not domestic grouper.

Sysco is doing the right thing. Methods to detect seafood product substitution are becoming more sophisticated each year and sooner or later the word will filter down to those who cheat the consumers that there are laws and there are agencies that will take their business licenses away and post their violation on the Internet. Would any reputable company want to have their name posted on the Internet as a violator?

**HACCP UPDATES AVAILABLE**

If your company is interested in revisiting your HACCP Plan and adding written Standard Operating Procedures, please contact the Tallahassee office. The FDA will be coming out with a new edition and possible stricter requirements for histamine type fish within the next few months.

There should also be consideration given to become proactive in preventing listeria or other harmful pathogens in your operations. Call 850/224-0612 for more information.

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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.

**Corporate Membership:** Fishbusterz Fisheries, LLC,  
Charlie Renier, Key West, FL

**Associate Membership:** Julie Gibson Services,  
Julia Gibson, Palmetto, Florida

## UPGRADE YOUR SFA MEMBERSHIP

Retail and HACCP members are urged to upgrade their membership in SFA to either to Associate members status but preferably to Corporate Member status. Notify the SFA office for financial methods to accomplish this upgrade. Thanks.  
**Goal for 2006 – 2007...**  
Each member sign up a **NEW** member this year!

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### **WHOLE FOODS BANS LOBSTER SALES FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS**

Bowing to pressure from animal rights activists, Whole Foods banned the sale of lobster from their stores because they believe killing them is inhumane. It makes a person wonder if Whole Foods should sell any animal protein at all, because all the animal meat in their stores is killed for food. Live lob-

ster sales are probably not the biggest item in their inventory so the financial loss will be low and the kudos from the vegans will be high.



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