

SFA President's Report
May 30, 2013
Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Hotel
Orlando, Florida

Welcome to SFA's 61st annual meeting.

Thank you for being here to exchange thoughts and ideas with those who are involved in protecting and regulating our seafood industry. This past year can best be described as the year we fully engaged Congress.

SFA's lobbying team was in DC in January, February, March, April and May fighting for all sectors of the commercial fishing industry. We coordinated our efforts with recreational fishing groups that care more about the fish resources than their egos. We do have a bonafide coalition of commercial and recreational interests who agree on minor changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act and not to fight over allocation and gear types until precise science is on the table.

We have visited Senators from Massachusetts to the shores of the west coast and Alaska. We deliver our strong message to members of Congress in a courteous, correct and concise manner. SFA's team makes their presentation quickly, and then spends most of the time in their offices listening to the Senators, Congressman and staff. They are the ones we go to hear, not ourselves. SFA makes its points, asks for what needs to be done on its part then leaves their office. The SFA team is proud to work with Rick Marks, who many of you have met before and whose reputation for honesty and supplying correct information is a door opener anywhere on Capitol Hill.

SFA will be in DC often in the coming year, as Congress moves to reauthorize the Magnuson Stevens Act. Kudos to all SFA members who made trips to DC this year, but a special thanks to Sherri McCoy, Jeanna and Mike Merrifield and Laurilee Thompson.

SFA began this year pushing for flexibility for the councils and transparency and honest stock assessments from NOAA as the number one goal to get our fisheries back.

We pleaded for cooperative research with both the state and federal government. The Florida Fish & Wildlife responded by actively managing the tagging and measuring of red snapper off the northeast coast of Florida. NOAA is still not working with us on cooperative research. The Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, in conjunction with SFA and Ocean Trust, has spent over \$20,000 on the red snapper tagging project. The participating captains contribute at least \$500 per trip by charging a greatly reduced fee. The commercial and charter boat fishermen participating with FWC charge the Foundation \$1,000 per all day trip. This is a strong commitment to develop the empirical data needed for precise red snapper stock assessment science.

SFA will continue to reach out to NOAA Science Center, hoping to eventually convince them to use our vessels and our skills in cooperative research projects. Non-cooperation in joint scientific research with the commercial and recreational fishing industry is an issue that will be discussed with the General Accounting Office (GAO) by industry spokespersons.

The Red Snapper ban in the South Atlantic has been in effect for over two years. In the Gulf of Mexico, where fishing in the federal waters will be limited to as few as nine days off is the same as a ban for 356 days per year. A fishing ban is not a management program. In the South Atlantic we consider it as punishment enacted on the fishing industry by a 7 to 6 political vote.

The state fish and wildlife commissions are so irritated with federal management of red snapper that four of the five governors in the Gulf of Mexico sent a letter asking Congress to give authority over fish to the states out to 200 miles. There are other bills in Congress escalating state authority over federal waters, but they have a long way to go before enactment and implementation. The issue of state preemption of federal fish resources will be settled by a federal judge should any of these bills pass.

There is a bill in the Louisiana legislature that prohibits the sale of red snapper by anyone in the state of Louisiana. No restaurant, retail, wholesale or angler sale of red snapper is allowed. It's a silly bill that's aimed at NOAA that is so at odds with the US Commerce Clause that a federal judge would probably toss it out the first day it is heard in federal court.

SFA does not understand why a well-informed state senator wants to harm so many businesses and punish the tourists who come to New Orleans to eat red snapper. The red snapper management system is a dilemma. SFA believes the only way to get out is through honest, transparent stock assessments and more flexibility for the councils. "Science will set us free" is SFA's motto.

SFA joined the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) as an associate member to work with this outstanding organization on fisheries issues impacting their members. FRLA supports honest fish species labeling and honest net weight the same as SFA. They want to serve fresh domestically harvested reef species to their millions of customers. They have a big financial stake in losing access to fresh fish if they are reallocated to the anglers.

SFA's team recently participated in the National Restaurant Association Public Affairs Conference in DC. We made many new friends. They could not believe there were organizations that want to ban commercial fishing. Such action prevents their customers from sharing in the publicly owned marine resources.

This has been a year of ups and downs. The ups included increase in fish quotas for yellowtail snapper, tilefish and black sea bass. The downs were the worst stone crab season in memory and the continuing decline in number of full-time fishermen, commercial fishing boats and shore side facilities.

The SFA/East Coast Fisheries Section under the leadership Chairman Jimmy Hull was super active this past year participating in meetings of the management councils, SEDAR meetings and webinars. It is well served not only by the members of the Section, but by the great work of their consultants Rusty Hudson and Dr. Peter Barile. "

For the 49th year in a row, thanks to Bob Jones for his steady hand on the tiller. We also thank Malinda Jones, Sarah Harris and Laurie Stevens for all the hard work they do on behalf of a culture worth saving.

Remember, that tonight's silent Auction and Peter Jarvis-led live auction, make it possible for SFA to be proactive.

Thank you for being here. Now let's go to work.

Gerald Pack, President