

A CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR FLORIDA

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Salt water sports fishing is a tremendous industry in Florida. \$888,000,000.00 was spent in Florida last year for fishing and hunting. Of this amount \$625,000,000.00 was for salt water sports fishing. 10 times more money was spent on salt water sports fishing than on all other spectator sports. Dog racing in Florida last year netted only \$4,454,892.69; horse racing \$8,776,335.; Jai-Alai was \$311,179.32, making a total of \$13,542,407.27 for racing.

The Florida Wildlife Federation has compiled these figures from a statewide survey. Just for comparison the lumber industry amounted to \$65,285,000.00; derived from minerals, \$21,928,362.00; fruits and vegetables \$248,709,580.00; all livestock and poultry \$91,765,000.00 and citrus canning \$42,580,552.00, making a total of \$473,268,464.00. Salt water fishing amounted to \$251,731,536.00 more than these important industries together.

Commercial fishermen received \$35,863,995.77 for their catch last year. In St. Petersburg the Tarpon Round-up netted \$5,500,000.00; Miami derived \$10,000,000 from salt water sports fishing; Jacksonville \$2,000,000.00, and West Palm Beach \$3,276,000.00. A recent survey showed that approximately \$400,000,000.00 is derived annually from salt water fishing tournaments in the state.

We cannot allow a close to a billion dollar a year industry slip through our fingers by allowing the commercial fishermen to drag our shoreline and wantonly destroy our game fish. The Federation decided to do something about our fast diminishing marine resources before the last election by presenting candidates for high offices with a questionnaire, one of the questions being, "Do you favor and will you support a constitutional amendment placing the management, restoration, conservation and regulation of our salt water resources under a constitutionally created commission?" The Governor elect and many other candidates answered in the affirmative showing that they are heartily in favor of the program.

A chart outlining a proposed salt water conservation division similar to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has been prepared. The proposed Commission would function under five commissioners with a Director under whom the various law enforcement and administrative departments would function. This plan will be presented by the Federation at the next session of the legislature.