



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Georgia and Alabama Game Wardens Join NOAA in Illegal Fish Sales Bust

After a 2-year joint investigation conducted by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Law Enforcement, Georgia's Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division, and Alabama's Department of Natural Resources Marine Resources Division and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, on September 23, 2022, Cuong D. Bui of Georgia, was sentenced to five years of probation, a \$25,000 fine, and 300 hours of community service for illegally buying and selling fish across state lines. Undercover agents and investigators uncovered 2,434 pounds of illegal fish purchased and transported across three different states—a violation of the [Lacey Act](#).

During his probation, he is banned from the seafood industry with limited exceptions. Bui pled guilty in June 2022 to illegally purchasing and selling recreationally caught snapper and king mackerel. This case was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Alabama and the Department of Justice's Environmental Crimes Section.

"It is our job to protect honest fishermen and good actors and those who break the rules will be held accountable," said Manny Antonaras, Assistant Director of NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, Southeast Division. "This case demonstrates the importance of our close collaboration with state partners, creative undercover operations, and diligent investigative work."

Through an undercover operation, officers discovered that Mr. Bui would travel from Georgia through Florida to Alabama to purchase fish illegally at interstate parking lots. He also made illegal purchases at his business in Georgia. In total, Mr. Bui illegally purchased more than \$14,000 worth of fish, while also failing to comply with state laws and health codes. Aware of his illegal activity, Mr. Bui regularly changed the meeting locations of his illegal fish purchases. He even concocted fake stories to deceive federal and state agents. Mr. Bui instructed the undercover agents to lie if they were stopped by enforcement on the way to sell their illegal catch. He told them to say that they were headed to a large birthday party for family and friends. "If you tell them that, they won't say nothing ... Good luck, try to catch a lot for me," said Bui.

When individuals illegally purchase and sell commercial quantities of fish, they harm the fishery. They also disadvantage honest fishermen who invest significant time and money into following the rules. Strict possession limits, reporting requirements, and other rules ensure that fish populations are healthy and accessible to all fishermen. Had it continued, Mr. Bui's illegal operation would have posed significant risks to the successful management of the fishery and harmed the livelihoods of honest fishermen.

To [report](#) possible illegal activity, contact NOAA's Enforcement Hotline at (800) 853-1964.

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