



THE FISHIN' INSIDER

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Under that catch all header “Of all the things I’ve lost I miss my mind the most” and a good proofer, I’d like to take the opportunity to apologize to Phil Calo of Osprey Charters cuz last week we kinda screwed the pooch in a synopsis of his remarks at a Gulf Council hearing. The piece should’ve read:

Phil Calo, Osprey Charters: The problem we have with your regulations is that you’re ignoring the fact that the Texas fishery is far different than the fishery in Florida. We are a deep-water fishery. In the wintertime about the only species we can consistently target is red snapper and amberjack. But to get to the amberjack you have to get through the snapper, so you’re forcing us to kill and discard a huge amount of red snapper. My customers get mad at us because of the waste of the resource and all we can do is point our fingers at some phantom regulators. My boats do well in the spring, summer and early fall because we can drift fish for kings, tuna and anything else that shows up as well as bottom fish. But in the wintertime the only consistent action is on the bottom. In Florida they can fish for kings and tuna year round as well as dorado. I have boat payments to make as well as a weekly payroll. I like to keep my crews together but the way you guys are running things I can’t afford to, you guys are killing us.

So goes the snapper mess, which was begat back in the late nineties with some incredibly stupid regulations imposed by the National Marine Fisheries Service that closed the recreational red snapper season from November through March. At one

point the bureaucrats bumped the minimum size on the critters up to 18 inches which prompted Bobby Grumbles, with the support of the Recreational Fishing Alliance, to file a federal lawsuit in Corpus Christi. The suit was dismissed in the summer of 2001 by Judge Hayden Head for lack of proof because the justice department lawyers demanded that the rules of evidence be followed to the letter and a federally funded study by Texas A&M on snapper mortality was thrown out. The study became available and was presented to the court the proverbial day late. The results showed conclusively that snapper hauled up in over ninety feet of water that had developed swim bladders or snapper over about thirteen inches had a mortality rate of over ninety- percent. The judge indicated that he was royally pissed at the government’s demands that the study be excluded from evidence because it showed up a day late. It could’ve been allowed but they insisted that the rules be followed to the letter.

The next step in this mess is another lawsuit in Judge Head’s court, which is being contemplated as I write this cuz the fed’s continue to show no interest in alleviating the problem they’ve caused the fishermen of Texas. An interesting suggestion has come up regarding the economic damage these regs have caused the coastal communities along the Texas coast. How would a court view a class action lawsuit by those effected to recover damages from the fed’s? This could be an interesting spring, summer and fall because if he chooses, Judge Head could take control of the federally managed snapper fishery.

We welcome your fishin’ photos. Drop them by 2600 Padre Boulevard on the Island, or mail them to I.B. Hooked, c/o Coastal Current Weekly, P.O.Box 2429, South Padre Island, Texas 78597. Be sure to include the name of the angler, weight and type of fish, where caught, and name of boat if applicable. Photos with SASE will be returned.