

Southern Skin Diver Supply



*Founded 1953
The Oldest in the South*

Alabama Historical Commission
Lee H. Warner
Executive Director
468 S. Perry St.
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900

November 13, 2000

Dear Dr. Warner:

I want to thank you, Tom Maher and Greg Rhinehart for meeting with myself and my friend, Erskine Mathis, yesterday at your office. We realize your time is very valuable and certainly do not want to waste your time. Erskine and I learned alot about what the new Underwater Cultural Resources Act does and what it is intended to do. We see mostly common ground, but myself and other divers, relic hunters and collectors will still have questions and problems with this act.

First of all, my disagreements are not personal. We like and appreciate all three of you and the jobs you do and do not intend any of these remarks to be an attack on you personally or professionally. I would like to speak frankly and tell you about our problems with this act. Perhaps some of them can be corrected. Perhaps parts of the act will have to be changed through the same process that created it. Anyway, let me tell you a little about what I think.

We believe the act that the legislature passed was not meant to stop individuals from looking for, finding and keeping old relics, bottles, coins, etc. that any person might find. Finders keepers is a tried and true tradition and there is nothing wrong with it. Furthermore, there is nothing wrong with being a treasure hunter.

In our opinion, the Historical Commission seems to be overreaching in authority over individuals in the state and ownership of lost or thrown away items in rivers or bays. Archaeologists seem to have too much authority over waters of Alabama and this was not intended by the legislature. The rules seem to act as if the state of Alabama owned everything underwater in the navigable rivers of the state. We do not think the legislature wanted to claim all underwater items, but instead wanted a very narrow intent, primarily shipwrecks and ancient underwater structures that might exist, and nothing more.

The state archaeologist, Tom Maher, seemed to be primarily interested in preserving any ancient Indian sites that might exist. Of course, we have no problem with

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