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Statement on the Sustainability of U.S. Wild-Caught Shrimp

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) is committed to sustainable management of commercial and recreational fisheries and the preservation of marine ecosystems. U.S. shrimpers harvest America's favorite seafood from sustainable stocks and use fishing gear that reduces the impact on the marine environments. The traditional way of life known by generations of shrimping families depends on healthy oceans. We are committed to working with government, academic, and environmental groups to ensure that the oceans are managed properly for future generations.

U.S. wild-caught shrimp is a renewable resource harvested from nature. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) verifies year after year that the U.S. shrimp stocks are sustainable. More than ten state, regional, and federal regulatory bodies ensure the health of the shrimp stocks and their ecosystems. Permanent area closures prevent shrimping in sensitive marine habitat and time-area closures preserve marine estuaries.

For more than thirty years, U.S. shrimpers have provided the same sustainable volume of shrimp. At the same time, shrimpers have dramatically reduced their impact on the environment. For example, U.S. shrimpers developed turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in the 1990s that allow 97% of turtles to swim free of shrimp nets. To reduce further accidental catches of non-target species, we use bycatch reduction devices (BRDs). Despite the fact that our bycatch ratios are seventy to ninety percent below worldwide shrimp fisheries, U.S. shrimpers continually strive to improve our practices and the health of the marine ecosystems.

SSA believes more can be done to improve the health of our marine environments. U.S. shrimpers are part of the largest U.S. wetland restoration project to restore vital estuaries and an award-winning project that is reviving the Kemp Ridley's sea turtle population from near extinction. We support greater pollution control, stronger regulations for coastal development, and increased management of the ballooning recreational fisheries.

Seafood consumers can also have a role in preserving the oceans by choosing seafood that is harvested or farmed in a sustainable manner. Nearly 90% of the shrimp consumed in the United States is imported and does not have to abide by strict U.S. environmental regulations for harvesting or farming shrimp. Consumers should look for country of origin labeling at grocery stores and ask about the source of their seafood at restaurants.

SSA is an alliance of the U.S. warm water wild shrimp fishery from eight states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. SSA represents thousands of vessel owners and operators, employees, seafood processors, as well as individuals, and businesses in communities whose economies are dependent on the continued viability of the domestic warm water shrimp fisheries.