

Priorities for Domestic Management and Conservation

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First of all, I wish to thank the GCFI for inviting the Southeastern Fisheries Association to be represented on this panel. Management and conservation have been our main interests since SFA was founded in 1952. As a panel member, I was invited to express my views on the priorities for and problems concerned with domestic conservation and management.

The first priority is to protect the estuaries from human and industrial waste and from indiscriminate landfill and bulkhead programs. I think everyone can agree on this and will support it the same as motherhood, the flag and good ole apple pie. And though everyone in this room is willing to pay for this protection, I dare say there are still those who see nothing wrong in allowing sewage to be pumped just offshore of some of our major cities or in filling the bays to build condominiums.

The second priority is to enact laws that will protect the resources from over-production and, at the same time, kill laws that are aimed at helping one part of the country at the expense of another part, such as the proposed 200-mile bill currently pending in Congress. I believe that, except for tuna, 75% of all fishery products landed in the U.S., produced by domestic fishermen, are produced within 12 miles of shore. Of the amount caught outside 12 miles by U.S. fishermen, about one-third is shrimp. The point I'm trying to make is that most of our fisheries are already protected by the 12-mile limit.

This is not to say that problems don't exist in New England or the West Coast and Alaska, for they surely do. But, in our opinion, these problems can best be solved through bilateral and multilateral agreements, as are currently in effect, plus a decision from the Law of the Sea Conference under the auspices of the United Nations. The 200-mile battle has been fought for years. There will probably be questions later on so I will leave this subject for now.

An entity that cannot be ignored in this Conservation and Management Symposium is the commercial fisherman himself for, after all, here is the person who provides seafood for millions of people to enjoy. Protect the commercial fisherman by providing governmental assistance in those areas in which he cannot provide it for himself. Protect him by such proven programs as marketing and consumer education as well as biological projects. Protect him from institutional barriers put on him by state legislatures strictly for political purposes. Protect him from those well-intentioned souls who honestly feel a good conservation program is one that prohibits the use of all types of nets. And finally, protect

him from that bureaucrat who feels profit-making is not in keeping with the American way of life and from those rule-makers who have never had to meet a payroll.

Okay, we want to protect the resource and the fishermen, but can the states do it, or must the federal government step in? We haven't made up our minds yet. We do know of many good state programs but we also know of many bad ones. Probably one of the areas needing federal attention is in the judicial field. So often fisheries violations are treated insignificantly, and the small fines levied are such that there is no deterrent whatsoever. If the fine for undersized crawfish is \$25, it's worth a gamble to bring in 100 lbs. at \$3 per pound and chance getting caught.

I am most familiar with what has happened here in Florida and, on more than one occasion, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources and I have called for an investigation by the Governor's office when it became obvious that the judge in a particular county was not being fair. States are also more liable to pass a law based on politics rather than scientific data because of personalities involved. We feel that the federal government would be less likely to do that. Conversely, in those gray areas that surely will arise in the management of any resource, we feel that the state would be more sympathetic than the "Feds." This will weigh strongly when a position is taken by our Association.

To effectively manage many of our resources, it will become more and more important to work on a multi-state approach. If, for example, you are trying to protect kingfish with mesh sizes or closed areas, it would make much more sense to have the same regulations in all the states the animal passes through. The same can be said for shrimp resources, which are found in more than one state, and for other migratory species.

While we are not saying that the federal government should take over the management of our marine resources, they should have input. The federal government has a giant stake in all the fisheries through grants given to the states, as well as their Sea Grant programs, which are becoming better and better each passing year.

In conclusion, I would like to thank GCFI for allowing us a few minutes to briefly touch on some complex problems and to pledge the cooperation of the Southeastern Fisheries Association in working with all user groups for the protection and proper management of our fisheries resources. There is more than enough room for everyone if everyone is dedicated to the principle of sound and equitable management.