

the most—where he is most sensitive—in his hip pocket—by seeing that he pays the penalty in court for his careless and filthy littering habits.

## FRESH WATER COMMERCIAL FISHING AS VIEWED BY THE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION MISSISSIPPI GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

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From the beginning of time the human race has depended upon the waters of the earth for a major source of its food supply. In the very beginning of creation, the Divine Creator, in the first Book of Moses, called Genesis, commanded that the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and God blessed them saying, "be fruitful, and multiply and fill the waters in the seas".

One of man's earliest occupations was commercial fishing; it most certainly dates back to the time of Christ, for he chose for one of his disciples a commercial fisherman. One has to but turn the pages of history and observe the disagreements and tribal wars that have been fought over fishing waters and rights to properly judge the effects that commercial fishing has had on our present day civilization.

A large amount of many nation's economy is tied up with the commercial fishing industry, but what this paper would like to deal with is not the salt water arm of commercial fishing, but the far less important and much smaller portions of the industry. The fresh water producer and his contribution to the economy of the State of Mississippi.

At the very best, commercial fishing is a highly controversial subject any time the sport fisherman and the commercial interest come into contact with each other. The sport fisherman, if he fails at any time of the year to fill his daily bag limit, tends to blame that gill net or seine that he saw, or someone else saw operating last year or last week. On the other hand, the commercial operator (blames in his words) (the old sportsmen) or probably in most cases, that dirty game warden in his County for any new Laws or regulations or increase in the price of commercial fishing licenses. Law enforcement is obviously caught in the middle.

The Magnolia State is bountifully blessed with the fresh water fishing, bordered on the West by the Mighty Mississippi River, laced with numerous smaller tributaries, studded with five major Reservoirs and 20 State owned lakes, all teeming with Black Bass, Crappie, Bream and Striped Bass, truly a sport fisherman's paradise; therefor, the primary object of law enforcement should be to bring about an understanding between all interested parties concerning the role commercial fishing plays in the overall control of rough fish population in the public waters of the State.

This necessary step is being taken at the present by the media of newspaper, radio, television and sportsmen's clubs that to maintain and keep the excellent sport fishing that is enjoyed by all, it is necessary that the commercial operator be allowed to continue to remove the 9½ million pounds of rough fish that is annually removed from the fresh waters of the State of Mississippi by nets each year.

All of our law enforcement personnel attend an In-Service Training Class on commercial fishing at the Law Enforcement Training Academy in Rankin County. This Academy is rated as one of the top training centers in the Nation. All new class personnel are instructed on how to check on all types of commercial fishing violations including how to measure the mesh size in nets, checking of license and equipment tags; how to control the illegal use of outlawed equipment and the taking of game fish by unlawful methods. How to find hidden nets and other outlawed equipment, and most important, what to do after an illegal device has been found, and the proper way to sell commercial fishing licenses.

The Division must be on its toes to properly sell the public on its ability to control commercial fishing interests in the State and thereby obtain the support from the public that is so necessary for any conservation program. Another aspect of commercial fishing that is of interest to the Law Enforcement Division is the fact that the actual field work performed by the Division in the control of commercial fishing is of the highest type training that new Game Warden personnel could obtain any where, any time. New personnel get efficient enough to meet and handle a professional in his own environment. We feel that he has taken a long step in making the grade of Warden one. We also find that there is no faster way for a rookie Game Warden to become familiar with Court Room procedure and opposing counsel than to apprehend a few commercial fishing violations.

A percentage breakdown on contested cases would probably be about five to the hundred in sport fishing, but on commercial cases it is another story altogether. At least fifty percent of all commercial cases will be contested in Court, if for no other reason, in the hopes that he might draw as one of his Jury men, one that might be sympathetic to his cause.

The Division holds that this active participation in the prosecution of the violator by the Game Warden will have a certain influence in the molding of a future first-rate conservation officer, and experience that he will find invaluable for as long as one stays with the Department.

Some of the best Fisheries Biologist warn that with out rough fish removal by the use of nets, our lakes would become unbalanced to the point where good sport fishing would be impossible, and some form of chemical removal would have to, in the end, be employed. We are of the opinion that the waters of the Mississippi, as well as the whole Nation, already carry too much pesticides and pollution, without adding any chemical for rough fish removal.

A project with such magnitude will carry with it a price tag that's in itself prohibitive, and last but not least, the fact that all species of fish would most certainly be affected by an eradication program. For these reasons, and the fact that the State economy receives one and a half million dollars annually from the fresh water fishing industry.

We of the Law Enforcement Division of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission certainly believe that for some time to come there will be a worthwhile place for law abiding, rule observing commercial fresh water fishing in the Magnolia State.

Thank You.