

FACT SHEET ON THE TARPULIN BAITFISH NETS

- Nets using tarpaulin in conjunction with 500 square feet of 1" mesh were developed as a result of the Florida Limited Marine Net Fishing Initiative¹ which was implemented on July 1, 1995. The tarp net was not developed as a loophole but as complying with law.
- Only the following species of fish and quota can be harvested with tarpaulin nets:² Anchovy (85,000 lb.), Blue runner (508,000 lb.), Thread Herring (308,000 lb.), Ladyfish (2,088,000 lb.), Chub mackerel (72,000 lb.), Menhaden (2,415,000 lb.), Spanish sardines (943,000 lb.), Round scad (999,000 lb.), Little tunny (392,000 lb.). NO OTHER SPECIES OF FISH CAN BE HARVESTED WITH TARP NETS. Has anyone ever seen any one of these species on a menu?
- Hundreds of thousands of sport fishermen depend on this affordable baitfish for their angling pleasure. Thousands of commercial fishermen depend on this bait for catching reef fish. Without this harvest bait prices would increase as much or more than food fish species³ and it would be of less quality.
- The State research agency (Florida Marine Research Institute) has determined there is no biological harm in using the tarpaulin net in the Panhandle fishery⁴. "*Landings of all baitfish species declined from an average of 23.1 million pounds annually during 1986-94 to an average of 4.3 million pounds during 1996-98, AN 82% REDUCTION in the historical harvest.*"⁵
- Hardly any bycatch occurs with tarpaulin nets. "*...although only a few fishing trips were sampled, target species comprised almost 100% of the sampled.*"⁶ Those fishermen who have seen this gear work call it the most environmentally friendly piece of gear ever to chase a fish.
- The tarpaulin net fishermen have been good stewards of the resource and when they thought the quota was near for ladyfish, they voluntarily closed down fishing and notified the Commission of their concern.⁷ The media reported on this action⁸ and the tarp fishermen were congratulated by a member of the Florida Cabinet.⁹
- Bait houses and dealers throughout the region support the continued use of the tarp seine and urge the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission to continue the pilot program for two more years so that all the science and socio/economic data can be examined by the Commissioners for a final decision on the utilization of this gear.
- Circuit Judge FE Steinmeyer of Tallahassee, ruled in Walker v DEP, that the use of the tarp gear for harvest of those species of baitfish authorized by the Florida legislature was legal. This decision was affirmed unanimously by the 1st District Court of Appeals in Tallahassee.
- As many as 225 full time jobs and 250 part time jobs are at stake in an area that already has high unemployment. This tarp net should be allowed in this part of Florida as this part of Florida has historically produced the bulk of baitfish.

¹ Article X, Section 16, Florida Constitution

² Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Rule 46-50.002

³ *Since the Net Ban: Fact Sheet* (SGEF-117)

⁴ Ken Haddad, FMRI Director, in meeting with FWC, legislative and Industry Representatives 01/19/00

⁵ FWC Memo to Russell Nelson from Behzad Mahmoudi FMRI dated 01/07/00—Baitfish/Trap Net Report

⁶ FWC Memo to Russell Nelson from Joseph R. O'Hopp, FMRI dated 01/-7/00—at sea observations..

⁷ Notification letter to Dr. Egbert of the FWC dated November 4, 1999

⁸ Panama City News Herald, VIEWPOINT, November 7, 1999

⁹ Letter of congratulations from Commissioner Bob Crawford dated December 2, 1999