

November Newsletter

Just a note to let you know we are still alive and kicking. We all know shrimp prices “suck” but hopefully through the hard work we’ve done over the past year we may soon see a glimmer of hope. As you know, our main focus has been on price and economic survival. The 3 main areas we’ve been working in have been to do something about the amount of imports coming in, to improve the marketing for our own product, and to get a little financial relief.

In marketing, you will soon be hearing a lot more about the upcoming Georgia Shrimp Certification Program. For those of you who haven’t heard of the program, it is a marketing plan that creates a logo and certification system for the Georgia shrimp industry which will guarantee that consumers are getting real Georgia shrimp instead of imports or any other shrimp.

How many of you have been to a restaurant and asked if the shrimp were local and got the answer “Sure they are.”, all along knowing full well the shrimp were imports? This program will let restaurants, seafood markets and grocery stores proudly sell our Georgia Shrimp product while educating the public that there is a difference between pond-raised, imported shrimp and wild, ocean-caught, sweet Georgia shrimp.

Since we started this program we have met with fishermen, dock owners, processors and many other specialists to study the quality issues and prepare some guidelines as to what will qualify as a Georgia Shrimp. We have also met with restaurant and foodservice industry people who have given us very positive input on the program.

On the import issue, we have been working with Southern Shrimp Alliance (mainly Elaine Knight and Mike Dubberly) on getting the trade petitions filed as soon as possible. You may have received or seen a one page questionnaire from the law firm of Dewey/Ballentine. This is to update your landings and renew your commitment in this battle. These forms will determine the final number of participants in the petition. There is also a request for money for the Southern Shrimp Alliance to pay for filing this petition. We need to honor our commitment to fighting these countries and their unfair trade practices. It is important to remember that federal assistance money was made

available to us through the expensive lobbying of the Southern Shrimp Alliance. Without their efforts, we would not have gotten this money.

Now, speaking of that money, I know this is the section you are most interested in. September 30th was the last day to get your assistance application in. As of then, there were 163 boats, 39 businesses, and 90 crew applications submitted. They are being reviewed now and if there are any questions or rejections in your application you will be contacted by the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center. They are shooting for a mid November check dispersal. If you haven't heard anything, that is good news. If you have received some kind of notice requesting more information, get that back as soon as possible.

In other business, we have also received a \$24,000 grant from the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation to go into the classroom with a TED & BRD display and presentation. The purpose is to educate future generations and counteract the negative press perspective on TED & BRD issues to middle and high school students. This will show them we have done more to save the turtles than anyone else. This program will fund twenty-five visits to schools in Georgia and may become a pilot program to go nationwide. If anyone is interested in participating in this program contact the Georgia Shrimp Association.

We are also updating the Association's website through Georgia Southern University. Our goal is to be able to put these newsletters on the website along with other information about what's going on in our industry in order to keep you better informed. Look for us at www.georgiashrimp.org. This will help us become more organized. We must be more organized. So this is **something you can do right now**. We need your email addresses. Call us at 912-437-8188 and leave us a message with your email address OR just tell us you don't have email and update your mailing address. Thank you.

So give us some time, as I have told a number of fishermen, "We can't undo in a couple of months that which we have ignored for twenty years."

Though you may not see us, the Georgia Shrimp Association is working for the Georgia shrimp industry daily, but we cannot do it without your support, both physically and financially, so contact your local board member and get involved.

Hang in there,

John Wallace