



SOUTHEASTERN FISHERIES ASSOCIATION

H O T L I N E S

A P R I L 2 0 0 8

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO HELP SHORE SIDE FACILITIES

The Florida Constitutional Revision Committee has approved language to be placed on the November general election ballot allowing water dependent businesses to be assessed based on their current use and not at "highest and best use" as in previous years. The commercial fish facilities and recreational marinas are currently assessed at the same land value as condos or other high end operations forcing many to sell and move. The ad valorem taxes for fish houses are confiscatory. It will take a concerted effort on the part of waterfront facility owners to help get people to support the amendment as the right thing to do. There is great concern that many of the voters will look at this proposal as another tax loophole and vote against it.

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

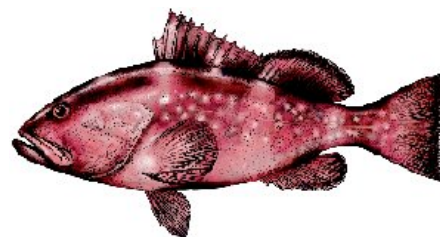
FLORIDA SENATOR BILL NELSON FILES BILL ALLOWING ANGLER SALE OF SEAFOOD PRODUCTS

Senate bill 2803 says the following in part:

'Persons engaged in the fishery industry, as charter boat or *recreational fishermen* catching aquatic products, may act together in associations, corporate or otherwise, with or without capital stock, in collectively catching, producing, and *marketing such aquatic products*, including implementing a vessel capacity reduction program, improving the operational and economic efficiency of a fishery, undertaking research, and improving the conservation and management of a fishery resource.'

While it makes sense for charter boat operators to pool resources to gain critical mass for purchasing fuel and supplies, allowing recreational fishermen to form a coop and sell their fish is ludicrous and the ramifications of such an action are mind-boggling. Hopefully Senator Nelson will strike the three words "or recreational fishermen" and make this a

good bill. SFA's Board of Directors will discuss this in St. Augustine at their 56th annual meeting and their discussion will be open to all members.



GULF COUNCIL TO REVISIT GAG REGULATIONS

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has postponed final action on the NMFS gag grouper regulations that would savage the anglers and charter boat industries based on science that might not be inaccurate. The Draft Reef Fish Amendment 30B, is 277 pages and can be found at; http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/grouper/B-5DraftAmendment30B_January_2008_rev.pdf

The Council sent the red/gag grouper plan back to the Science 7 Statistical Committee (SSC) to address Dr. Trevor Kenchington's comments he presented at the meeting. The intent of the Council is to convene the SSC

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

in May and consider the plan at the June Council meeting, which occurs the same time as SFA's annual meeting.

The council discussed efforts to request the Secretary of Commerce to preempt Florida and Texas and maybe Alabama regarding red snapper. A motion was made but failed on an 8 - 7 vote and what some described as a "heated and emotional" debate. The motion to require federally permitted vessels to comply with the more restrictive regulations on an emergency basis failed on an 8 - 8 vote. Obviously no consensus exists on these two issues.

The council began considering requiring operator permits in the GOM EEZ and it was strongly objected to by Glenn Delaney, lobbyist for the Southern Shrimp Alliance and others. Most of the time when the federal government starts looking at something like this; it's only a matter of time before it happens.

The aquaculture amendment went back to Intragovernmental Planning Teams to incorporate substantial changes.

The Individual Fishing Quota Amendment 29 was approved for public hearings after June in order to all incorporation of changes and high workload of the staff.

GMFMC hosted a retirement party in Baton Rouge for outgoing Executive Director, Wayne Swingle. Advertisements for his replacement will be sent out again as no applicants came forth in the first round. There were rumors regarding potential candidates, several that would blow a person's mind, but no paperwork was received. There are straight arrows like Wayne out there and surely one will surface in the near future. Wayne will be a most difficult class act to follow.

USCG DEVELOPING NEW REGS ON STABILITY AND CREW TRAINING



The recent increase in commercial fishing fatalities in the northern parts of the country has pushed the USCG

to publish a proposed set of proposed regulations in the federal register. From 1994 to 2004, almost 1400 commercial fishing vessels were lost and 641 fishermen died. The USCG is looking at **Vessel Stability and Watertight Integrity, Vessel Maintenance and Self-Examination, Immersion or survival suits, Crew Preparedness and Training and Required Safety Equipment.**

The USCG determined that 69% of vessel losses were attributed to vessel maintenance and self-examination. Deficiencies exist in Mandatory inspections of commercial fishing vessels by the USCG, training vessel owners and operators properly performing self-inspections, a more formal process to document self-inspections and the high number of wooden vessels involved in the losses.

There is never a good time to change the mindset of fishing vessel operators but it seems Congress and the USCG are adamant in doing whatever they can to reduce the number of deaths of commercial fishermen. The efforts to do that will take many operators out of their comfort zone when "status quo starts to go."

GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE INVESTIGATES FISH FRAUD

The GAO is conducting a Scoping Process to determine the extent of seafood product substitution at the request of Senator Olympia Snowe. A Senior Analyst for Natural Resources and En-

vironment spent two hours at the SFA office interviewing Bob Jones. The GAO analyst was given a two inch thick document of news articles, radio interviews and enforcement reports concerning seafood fraud in Florida. He appeared taken aback by the sheer volume of the document and noted it would be of great assistance in the scoping process. In addition to the discussions on the "bait & switch" violations in this region, net weight and overglazing was also discussed. Many SFA members have said they have more trouble competing with firms that sell short weight products than they do with firms selling basa for grouper. There are state and federal laws in place concerning net weight but very few restaurants and other retail customers have the right kind of scale or are familiar with the approved methods for checking the weight of frozen seafood. If any member has any ideas about how to combat net weight violations please notify SFA headquarters so the idea can be plugged into the effort to stop net weight violations.

U.S. CHINA COMMISSION MEETING TO DISCUSS FISH SUBSTITUTION

SFA was contacted by a representative of the US/China Commission concerning the sale of pangasius type fish for other species. They wanted to know if the suppliers in China were labeling the boxes as grouper or was the switch occurring in the United States processing and restaurant sector. A copy of the two inch document on fish fraud that was given to the GAO was also given to the Commission for their meeting in Louisiana later in April. Bob Jones was invited to testify but there was a conflict with his schedule.

Evidently this commission wants to ascertain both partners do the lawful things when selling seafood products on the US market. We discussed how

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

the domestic market can be manipulated when true species such as Gulf of Mexico grouper, is forced to compete with a fake fish that claims to be Gulf of Mexico grouper. Jones mentioned the level of enforcement concerning consumer fraud seems to have declined and under budget cuts the Florida legislature has been forced to make, there won't be any additional inspectors hired to protect the consumers from "bait and switch" in Florida.

PREPARE FOR A CIGUATERA FISH CAMPAIGN

Evidently the Florida Department of Health is kicking off a ciguatera cam-

SFA 56TH ANNUAL MEETING



With an outstanding group of speakers prepared to impart current and valuable information,

the meeting is guaranteed to be a success. Add the beautiful, historic venue of St. Augustine and that makes any meeting attractive.

Sponsorships are still coming in and we encourage any of the members who have not sent in their sponsorship to do so. The profit we make on the convention is what keeps the doors open for SFA. There are still rooms available but they might be gone by the end of the month, so get a confirmed reservation today. Cutoff date is May 2, 2008

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paigned although SFA has no idea what it will say or what kind of recommendations it decides to make. The one big amberjack with ciguatera caught off Texas Florida Gardens has reverberated throughout the entire industry with FDA devoting much time and effort on this issue. All SFA members were instructed to amend their HACCP Plans to include a statement that groupers, snappers and other reef fish they buy come from approved waters and from areas not known for ciguatera. FDA is stepping up the pressure by requiring every importer ciguatera type fish must have an official statement from an EXPERT AUTHORITY in the country where the fish was harvested and shipped. For more information concerning HACCP or ciguatera, contact SFA headquarters.

SMALL VESSEL SECURITY SUMMIT

The Department of Homeland Security and USCG will be holding a meeting of invited stakeholders to discuss security risks for small vessels identified as any vessel under 300 gross tons as opposed to vessels over 300 gross tons

that already have security requirements in place. Most commercial fishing boats and charter boats are less than 300 gross tons. Security risks for small vessels are broken down into four general categories:

1. Use of small vessels as a conveyance to smuggle weapons (including weapons of mass destruction).
2. Use of small vessels and Water Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (WBIED) that could be used against another vessel critical to maritime infrastructure or key resources.
3. Use of small vessels as a platform to smuggle terrorists in the United States and
4. Use of small vessels as a platform for standoff weapons (Man portable Air Defense Systems for launch offshore attacks on the maritime industry or critical infrastructure).

The objective of the summit is to provide a regional forum to discuss security issues, educate regional small vessel stakeholders of security threats in the local area and communicate with regional small vessel stakeholders on actions take to coordinate a layered security system throughout the government levels and private sector.

(Continued on page 4)

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)

SFA BOARD TO DISCUSS MAJOR POLICIES

Tentative Agenda Items Include:

1. **FDA** change in regulations requested by Southern Shrimp Alliance
2. **S.2803**-by Senator Nelson to allow angler sale of seafood products nationwide
3. Require **operator permits** for all GOM vessels fishing

- in the EEZ
4. Enhanced efforts in Substitution program to stop **short weight, overglazing, backdoor sales, co-mingling of domestic and foreign shrimp products.**
 5. Development of **industry standards.**

This is a very important meeting and all Board members should make every effort to attend as well as other interested members of SFA.

SOUTHEASTERN FISHERIES ASSOCIATION, INC.

**56TH ANNUAL MEETING
JUNE 4-6, 2008
HISTORIC ST.
AUGUSTINE, FL
REGISTER TODAY!!**

Label all seafood products properly to avoid a citation. **"TRUTH IN LABELING"** is right - **MISLABELING** is wrong. It is just that simple.

Get on board with a winner!!
JOIN SFA TODAY.
Be a **giver** and not a taker.
Put something back into your industry.



Think Food Safety



Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc.
Serving the Commercial Fishing Industry for over 50 years



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