

Sutton, Kaitlyn

From: capttommes@aol.com
Sent: Thursday, November 21, 2019 9:39 AM
To: Sutton, Kaitlyn
Subject: Clean Florida Water

Dear Kaitlyn Sutton

November 19, 2019

I wrote this letter to Rep. Brian Mast but it might help what you are doing.

I am an old salt involved with boating, fishing and diving for the past 50 +years. In 1978 I sailed through Stuart and was totally impressed with the beautiful clear turquoise water. You could see the bottom even at the old Roosevelt bridge 15ft down. At that time Stuart area was considered the top fishing spot in Florida. I decided that when I retire, this is where I want to settle. By the time I did retire and moved to Stuart, the water turned brown, toxic, and visibility is less than 6 inches. In a short 40 years, I have seen a drastic decline in our fish population and other marine creatures and a total devastation of our water quality.

The marine environment in our coastal waters has change drastically in the past 40 to 50 years, and it has affected our health, property values and devastated business that depend on our water to make a living. Finally, we have a politician who is true to his word and making a major effort to clean up this mess. **Thank you! We all thank you!**

I do keep up with your efforts about discharge, retention ponds, cutting down on fertilizers and pesticides, restricting fishing quotas. There is one thing I do not hear that needs to be addressed.

Nature needs to be in balance, and it will take care of itself. We are dumping pollutions and toxins in our water that must be stopped. We are taking fish and vertebrates out at a phenomenal rate, but we are not putting anything back. Just like the forest industry in the past when they were striping the mountains of trees and did not re plant. We are doing the same thing in our ocean and coastal waters.

The foundation of our marine eco system is the bottom of the food chain. If there is no food for the predators, they will die out. **That is what happened!**

Not that far back in the 60s and 70s, in Biscayne Bay when the sun was going down you could hear hundreds of mullets jumping being chased by Jacks or Barracudas. That is not happening anymore. At Dinner Key Marina, people use to come down to the docks with a lantern, sit at the dock and with a net scoop shrimp out of the water filling their coolers. That is all gone. Even at the early seventies in the flats, Hawks Chanel and Bear Cut was crawling with conch. They are all gone. In the seventies I have seen huge number of Bay Scallops in Biscayne Bay. I have not seen a live one in 30 years.

Mullet, shrimp, conch, scallops are on the bottom of the food chain and when you wipe them out, you killed the whole eco system. What is interesting is, these creatures lay eggs by the millions, and they **all eat algae**, even blue/green algae, eat decay mater on the bottom and filter the water. They clean the plants and coral of organic matter. They are our coastal cleanup crew and we are wiping them out. Fish in nurseries in the mangroves depend on this food source to strive.

Barracudas, in the mangroves and reefs use to be so plentiful that they were a nuisance. Going out to the ocean deep sea fishing we did not put our lures in the water till we were in deep water. Now I can drag a large shiny spoon across the reef and no cuda. They were not fished out by commercial or sport fishing! They died out when they were immature because of lack of food.

My suggestion is: **it is not enough just to get the pollution out of the water, but we need to balance the marine eco system.** Once established they will clean and maintain the balance.

Unfortunately, the fishing industry still believes that it is their right to strip the ocean and they do not need to put anything back. I believe it should be their responsibility and to **their benefit** to restore the balance of our marine eco system. They should be funding hatcheries starting from eggs and larva to open enclosed estuaries that has tied flow and you could be raising all four species at the same time. (Not tanks) Mullet on the surface, scallops, conchs and shrimp cleaning the bottom. Have these natural estuaries along the coast, and when the crop matures enough to survive in the open environment, release them. This could be a good source of jobs for the commercial fishermen who can not make a living fishing anymore. This would be a win-win for the whole community.

I am impressed by all the work you are doing and hope before I get too old, I will see clean water in the St. Lucie River. I have faith in you and if anyone can do it, I believe you can. Our children depend on us, we screwed this up the first place!

Sincerely yours
Thomas Mestrits

Capttommes@aol.com