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Fla. fisherman penalized for shark finning

By news-press.com

Originally posted on November 15, 2006

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has issued a \$68,000 civil penalty and a 100-day permit sanction to the owner and operator of the fishing vessel Sea Angel for multiple violations of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

According to a NOAA release, On May 18, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officers, operating under a Cooperative Enforcement Agreement with NOAA Fisheries Service Office for Law Enforcement, conducted a dockside inspection of the fishing vessel Sea Angel in Port Canaveral. Onboard the vessel they discovered fins of large coastal sharks. The fishing season for large coastal sharks had already ended. Accordingly, the FWC officers contacted NOAA special agents, who initiated an investigation. Subsequently, the agents seized 91 pounds of shark fins and an undersized swordfish carcass.

NOAA's Office for Law Enforcement utilized a shark fin expert to sort and identify the fins by species. Additionally, OLE special agents collected tissue samples which were submitted to Nova Southeastern University's Guy Harvey Research Institute in Fort Lauderdale for DNA analysis. This analysis confirmed that some of the fins seized were also prohibited shark species, specifically from dusky and night sharks.

"With the help of our enforcement partners and with the use of technology such as DNA analysis, we were able to catch these violators," said special agent Richard Chesler. "The destructive practice of illegal shark finning is a serious threat to sustainability of sharks in our oceans."

The Notice of Violation and Assessment and Notice of Permit Sanction issued to the owner of the Sea Angel, Fish Hunters, Inc., and operator Frank Davis III, list multiple counts of Magnuson-Stevens Act violations. These violations include shark finning, possession of large coastal sharks during a closure, possession of prohibited sharks, possession of undersized swordfish, and operating a vessel without a dolphin/wahoo operator permit.

The owner and operator have 30 days to request a hearing before an administrative law judge.

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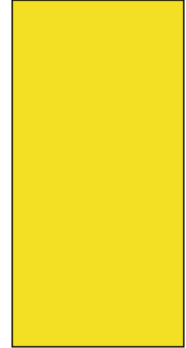
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