

Mr. Tony Coppa
P.O. Box 2153
Jupiter, Florida 33468-2153

May 10, 2012

Mr. David Cupka, Chairman
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
N. Charleston, SC 29405

Re: Golden Crab Amendment 6 & Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ), Expression of Interest

Dear Mr. Cupka,

I have spent my entire life as a commercial fisherman and I am very concerned about the methodology and rationale being used by the Council to implement a catch shares program in the golden crab fishery. Over the course of the past eighteen months I have invested more than \$500,000 in a permit and vessel for the sole purpose of fishing golden crab on a full time basis. In spite of being an active participant with landings in excess of 30,000 pounds for the first three months of 2012 alone, the Council has set control dates and landings requirements prohibiting me from voting on an "Expression of Interest" in an IFQ program!

At the Council's March meeting in Savannah there was widespread opposition to catch shares and four of the seven permit holders including myself made it clear we did not want a catch share program in the golden crab fishery. Please ask yourself,

- Why would we limit ourselves to ridiculously low quotas in what is clearly a very healthy and growth oriented fishery?
- Why would we put ourselves in a position of having to lease or buy shares to maintain or grow our businesses when not even half of the annual 2 million pound quota has been caught in any fishing season by all the permit holders combined?
- Why would we support giving 49% of that quota to just one fisherman?

Mr. Cupka, what justification does the Council possibly have for a catch shares program in the golden crab fishery? It most certainly is not over-capitalized; there are no gear conflicts; with three fishing zones - no user conflicts and there is no indication golden crab are undergoing over-fishing or over-fished. All of the permit holders are experienced fishermen, HAPC's are well-defined and modern electronics make it possible for fishermen to engage the profession in an environmentally responsible fashion.

I'm also not pleased with the direction being taken by the Advisory Panel and have voiced my opposition. I think it is very heavily weighted toward catch shares to the extreme benefit of only a few persons and at great cost to the rest of us. Our representative voice on the AP was not re-appointed to the panel at the end of his term and it seems as though we have been told one thing and the Council is being told another by the AP regarding support for catch shares.

I've got a half a million dollars invested here and my livelihood at stake and I urge you Mr. Cupka and the Council to drop any consideration of a catch shares program in the golden crab fishery.

Sincerely,

Tony Coppa

Tony Coppa
Permit GC-3

C: Con. Walter Jones
Con. Steve Southerland
Mr. Todd Zinser, Inspector General, U.S. Dept. of Commerce
Mr. Robert Mahood, Executive Director, SAFMC
Dr. Roy Crabtree, Regional Administrator, NMFS/SERO