



The Shrimp e-Advocate

Lawsuit Information

MAY 14, 2010

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) is a non-profit alliance of members of the U.S. shrimp industry in eight states committed to preventing the continued deterioration of America's shrimp industry and to ensuring the industry's future viability. SSA serves as the national voice for the shrimp fishermen and processors in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas.

Quick Links

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Important Information Regarding Potential Class Action Lawsuits Related to Gulf Oil Spill

Since shortly after the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig and the resulting oil spill that has affected the shrimp fishery in the Gulf of Mexico, members of the shrimp industry have been encouraged to sign up for legal representation related to potential claims arising from the oil spill. The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) recognizes that this catastrophic event and resulting closures of certain areas of the Gulf to the shrimp fishery have caused a great deal of anxiety for members who, as a result, may feel extra pressure to sign up for legal representation.

While SSA does not provide legal advice to its membership regarding individual legal claims, we believe it is important to caution our members to not rush to sign up for any legal representation until the time is appropriate. Importantly, there does not appear to be a need to rush to sign up with any particular lawyer at this time. The extent of the damages, in terms of both immediate income loss to members of the industry and long-term effects on the fishery, will not be known for quite some time. Further, the damages suffered by one segment of the seafood industry may be different than those suffered by another segment of the industry. For example, the damage to the shrimp industry may be different than the damage to the oyster or crab industries. A lawyer representing individuals in one segment of the industry may not be able to fully defend the interests of individuals in another segment of the industry, particularly if there is a limited amount of payments that will be made.

Thus, the information available for anyone in the industry seeking to make a sound decision about pursuing legal relief is extremely limited. **Moreover, no individual will preclude his or her right to seek relief at some later time by not signing up for representation immediately.**

Individuals may feel pressured by lawyers to sign up for representation immediately, however, such immediate decision-making may be in the best interest of the lawyers, but not in the best interest of industry

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members. In general, lawyers are currently seeking to position themselves as representing a large number of potential claimants both for purposes of potential legal actions and, more immediately, for potential discussions with companies involved in the oil spill regarding settlement that would not require litigation. **As such, lawyers may attempt to reach early settlements on behalf of their clients before a full understanding of the damages is known. Individuals should be wary of such early settlements because they may be better for the defendants and the plaintiff's lawyers than for the actual plaintiffs (fishermen).**

In addition to being cautious about signing up for legal representation until the full extent of the damages is known, individuals may want to contact their state industry organizations before doing so. The effects of the oil spill on the industry likely will vary from state to state, as will the opportunities for legal representation. **Thus, it is important to get as much information as possible from your state association before contracting for legal representation.**

As previously emphasized, it is still too early for SSA or anyone to know the extent of the damages to the industry and, therefore, what remedies are appropriate. Further, the damages caused by the oil spill may differ from state to state. **Thus, at this time SSA does not anticipate that it will file a lawsuit.** Instead, SSA believes it can best serve its members by continuing to closely monitor the situation in the Gulf, maintaining communication with government officials and others involved in the cleanup effort, and keeping its members apprised of any legal or other developments. SSA is committed to doing everything it can to protect the Gulf, the shrimping industry, and the men and women who rely on the industry for their livelihood.

Lastly, we urge all individuals to make sure they have a full understanding of the terms of legal representation before signing up with any lawyer. To that end, we have prepared a list of questions one should ask about any contract for legal representation, which is available at the following link: <http://www.shrimpalliance.com/Press%20Releases/5-6-10%20Important%20information%20about%20contracts.pdf>.