



# Hotlines

JANUARY 2010

SOUTHEASTERN  
FISHERIES  
ASSOCIATION

East Coast Fisheries  
Section

FLEXIBILITY -  
TRANSPARENCY -  
HONEST SCIENCE

Standing together for a  
real Change



## SPECIAL THANKS

SFA extends a special thanks to Jim Donofrio of Recreational Fishing Alliance, Dennis O'Hern of Fishing Rights Alliance and Terry Winn of Central Florida Offshore Fishing Club for working with the commercial fishing organizations to mandate flexibility, transparency and honest science in the Magnuson Act. **FIX MAGNUSON NOW!!!**



### FISHERMEN UNITE FOR RALLY IN DC

On February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010, commercial and recreational fishermen will come together near the steps of the nation's Capitol for the purpose of convincing Congress to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The combined forces of recreational and commercial fishermen are asking for three things to occur: 1: Give the Councils and NMFS flexibility to manage fish, especially for those species and stocks where the science is either flawed or non-existent. 2; Mandate that the entire Council and NMFS process, especially stock assessment meetings, be transparent and 3: Mandate honest science. The industry is not asking for money or special considerations but only for what should be good governance for all citizens.

The most significant aspect of this rally which could bring anywhere from 500 to 5000 fishermen to Washington, is the fact that both recreational and commercial fishermen have joined forces for the first time in modern memory. Old wounds have been healed or at least bandaged and wrapped. The joining of forces doesn't mean there won't be battles again, but for the moment the "weapons" have been laid outside the meeting room, so straightforward cooperation can occur and progress made in fixing a common problem. There will always be fights over "who gets the fish" but the fights can be waged under rules of engagement that don't have to include "slash and burn tactics" but rather a civil discussion between legitimate interests based on both honest science and social and economic considerations.

All fishing industry sectors are under the gun from environmental non-profit organizations who want to close the oceans to all fishing, draw lines to designate their approved activities, and then let fishermen back on the water in a very limited and rigidly regulated manner. There are PhD's who are vegans that have no

intention of ever eating a grouper and have been in charge of setting government policies on recreational and commercial fishing.

- There are groups who teach school kids and others that catching a fish with a hook is the same as catching a kitten with a hook. This mind-control begins as a child is beginning to read and plants images so deep they remain there for the rest of the child's life.
- There are groups who use the Endangered Species Act in any manner they can to stop fishing.

There are groups who are proud of the cultural genocide they are perpetrating on hard working families.

Is this drama? You bet it is because it's our lives being ravaged by militant environmental lobbyists who want all fishermen off the water. Our goal is to stop them. The recreational/commercial fishing rally in DC is the first step.

Attending one rally in DC will not change the world. Word on the street is that the wealthiest of anti-fishing groups will be out in force the week before we get to DC telling the Congress not to amend the Magnuson Act and instead to let the "short-term pain" run its course. The problem is, what they call "short-term pain" is our life's work and our ability to provide for our families as well as providing food-producing and recreational jobs to a nation that needs both. Enviros don't have any pain at all, just steady paychecks.

If you can't make the DC trip along with 25 to 35 SFA folks who are going, you can contact your local, state and federal elected official's and tell them to save the jobs of thousands of commercial and recreational fishermen. That's what they are supposed to do anyway.

Get on board with a winner!! **JOIN SFA TODAY.**

Be a **giver** and not a taker.

Put something back into your industry.

#### **WHAT CONCERNS MOST CONSUMERS ABOUT SEA-FOOD?**

In a recent survey taken in California, more seafood consumers were concerned about mercury in fish than anything else. The anti-fish eating groups are winning in their desire to stop people from eating fish using whatever tactic they can. On the one hand they think they are stopping a problem but on the other hand they are scaring the consumers so badly that many are not eating any seafood. If consumers look at the information available at the Center for Disease Control, the American Heart Association, the American Medical Association and other reputable professional organizations, they would find consumption of seafood is highly recommended and for a wide variety of reasons.

Shark production has almost been eliminated in the United States; not because of a mercury problem but because anti-fishing groups don't want sharks harvested. King mackerel, especially the large ones, are caught and consumed by the recreational fishermen at home and should not even be on the market under current law. Those are the two main targets of the anti-fish groups concerning mercury, and they are not the species most often consumed by the American public today. As long as some groups use the ultra-conservative tolerance level of the EPA instead of the more scientifically based FDA level, groups who want to frighten seafood consumers will have a heyday.

#### **CATCH SHARES TO BE DEBATED AT ANNUAL CONVENTION**

The catch share program pushed by NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco and endorsed by the Obama administration hierarchy is highly controversial and extremely complex. Southeastern Fisheries Association hasn't taken an official position because many members have strong feelings one way or the other. Since the meeting in Key West last June, SFA has attempted to forward articles and statements explaining the issue both pro and con, but did not call a special board meeting to determine a policy.

There is so much going on and so much to come in the next few years that SFA needs to take a position and fight for that position whatever it turns out to be. Within the next few months SFA will be talking to people knowledgeable about catch shares and will invite a panel to discuss and debate the issue prior to voting on SFA's position at the annual convention.

The last time we had a policy decision this controversial was the establishment of the Tortugas Nursery Area. The vote to support the NO SHRIMPING ZONE in a 3,000,000 acre portion of the Tortugas almost tore the Association apart. Many members dropped out and another association was formed composed of only shrimpers. But the majority voted in favor of the Tortugas Nursery area and that mandated SFA's position, which still holds after forty years. Over time many of the opponents came home to SFA and several became president, but the climate was stormy for over a decade.

#### **RED SNAPPER BAN IS CULTURAL GENOCIDE**

It didn't matter that commercial and recreational fishermen on the east coast of Florida gathered 20,000 signatures or that over 1,000 fishermen attended hearings in Cape Canaveral and Jacksonville or that the stock assessment used to ban red snapper was flawed. NOAA banned red snapper fishing without giving a whit about the facts presented by the fishermen, businesses and communities dependent on them. The only entity NOAA paid any attention to was the Pew Trust who is in control of the agency. President Obama talks about jobs at every venue but allows the Secretary of Commerce, through the NOAA administrator, to banish more than 1,000 jobs by the flick of the pen. NOAA didn't have to ban red snapper fishing. They could have reported to Congress that the spate of scientific information it had was not enough to wreck an industry and cause unemployment figures to rise, especially in Florida, where the rate is already near 12%.

The corks popped from the champagne bottles by those who celebrated the removal of fishermen from the oceans, but the sound might have been the rallying cry for the recreational and commercial fishermen to stand together and point out all the misinformation and lies about their way of life.

#### **OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL SLAMS NOAA'S LAW ENFORCEMENT**

In a scathing report you can read at the URL below, chances are significant changes will be made within the law enforcement division. Maybe the changes will tone down the "Us vs. Them" attitude between fishermen and agents. Fishermen deserve respect as does the agency, but respect has to be earned and therein lies the challenge.  
[http://www.savingseafood.org/images/documents/enforcement/noaa%20oig\\_1\\_21\\_10.pdf](http://www.savingseafood.org/images/documents/enforcement/noaa%20oig_1_21_10.pdf)

## GROUPEL, GROUPEL – WHERE CAN YOU CATCH GROUPEL?

A major seafood restaurant chain called SFA and asked where it was legal to catch grouper. They needed to know in order to plan their menu items and didn't want to sell any species that wasn't harvested legally. As it turns out it almost takes a lawyer to figure out when and where a person can fish and what species are legal during what months of the year. There is a four-month closure on certain grouper (maybe all grouper) on the east coast of Florida but all of Monroe County was included in the closure, which means the Gulf of Mexico. FWC subsequently closed state waters and used the same area which means grouper from other parts of the Gulf can be legally harvested. The chain wanted to know does it make a difference where it was landed, in other words the grouper was caught legally but landed in Key Largo on the Atlantic side. Finally the seafood chain was given the web site of NMFS and FWC and told to get their lawyers to look at the regulations to see where and when they can buy fish. This is regulatory craziness.

## SAFEMAY REMOVES RED SNAPPER AND GROUPEL FROM THEIR CASES

In a press release, Safeway grocery stores proclaimed they were removing red snapper and grouper from their stores in keeping with the wishes of an environmental group that said red snapper and grouper were overfished. Several SFA wholesale dealers doubted Safeway sold domestic red snapper and grouper so the announcement might just be a public relations effort to appease the enviros telling the consumers what fish to eat. Sort of like telling the consumers and chefs to give swordfish a break when in fact the domestic swordfish industry was sustainable and the fishermen were working hand in hand with government to improve all aspects of harvesting. Denying fish species to consumers because an enviro group doesn't like the way it is harvested is ridiculous. Removing it from the market when an enviro says it's overfished and the government says it isn't is unscrupulous. Legitimate grocery chains should check with reputable fishing organizations before caving in to an environmental activists group that get their funding off the backs of hardworking fishermen.

Gulf red snapper have been designated as not overfished and should not be on any enviro's "don't eat list." Same for red grouper, but none of this is ever considered by the "don't eat certain fish" groups who are growing in numbers all the time.

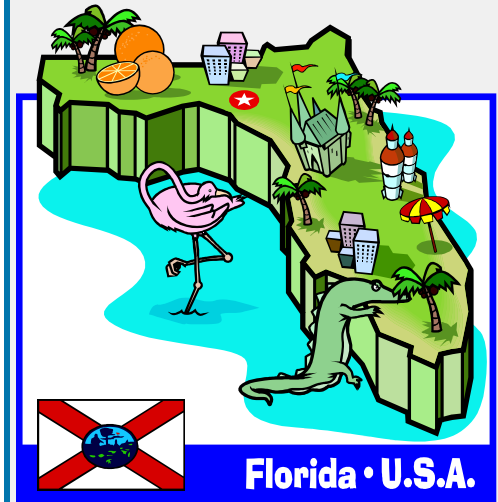
Any person can form a group and distribute their point of view. Some "don't eat fish" groups keep domestic shrimp on the "don't eat list" because they, the enviro leaders, don't like shrimp trawls. They haven't taken time to really look at where we trawl for shrimp in the southeast and to see that we have trawled for shrimp for over 100 years. In addition, the resource will always be sustainable because there is 100% mortality per year for shrimp. We can't save a shrimp for the next generation. We can and should save the habitats and ecosystem. That's where the enviros should be working, but it will be very difficult fighting the dredge and fill industries. Fishermen are easy targets, sort of like state or federal workers.

## SFA HAS AN ADDITIONAL WEB SITE

<http://seafoodsustainability.us/> is the address of SFA's new web site which has a blog and a place where current events are posted. The original web site, [www.southeasternfisheries.org](http://www.southeasternfisheries.org) will be kept for historical and archival purposes. There is a lot of factual information on the old site that might be helpful to those checking back on what has transpired throughout time in many areas. Bob Jones will be managing the new site so there may be glitches but at the end of the day it will be helpful to anyone interested in the fishing industry.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### SFA 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting



## ANNUAL CONVENTION SHAPING UP

The 59<sup>th</sup> annual SFA convention will be held in Orlando, June 9-12 at the Hilton-In-The Walt Disney World Resort, across the street from Downtown Disney. A modified American Assembly protocol will be used again this year but with several panel discussions on issues that cut across the entire spectrum of businesses. The industry is on the cusp of major changes and all members are encouraged to make plans to be at this special meeting. We will talk about the problems of course but we will also talk about the opportunities and what it will take for the survivors to keep on surviving. Be a participant. Be a player. Don't sit back and let others do the work for the benefit of the entire industry. Come attend and we guarantee you will come away with new information and enthusiasm.

**2009-2010  
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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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