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**TORTUGAS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE VIOLATION BRINGS \$20,000  
PENALTY: NOAA Cites Owner and Operator of Shrimp Trawler**

Attorneys for the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have issued a \$20,000 civil penalty in the case of a vessel cited for illegal shrimp trawling in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's protected Tortugas Ecological Reserve last December.

Christine Ho of Abbeville, La., owner of the Fishing Vessel Miss Christine V, and vessel captain Cu T. Nguyen of Port Arthur, Texas, face a combined penalty in the incident. The Coast Guard vessel Nantucket cited the Miss Christine V on Dec. 16, 2002. The Nantucket escorted the Miss Christine V to Key West, where its catch of 1,117 lbs. of pink shrimp was seized and sold by a NOAA agent. The \$1,733.38 proceeds from the sale remain in escrow pending settlement of the case.

Five days previously, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officers had cited the Miss Christine V for illegal shrimp trawling inside the Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary, a cooperative closure between the State of Florida and the Department of Commerce.

"Once again, we thank the United States Coast Guard for helping to provide the effective enforcement that is critical to the success of the Tortugas Ecological Reserve," said Sanctuary Superintendent Billy Causey. "Law-abiding commercial and recreational fishermen, who are by far the majority, deserve to know that those who violate the reserve's protections will pay the price."

The Tortugas Ecological Reserve, established in 2001, protects 151 square nautical miles of deep coral reefs and other essential habitat for fish and other marine life. The reserve is the largest of the sanctuary's network of 24 "no-take" areas set aside to protect habitat and preserve the diversity of marine life in the coral reef ecosystem of the Florida Keys.

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, 13 national marine sanctuaries encompass more than 18,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources. In addition, the NMSP is conducting a sanctuary designation process to

incorporate the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve into the national sanctuary system.

NOAA National Ocean Service (NOAA Oceans and Coasts) manages the National Marine Sanctuary Program and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. NOAA Oceans and Coasts balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the internet:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Oceans and Coasts - <http://www.nos.noaa.gov>

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary - <http://www.fknms.nos.noaa.gov>

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