

GULF FISHERY NEWS

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GULF FISHERY NEWS is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council for persons interested in the Gulf's fishery resources. Editor: Peter Hood.

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COUNCIL APPROVES FEDERAL SHRIMP CRAFT PERMITS

At its January 2001 meeting, the Gulf Council approved sending Amendment 11 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Within the amendment, the Council approved the requirement that vessels and boats (craft) harvesting shrimp in the EEZ waters of the Gulf of Mexico must obtain a federal shrimp craft permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and is renewable annually. However, at this time, the Gulf

Council voted not to require shrimp vessel and boat operator permits.

The purpose for requiring permits is that mandatory vessel and boat permitting will give better estimates of the

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

March 26-29, 2001

Adam's Mark Hotel and Resort

64 South Water Street

Mobile, Alabama 36602



number of potentially active craft and participants. Current estimates of the number of shrimp vessels range from 3,000 to 7,000. In other commercial and for-hire fisheries operating in the Gulf, including the reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic fisheries, permits have been shown to be an effective means to monitor fishery participation. These data combined with logbook reporting, observer reports, and other surveys have provided managers with valuable information on effort, catch, bycatch, and other important parameters regarding these fisheries. Having a known universe of craft operating in the shrimp fishery will likely provide the same opportunities for scientists and managers to collect data on effort, catch, bycatch, and other important parameters of both targeted shrimp stocks, as well as bycatch species that may or may not be under separate management regimes. Without permits or a registration, the numbers of craft that could be operating in the shrimp fishery can only be estimated using the NMFS Shrimp Landings File (SLF), NMFS Vessel Operating Unit File (VOUF), or state license files.

In further action, the Gulf Council voted to prohibit the use of traps in the royal red shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and prohibit the possession of trap gear and royal red shrimp aboard a vessel (including not transferring royal red shrimp at sea except in the event of a vessel emergency). The royal red shrimp fishery in the Gulf has traditionally operated as a trawl fishery; however, a recent request to allow trap gear was considered and denied due to potential gear conflicts and the increased possibility of exceeding the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) as a result of this new effort. This prohibition on the use of traps was previously implemented through an emergency interim rule. The Council's action provides permanent prohibition on the future use of trap gear.

COUNCIL VOTES TO MAINTAIN THE TEXAS CLOSURE AREA FOR 2001 IN THE EEZ

After hearing a presentation by Dr. James Nance from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of a biological review of the 2000 Texas Closure, the Gulf Council at its January 2001 meeting voted to request that NMFS maintain the Texas closure area for 2001 in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The closure occurs from mid May to mid July for Texas and federal waters. The purpose of the closure is to protect juvenile shrimp

migrating from the bays to the Gulf of Mexico and allows the shrimp to grow to a larger more valuable size.

In reviewing catches and the affects of the Texas closure in 2000, Dr. Nance noted that the May to August brown shrimp production from nearshore Louisiana was approximately 21 million pounds in 2000 as opposed to the average of about 12 to 13 million pounds in previous years. Nearshore production in Texas for the May to August period was below average at about 4 million pounds. Offshore production for Louisiana was slightly lower than average; however, offshore production from Texas, particularly in July and August, was well above average at over 18 million pounds, the highest level since the Texas Closure in 1981.

The sizes of brown shrimp landed off Louisiana were similar to previous years, and were dominated



Brown Shrimp (*Penaeus aztecus*)

by shrimp >67 count per pound (count) from May through August. However, shrimp of larger sizes began to be distributed in the catches for July and August. Landings off Texas in May and June were low. When landings began to increase in July, the sizes were well distributed with especially good numbers of 31-40 and 51-57 count shrimp being landed. Only about 6% of the catch was >67 count.

Dr. Nance reported that with regard to catches by area, 75% of Louisiana's catch was landed in Louisiana while approximately 20% was landed in upper Texas ports. For catches from Texas, about 45% were landed in lower Texas ports, 30% in middle Texas ports, and the remainder in upper Texas ports and Louisiana.

White shrimp catches for 2000 were slightly above 1999 at around 800,000 pounds for both July and August. August was particularly good and was at the highest level since 1980. Over 50% of the catch were <20 count.

Dr. Nance concluded that: (1) environmental conditions were the dominant factors that influenced catch in Texas; (2) actual brown shrimp catches off Texas in 2000 were well above average; (3) brown shrimp size off Texas was above average with only about 6% being >67 count; (4) distribution of the brown shrimp catch was similar to previous years; (5) white shrimp catches were above average for July and August; and (6) the increase in yield (pounds) as a result of the Texas Closure was between 6 and 27 percent.

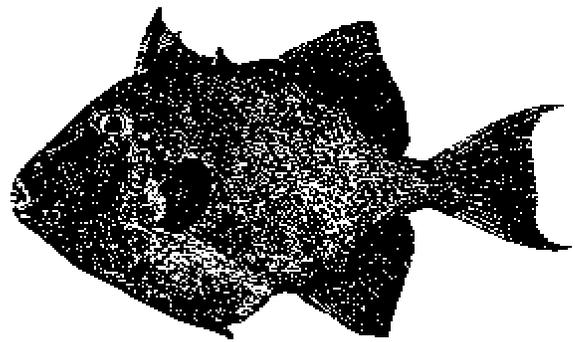
REVIEW OF DRAFT ARTIFICIAL REEF PLAN

At its January 2001 meeting, the Gulf Council heard an update summarizing the National Artificial Reef Plan (Plan) by Mr. Ron Lukens of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC). He noted that the National Fishing Enhancement Act of 1984 established artificial reef development as a national priority, designated the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the permitting and regulatory authority, and mandated that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) develop the Plan. Impetus for the Plan revision is due to an increasing amount of related activities, primarily regional planning through interstate commissions and development of state plans. In the spring of 1996, the three interstate Commissions (GSMFC, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commissions) asked the NMFS director to let the states take the lead in developing Plan revisions. The NMFS concurred, and the draft revised plan was completed in 1998 and submitted to NMFS as a recommendation to replace the National Plan. While waiting for NMFS decision, the three interstate commissions adopted the revised Plan as a standing policy document of the interstate Commissions and their member states. The National Standards in the National Fishing Enhancement Act emphasize enhancing fishery resources to the maximum extent practicable. Consequently, the draft revision places stronger emphasis on the habitat implications of artificial reefs than other functions or outcomes.

Many materials are not contained in the document, but that does not mean that they are not appropriate. The revised Plan does not contain a listing of materials, but rather criteria for artificial reef materials. Materials are required to be effective habitat for marine organisms, compatible with the marine environment, have a long life span, and stay in place.

The Plan has no regulatory authority, but rather is a guideline. The Plan's authors felt that artificial reef development should be tied to fisheries management, and that permits should be held only by marine fisheries management agencies. This would ensure compatibility with fishery management planning, and provide a permanent entity to assume liability for the life of the artificial reef. Projects should have well defined objectives that are consistent with fishery management objectives. Baseline and followup evaluations and

monitoring should be conducted to determine if objectives are being met. Artificial reefs can be used to restore and enhance habitat, as sanctuaries, as reef management areas for effort control, or to resolve spatial and use conflict management. The draft revised Plan is currently under a federal review process, and the Council has requested that NMFS provide adequate time for comments during this federal review period. Comments are expected from federal agencies by late December 2001 or January 2002. The NMFS will then publish the draft plan and accept public comments, after which a final decision will be made.



NEW NMFS E-MAIL NEWSLETTER

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces a new fish server called "Fishnews". The server uses a voluntary subscribe/unsubscribe technology that will post an e-mail to anyone who has subscribed to the service. This service was established in response to repeated requests from the public for the agency to provide timely notification of Federal Register (FR) activity. Sometimes it can take several days before a document is published in the FR. "Fishnews" will allow the agency to post documents on the web immediately upon filing at the FR.

To subscribe to "Fishnews", simply send an e-mail to listproc@ns.noaa.gov and write **SUBSCRIBE FISHNEWS YOUR NAME** in the body of the message. A notice will be quickly sent confirming the subscription. To remove a name from the list, simply write to listproc@ns.noaa.gov and include **UNSUBSCRIBE FISHNEWS YOUR NAME** in the body of the message.

NEW REEF FISH PLAN AMENDMENT WILL ADDRESS RED GROUPER OVERFISHING

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently declared the Gulf of Mexico red grouper stock to be overfished, based on the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 guidelines, which require that stocks be capable of supporting maximum sustainable yield (MSY) on a continuing basis. The Gulf Council's Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel (RFSAP) reviewed red grouper stock assessment analyses and recommended two strategies to rebuild the red grouper stocks to the MSY levels. Under a "constant catch" rebuilding program, the red grouper acceptable biological catch (ABC) would be set at 4.3 to 5.2 million pounds (mp) with the requirement that catches be held at this level for the next ten years as the stock rebuilds. Under a "constant fishing mortality" (or "constant F") rebuilding program, the ABC would initially be set at 3.0 to 4.2 mp, but catches would be allowed to increase as the stock rebuilds and would surpass the constant catch levels about halfway into the rebuilding program. Under either strategy, after ten years the stock would be rebuilt and catches could be increased to the long term MSY levels of 6.7 to 7.0 mp. These ABC recommendations would be subject to periodic review when new red grouper stock assessments are produced. For comparison, annual red grouper harvests since the current red grouper regulations were implemented in 1990 have ranged from 4.9 to 8.7 mp, with an average of 6.6 mp.

The Gulf Council, at its January 2001 meeting in Galveston, Texas, decided to begin developing Amendment 18 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan in order to implement regulatory measures to achieve the rebuilding ABC levels. In addition to red grouper overfishing, Amendment 18 will also address other issues regarding reef fish effort management and enforcement concerns. Many of the issues to be addressed in Amendment 18 concern bottom longline fishing, which is the gear used to land most of the commercially caught red grouper. Alternatives specific to reef fish bottom longlines include: create a longline limited entry system, move the longline fishing boundary from its current position outside of the 20 fathom contour east of Cape San Blas, Florida, phase out the use of bottom longlines in the Gulf of Mexico, and allow a percentage of the longline catch to consist of undersized reef fish rather than have those fish

thrown back dead. Other fishing alternatives which would not be specific to longlines include a prohibition on the use of reef fish (or selected reef fish species) as bait, establishment of an electronic vessel monitoring system for commercial reef fish vessels, and either a prohibition or permit requirement on the use of powerheads when spearfishing. The amendment will also contain alternatives to reduce the number of dormant (or unused) commercial reef fish permits, create operator permits for commercial and recreational for-hire vessels fishing for reef fish, and prohibit the import of undersized red snapper and red grouper. Management alternatives that directly address red grouper harvest will include closed seasons, closed areas, commercial trip limits, and recreational bag limits. The amendment will also consider establishing a tilefish quota, and will propose adding marbled grouper (a species occasionally caught in the Gulf of Mexico) to the reef fish management unit.

The Council has not selected any preferred alternatives at this time. Development of Draft Amendment 18 will continue over the next few months. Preferred alternatives will be selected and public hearings held in the late spring or summer. Final action is expected to be taken by the Council in July or September, 2001. *NOTE: Several newspapers have erroneously reported that the Gulf Council approved a proposal to move the reef fish longline boundary out to the 50-fathom (300 feet) depth contour in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. While this is an alternative under consideration in Reef Fish Amendment 18, no decisions have been made at this time.*

COUNCIL RECOMMENDS STATUS QUO FOR GREATER AMBERJACK

At its January 2000 meeting, the Gulf Council heard recommendations on greater amberjack stocks in the Gulf of Mexico. The current stock assessment indicated that the stock biomass was overfished in 1998, with the stock size less than the minimum stock size threshold (MSST). After considering several factors of the stock assessment, the Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel (RFSAP) considered that the best estimate of the stock size was 1/3 of the MSST. Whether overfishing was occurring in 1998 was more uncertain, with some combinations of tuning indices indicating that overfishing was occurring, while other combinations indicated overfishing was not

occurring. Based on the assessment, the RFSAP recommended that average catches should not exceed 2.2 million pounds over each of the 3 years, 2000-2001-2002, which is the mid-point for landings in those years under a constant fishing mortality rate scenario to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY). After 2002, catch could be adjusted to a constant fishing mortality rate scenario based on optimum yield (OY) rather than MSY, which would not require any reduction in the acceptable biological catch (ABC). The RFSAP recommended that the stock status be re-evaluated within 3 years (2003).

The RFSAP noted that the stock assessment did not incorporate the effect of the Gulf Council's recently implemented actions on greater amberjack, and that landings in recent years were below the initial ABC. It is possible that those actions may have been sufficient to stop overfishing and start the rebuilding program. These actions were put in place in 1998 when the Gulf Council responded to anecdotal information that the Gulf of Mexico stock of greater amberjack was declining. The Gulf Council reduced the recreational bag limit from 3 fish to 1 fish and prohibited commercial landings between March and May. These measures were expected to reduce greater amberjack harvest by about 25% (the actual 1998 landings were about 15% less than 1997). In 1999, a 14-22 inch slot limit and 5 fish recreational aggregate bag limit for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack was implemented to provide some protection for juvenile greater amberjack being landed as mis-identified banded rudderfish or lesser amberjack.

In January 2001, the Gulf Council moved not to take action on greater amberjack at this time; however, if greater amberjack stock are considered overfished, a rebuilding schedule would be initiated in the future.

COUNCIL ENDORSES RED SNAPPER REBUILDING PLAN

At its January 2001 meeting, the Gulf Council endorsed a red snapper rebuilding plan that breaks the rebuilding period into 5-year intervals. The plan will 1) keep total allowable catch (TAC) at status quo for 5 years (2000-2004), 2) transition to a constant F strategy beginning in 2005, 3) reevaluate the recovery every 5 years, and 4) base subsequent 5-year actions on a 3-way decision tree (interval targets exceeded, met, or not met).

The Gulf Council will adopt this rebuilding plan through a regulatory amendment.

The plan has several advantages. One is that it will provide stability to the landings that will allow National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) assessment biologists to better evaluate the stock in an assessment to be done in 2004. The NMFS biologists will also have time to collect new, much needed information on red snapper biology through directed research programs and will be able to evaluate alternative hypotheses on red snapper stocks that have been proposed by other scientists. Finally, this plan will reduce hardships to the fishery associated with potentially significant reductions in TAC (e.g., by ~ 50%) if a constant F fishing mortality scenario was adopted immediately.

NMFS ANNOUNCED OPENING OF RED SNAPPER COMMERCIAL FISHERY AND ONE MONTH CLOSURE OF GAG, RED, AND BLACK GROUPER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES IN GULF FEDERAL WATERS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that the commercial fishery for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico Federal waters would open at noon, local time, on February 1, 2001, and close at noon, local time, on February 10, 2001. During the spring season fishing will be allowed during the first ten days of each month until the spring quota is caught. The 2001 Gulf of Mexico commercial red snapper quota is 4.65 million pounds with 3.10 million pounds being allotted as the spring quota. The operator of a vessel with a valid reef fish permit and red snapper licence having red snapper aboard must have landed and sold such red snapper prior to noon, local time, February 10, 2001. The minimum size limit for the commercial fishery is 15 inches total length.

The NMFS also announced that from February 15 until March 15, each year beginning in 2001, the sale or purchase of gag, red grouper, or black grouper is prohibited, and no person aboard a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial permit for Gulf reef fish has been issued may possess these species in the Gulf regardless of where harvested. A person aboard a vessel for which the permit indicates both charter vessel/headboat for Gulf reef fish may continue to retain gag, red grouper, and black grouper under the recreational bag and possession limit, provided the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat. Reef fish caught under the recreational bag limit may not be sold.

MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR APPOINTS NEW DMR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

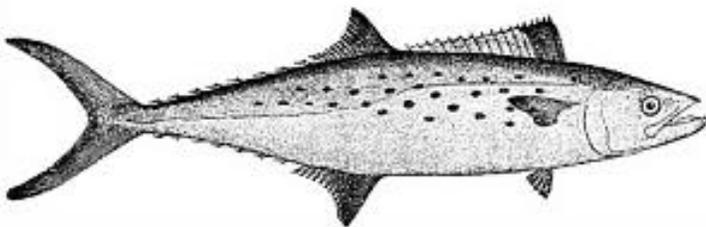
Mr. Glen H. Carpenter joined the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources as its new Executive Director. Governor Ronnie Musgrove announced his appointment to the position on November 30, 2000.

In his position as DMR Executive Director, Mr. Carpenter will oversee the Department, which is responsible for Marine Fisheries Management, Coastal Ecology, Wetlands Permitting, Marine Patrol, Coastal Zone Management, Coastal Preserves, the National Estuarine Research Reserve, Seafood Plant Certification, Boat and Water Safety, Derelict Vessel Act Administration and Tidelands Act Administration. In his position as state director, Mr. Carpenter will serve on the Gulf Council; however, Mr. William 'Corky' Perret will be Mr. Carpenter's designee.

Mr. Carpenter holds a B.S. degree in Geological Oceanography from the University of Washington and a M.S. in Physical Oceanography and Meteorology from the Naval Post Graduate School. He was previously the Director of the GIS and Remote Sensing Laboratory for the Center of Higher Learning at Stennis Space Center.

NEW FISHING REGULATION BROCHURES AVAILABLE

January 2001 brochures of the commercial and recreational fishing regulations for the Gulf of Mexico federal waters are available from the Gulf Council office. The brochures update size limits, trip limits, and quotas for coastal migratory pelagic species, reef fish, shellfish, highly migratory species, coral and coral reefs, and red drum. In addition, information on permits, allowable gear, and other items of interest are included in the brochures. Contact the Gulf Council office for details (Council addresses and phone numbers are given on page 16).



COMMERCIAL KING MACKEREL FISHERY CLOSED FOR VESSELS USING RUN-AROUND GILLNETS IN THE SOUTHERN FLORIDA WEST COAST SUBZONE

Beginning 12:00 noon, local time, January 19, 2001, the commercial run-around gillnet fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the southern Florida west coast subzone was closed. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced closure of this fishery after projecting that landings would reach the quota (541,125 pounds) on January 18, 2001. The gillnet fishery will remain closed in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) through 6:00 a.m., January 22, 2002 unless new fishery management actions are taken.

This action closes the commercial run-around gillnet fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the EEZ of the southern Florida west coast subzone. The southern subzone is that part of the Florida west coast subzone which from November 1 through March 31 extends south and west from 25° 20.4' N. lat. to 26° 19.8' N. lat. (a line directly west from the Lee/Collier County, FL, boundary), i.e., the area off Collier and Monroe Counties. From April 1 through October 31, the southern subzone is that part of the Florida west coast subzone which is between 26° 19.8' N. lat. and 25° 48' N. lat. (a line directly west from the Monroe/Collier County, FL, boundary), i.e., the area off Collier County.

Closure of the commercial run-around gillnet fishery complies with the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic and is necessary to protect and rebuild the overfished Gulf group king mackerel resource. During the closure, no one may fish for or possess king mackerel in or from the closed area when on board a vessel issued a Federal king mackerel permit with a gillnet endorsement. Also, during the closure, no one on board a vessel using or possessing a gillnet with a stretched-mesh size of 4.75 inches (12.1 cm) or larger in the southern Florida west coast subzone may fish for or possess Gulf group king mackerel.

NMFS SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED 2001 LIST OF FISHERIES

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is seeking comment on proposed changes to its annual list of commercial fisheries that interact with marine mammals. The List of Fisheries categorizes each U.S. commercial fishery based on the level of interaction each fishery has with marine mammals. The annual list is required by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

Each fishery is placed into one of three categories according to whether it has a frequent (Category I), occasional (Category II), or remote (Category III) likelihood of known incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals.

After reviewing marine mammal stock assessment reports and other new information (e.g., observer data and marine mammal stranding data), NMFS is proposing several classification and administrative changes.

The Atlantic Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Trawl fishery and the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet fishery are proposed to be elevated to Category I from Category II (see explanation of tiers and categories, below).

The following commercial fisheries are proposed to be elevated to Category II from Category III: Atlantic Blue Crab Trap/Pot; Gulf of Mexico Blue Crab Trap/Pot; Gulf of Mexico Gillnet; Hawaii Swordfish, Tuna, Billfish, Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, Oceanic Sharks Longline/Set Line; North Carolina Inshore Gillnet; and Southeast Atlantic Gillnet fishery.

The following commercial fisheries are proposed to be added for the first time to Category II: California Longline; Mid-Atlantic Pound Net; North Carolina Long Haul Seine; Northeast Drift Gillnet; and Northeast Trap/Pot fishery.

The annual List of Fisheries classifies fisheries based on a two-tiered, stock-specific approach that first addresses the total impact of all fisheries on each marine mammal stock and then addresses the impact of individual fisheries on each stock. The annual rate of marine mammals seriously injured or killed incidental to commercial fisheries is compared to the Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level for each stock. The PBR level is defined in the MMPA as the maximum number of animals that may be removed from a marine

mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population. Tier 1 considers the cumulative fishery mortality and serious injury for a particular stock, while Tier 2 considers fishery-specific mortality and serious injury for a particular stock.

- Tier 1: If the total annual mortality and serious injury across all fisheries that interact with a stock is less than or equal to 10 percent of the PBR level of such a stock, then all fisheries interacting with that stock would be placed in Category III. Otherwise, these fisheries are subject to the next tier to determine their classification.
- Tier 2 - Category III: Annual mortality and serious injury in a given fishery is less than or equal to 1 percent of the PBR level.
- Tier 2 - Category II: Annual mortality and serious injury in a given fishery is greater than 1 percent but less than 50 percent of the PBR level.
- Tier 2 - Category I: Annual mortality and serious injury of a stock in a given fishery is greater than or equal to 50 percent of the PBR level.

Commercial fishermen who participate in fisheries placed in Category I or II must register with the Marine Mammal Assessment Program and submit a \$25 fee unless registration has been integrated with a pre-existing state or federal registration program. The MMPA requires that all commercial fishermen regardless of category submit a report to NMFS within 48 hours of the end of each fishing trip if a marine mammal is injured or killed incidental to fishing operations.

The proposed 2001 List Of Fisheries was published in the Federal Register on January 22, 2001 (66 FR 6545) and is available for public comment until March 8, 2001. Copies of the proposed rule can be found on the [Internet at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Fisheries_Interactions/list_of_fisheries.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR2/Fisheries_Interactions/list_of_fisheries.html) or by contacting Gale Heim, Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. (301) 713-2322, ext. 132.

CHARTER VESSEL/HEADBOAT PERMIT MORATORIUM AMENDMENT SCHEDULED TO GO TO PUBLIC HEARINGS

At its November 2000 meeting, the Gulf Council reviewed new alternatives added by members to the proposed Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium Amending the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP. These principally included alternatives for a charter vessel quota for red snapper based on charter vessel landings for various periods in lieu of implementing the permit moratorium. The Gulf Council retained all of the alternatives proposed by the Ad Hoc Charter Vessel/Headboat Advisory Panel along with preferred alternatives selected by the Gulf Council in September.

The amendment includes two simplified management systems with alternatives that the Gulf Council can select from after public hearings. These systems were proposed by Mr. Jim Fensom, Council member from Panama City, Florida, and by Ms. Bobbi Walker, Council member from Orange Beach, Alabama.

The amendment includes a large number of alternatives that address the following issues:

- A. Duration of Moratorium and Alternatives Instead of a Moratorium
- B. A New Gulf Permit for the Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fisheries
- C. Initial Eligibility Requirements for Permits and/or Endorsements
- D. Annual Permit and Endorsement Transfers During the Moratorium
- E. Vessel Passenger Restriction on Permit Transfers
- F. Annual Reissuance of Permits Not Renewed (or Permanently Revoked)
- G. Appeals Process under the Moratorium
- H. Reporting Requirements to Maintain the New Gulf Permit/Endorsement

To obtain a copy of the amendment, contact the Gulf Council Office at 813-228-2815, or download a copy from the Gulf Council website at www.gulfcouncil.org. Written comments on the amendment must be received by March 16, 2001.

Public hearings on the revised amendment are scheduled for February 2001 as follows:

Monday, February 5, 7:00 p.m.

Laguna Madre Learning Center
Port Isabel High School
Highway 100
Port Isabel, TX 78578
956-943-0052

Tuesday, February 6, 7:00 p.m.

Port Aransas Community Center
408 North Allister
Port Aransas, TX 78373
361-749-4111

Wednesday February 7, 7:00 p.m.

Texas A&M University
200 Seawolf Parkway
Galveston, TX 77553
409-740-4416

Monday, February 12, 7:00 p.m.

Larose Regional Park
307 East 5th Street
Larose, LA 70373
504-693-7380

Tuesday, February 13, 6:00 p.m.

MS Department of Marine Resources
1141 Bayview Drive
Biloxi, MS 39530
228-374-5000

Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 pm

Hilton Beachfront Garden Inn
23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard
Orange Beach, AL 36561
334-974-1600

Thursday, February 15, 7:00 p.m.

National Marine Fisheries Service
3500 Delwood Beach Road
Panama City, FL 32408
850-234-6541

Monday, February 19, 7:00 p.m.

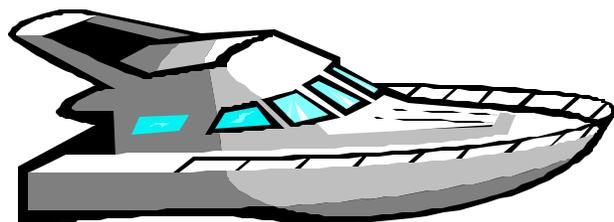
Holiday Inn Beachside
3841 North Roosevelt Boulevard
Key West, FL 33040
305-294-2571

Tuesday, February 20, 7:00 p.m.

Naples Depot Civic Cultural Center
1051 Fifth Avenue South
Naples, FL 34102
941-262-1776

Wednesday February 21, 7:00pm

Madeira Beach City Hall
300 Municipal Drive
Madeira Beach, FL 33708
727-391-9951



UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Council to Meet Jointly with CFMC and SAFMC to Approve Dolphin/Wahoo FMP

The Gulf Council will meet jointly with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to approve the Fishery Management Plan for the Dolphin, *Coryphaena hippurus*, and Wahoo, *Acanthocybium solandri*, Fishery in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico” (Dolphin/Wahoo FMP). The meeting will take place at the Wyndham Sugar Bay Beach Club and Resort in St. Thomas, U.S. V.I., on February 22, 2001, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The SAFMC is acting as administrative lead for the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP which has been drafted in conjunction with the Gulf Council and the CMFC. The purpose of the meeting is approve the first 10 actions of the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP that are applicable to the dolphin and wahoo stocks in the jurisdictions of all 3 councils, approve all actions to be included in the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP, and approve the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP for submission to the Secretary of Commerce.

Panels to review Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium Amendment

The Council’s Ad Hoc Charter Vessel/Headboat Advisory Panel (AP), Socioeconomic Panel (SEP), and Standing Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) will review the Draft Amendment for a Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium (Amendment) and provide recommendations to the Gulf Council. All meetings will be held at the Hilton Tampa Airport Hotel, 2225 Lois Avenue, Tampa, Florida. The AP meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 1, 2001, the SEP meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, March 2, 2001, and the SSC meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on March 7, 2001. The conclusions and recommendations of each panel will be presented to the Gulf Council at its meeting on March 26-29, 2001 in Mobile, Alabama. For copies of the panel agendas, or to obtain more information about the meetings, please contact the Gulf Council office (See page 16 for details).

Law Enforcement AP to meet at GSMFC Spring Meeting

The Gulf Council’s Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (AP) will meet in Brownsville, Texas on March 14, 2001. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) spring meeting. The AP will review various amendments to fishery management plans (FMP) including Amendment 18 to the Reef Fish FMP, Amendment 10 to the Shrimp FMP, and the Charter Vessel Permit Moratorium Amendment. In addition, the AP will continue work on the 2001 operations plan. To obtain more information about the meeting, please contact the Gulf Council office (See page 16 for details).

Mackerel SAP to review NMFS Assessments

The Council’s Mackerel Stock Assessment Panel (SAP) will meet at the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Miami, FL from April 2-6, 2001. The purpose of this meeting will be to review stock assessments of king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia and evaluate the respective status of these stocks. To obtain more information about the meeting, please contact the Gulf Council office (See page 16 for details).



**TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE MARCH
GULF COUNCIL MEETING
Adam's Mark Hotel and Resort
Mobile, Alabama**

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Monday, March 26, 2001

AP Selection Committee (Closed Session)

- Appointment of AP Members
 - Attendance Record
 - Resumes

SSC Selection Committee (Closed Session)

- Appointment of SSC, SAP, and SEP Members
 - Attendance Record
 - Resumes

Reef Fish Management Committee

- Reef Fish Amendment 18 Options Paper
 - Selection of Preferred Alternatives
- Legal Opinion on IFQ Development

Tuesday, March 27, 2001

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Management Committees

- Draft Amendment for a Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium
 - Summary of Public Hearings
 - Public Letters
 - SSC Recommendations
 - SEP Recommendations
 - Ad Hoc AP Recommendations
 - LEAP Recommendations
 - Federal Comments
 - Committee Actions

Shrimp Management Committee

- Amendment 10 Options Paper
 - BRD Section Review
 - Selection of Preferred Alternatives

Mackerel Management Committee

- Control Rule Risk Levels

COUNCIL AGENDA

Wednesday, March 28, 2001

- I. Call to Order and Introductions - K. Williams
- II. Adoption of Agenda - K. Williams
- III. Approval of Minutes - K. Williams
- IV. Public Testimony¹ - K. Williams

¹Persons testifying must turn in registration cards before start of testimony period.

- a. Charter vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium Amendment

V. Committee Reports (Closed Session)

- a. AP Selection - Simpson
- b. SSC Selection - Foote

Thursday, March 29, 2001

V. Committee Reports (Continued)

- a. AP Selection - Simpson
- b. SSC Selection - Foote
- c. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Management - Minton/R. Williams
- d. Shrimp Management - Aparicio
- e. Reef Fish Management - Minton

Friday, March 30, 2001

V. Committee Reports (Continued)

- f. Mackerel Management - R. Williams

VI. SAFMC Liaison Report - K. Williams

VII. Mid-Term Council Chairmen's Meeting - Swingle

VIII. ICCAT Advisory Committee Meeting - Claverie

IX. G&SAFF Bycatch Workshop - Aparicio

X. Enforcement Reports - Fiedler/Cinalli/Proulx

XI. Regional Administrator's Report - Powers

XII. Director Reports - R. Williams/Minton/Perret/Foote/Osburn/Simpson/Frugé

XIII. Other Business - K. Williams

The above agenda is tentative and is not final until it becomes noticed. Updates to the agenda will be posted on the Gulf Council web site as they become available. Although non-emergency issues not contained in the agenda may come before the Gulf Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), those issues may not be the subject of formal Gulf Council action during the meeting. The Gulf Council's actions will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the noticed agenda and any issues arising after publication of that notice that require emergency action under section 305 (c) of the MSFCMA, provided the public has been notified of the Gulf Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

Following Meeting:

May 14-17, 2001

Edgewater Beach Resort

Panama City, FL

COUNCIL ACCEPTS LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2001-2006

The Gulf Council voted unanimously at its January 2001 meeting to accept the Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan for 2001-2006. This plan has been developed by the Gulf Council’s Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (AP) and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) Law Enforcement Committee and is the first comprehensive regional law enforcement plan for the Gulf of Mexico. The purpose of the plan is to address the need for new law enforcement strategies. Increased state and federal management concerns over living marine resources, coastal habitat conservation, and international concerns over highly-migratory species have lead to a dramatic increase in law enforcement responsibilities throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

The plan notes that the role of law enforcement in the fishery management process is to ensure compliance with adopted regulations. Compliance, which enhances the success of management plans, is achieved with an effective enforcement program. State and federal marine resource regulations mandate a comprehensive and coordinated compliance program. A gulf-wide cooperative law enforcement strategic plan will maximize the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts by defining gulf-wide priorities; supporting comprehensive, cooperative planning efforts; and enabling

interjurisdictional fisheries enforcement operations.

The vision statement of the plan is “Improve regulatory compliance through cooperative law enforcement efforts to enhance, protect and conserve living marine resources throughout the Gulf of Mexico for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.” The mission statement is “ The committee is dedicated to fulfilling law enforcement’s role in fisheries management by providing professional law enforcement guidance and expertise to the GSMFC and the Gulf Council. We are committed to improving regulatory compliance through cooperative efforts that enhance, protect and conserve shared living marine resources and their supporting ecosystems throughout the Gulf of Mexico.”

The goals of the plan are:

- 1) Provide professional law enforcement expertise throughout rule-making processes.
- 2) Promote law enforcement partnerships among the states and between state and federal agencies.
- 3) Develop and implement effective educational programs.
- 4) Obtain funds to aid state and federal law enforcement agencies.

For a copy of the plan, contact the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, P.O. Box 726, Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39566-0726, Phone: (228) 875-5912

SETTLEMENTS BETWEEN OCTOBER 1, 2000 AND DECEMBER 31, 2000

CASE NUMBER	RESPONDENT NAME	AREA	LE UNIT	CASE DESCRIPTION	FINAL AMOUNT	FORFEITED AMOUNT	PERMIT SANCTION
SE970122FM	Recovery Marine, Inc. Joseph Giacalone	GOM	USCG	1) Possess shark during closure 2) Filet shark at sea	\$ 6,600		
SE980226FM	Jimmie D. Pelfrey	GOM	NMFS	1) Sell red snapper after closure 2) Sell red snapper after closure 3) False reporting 4) False reporting	\$ 6,750		
SE990006FM	Eliminator, Inc. Jeffrey Lynn Williams	GOM	NMFS/ USCG	Tortugas Sanctuary violation	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	
SE990025FM	Luis J. Avila Francisco J. Cardozo	GOM	NMFS/ FWCC	1) Dispose of fish after approach by officer 2) Exceed king mackerel limit 3) Possess undersize spiny lobster	\$ 5,000	\$ 196 and 4 spiny lobsters, 13 spiny lobster heads & 3 separated spiny lobster tails	
SE990034FM	Lyle G. Lecompte	GOM	USCG	BRD violation	\$ 3,000		

CASE NUMBER	RESPONDENT NAME	AREA	LE UNIT	CASE DESCRIPTION	FINAL AMOUNT	FORFEITED AMOUNT	PERMIT SANCTION
SE990142ES	Hill Cong Nguyen Dieu Thi Lee	GOM	NMFS	TED violation	\$ 1,250		
SE990331FM	Captain Murphy Charter Service Patrick E. Murphy	GOM	NMFS	Possess undersize red snapper	\$ 1,500	\$ 125	15 days
SE990346FM	Kerry R. Hurst	GOM	FWCC	Possess red snapper during closure	\$ 1,500		15 days
SE990488ES	Sum V. Tran	GOM	USCG	TED violation	\$ 4,000	\$ 6,268.55	
SE990520FM	Capt. Dave's Restaurant, Inc. James T. Westbrook	GOM	USCG	Operating charter boat in EEZ without federal permit	\$ 1,980		
SE990713FM	Coquina Reef Marine, Inc. Hugh Jason Hallmark	GOM	FWCC	1) Possess undersize red snapper 2) Possess red snapper during closure	\$ 2,000		15 days
SE991284FM	Stephen D. Vancil	FKNMS	FWCC	Fish in sanctuary Preservation area	\$ 500		
SE991318FM	Larry Russell Rohr	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate a vessel so as to strike or damage seagrass	\$ 2,750		
SE000353MS	James L. Alexander	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate a vessel so as to strike or damage sea bottom	\$ 2,000		
SE000473ES	Annie Thornton, Inc. Artemio Mendoza Ochoa	GOM	USCG	TED violation	\$ 6,000	\$ 2,005.05	
SE000474ES	Miss Lillie, Inc. Leo Vernon Ray	GOM	NMFS	TED violation	\$ 1,000		
SE000490MS	Robert G. Courtier	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate vessel and cause damage to natural resource	\$ 2,500		
SE000493MS	Michael I. Keller	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate vessel and cause damage to natural resource	\$ 825		
SE000495MS	James H. Middendorf	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate vessel and cause damage to natural resource	\$ 750		
SE000496MS	Juan Gonzalez Morales	FKNMS	FWCC	Illegal entry into research only area	\$ 1,000		
SE000498MS	Roger A. Lloyd Harry Corbin Morris	FKNMS	FWCC	Deposit unapproved material into FKNMS waters	\$ 2,000		
SE000603FM	H&H Marine Harvest, Inc. Bryon H. Holland	GOM	USCG	1) Fail to maintain red grouper intact through offloading 2) Possess or fail to release undersize red grouper 3) Fail to maintain shark in proper form	\$ 4,500		
SE000693ES\ FM	Bernardo B. Bautista Little Ernie Gulf Trawls, Inc.	GOM	USCG	1) TEDS violation 2) BRD Violation 3) Unlawful destruction of gear	\$12,000		
SE000848MS	Lazaro Leon	FKNMS	FWCC	Entry into research only area w/o permit	\$ 500		
SE000898MS	Albar Shipping & Trading Co.	FKNMS	FWCC	Area to be Avoided	\$ 5,000		

CASE NUMBER	RESPONDENT NAME	AREA	LE UNIT	CASE DESCRIPTION	NOVA AMOUNT	NOVA* AMOUNT	PROP. SANCTION
SE000899MS	Raul Leon	FKNMS	FWCC	Possess speargun	\$ 600		
SE000900MS	Richard A. O'Connel	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate vessel causing damage to sea bottom	\$ 2,025		
SE000998FM	A&B Fisheries, Inc.	GOM	USCG/ NMFS	Fish for Atlantic HMS without permit	\$ 1,000		
SE001032FM	Bill P. Archer	GOM	FWCC	1) Exceed red snapper bag limit 2) Fail to maintain red snapper intact 3) False statements to Officers	\$ 5,500		5 days
SE001046MS	Gustavo Sosa	FKNMS	FWCC	Fishing in FKNMS	\$ 800		
SE001271MS	Thomas R. Seiter	FKNMS	FWCC	Operate vessel resulting in damage to sea bottom	\$ 1,500		

NOVAs ISSUED BETWEEN OCTOBER 1, 2000 AND DECEMBER 30, 2000

CASE NUMBER	RESPONDENT NAME	AREA	LE UNIT	CASE DESCRIPTION	NOVA AMOUNT	NOVA* AMOUNT	PROP. NOPS** DUR.
SE990006FM	Jeffery Lynn Williams Eliminator, Inc.	GOM	NMFS/ USCG	Tortugas Sanctuary violation	\$ 12,000	\$16,794.00	
SE990025FM	Francisco J. Cardoso Luis J. Avila	GOM	NMFS/F WCC	1) dispose of fish after approach by officer; 2) exceed king mackerel limit; 3) possess undersize spiny lobster	1) 3,000 2) 1,500 3) 1,500	\$196.00 and 4 spiny lobsters, 13 spiny lobster heads & 3 separated spiny lobster tails	60 days
SE990222FM	Bruce E. Reiger	GOM	NMFS	interfere with, obstruct, delay or prevent by any means an investigation, search or seizure	\$ 2,500	\$ 500.00	
SE990331FM	Captain Murphy Charter Service, Inc. Patrick E. Murphy	GOM	NMFS	possess undersized red snapper	\$ 1,500		15 days
SE990346FM	Kerry Hurst	GOM	FWCC	red snapper seasonal closure violation	\$ 1,500	\$ 317.25	15 days
SE990713FM	Hugh Jason Hallmark Coquina Reef Marine	GOM	FWCC	1) red snapper closure violation; 2) possess undersized king mackerel	\$ 1,500 \$ 500		15 days
SE000171FM	Virgil L. Coleman Carly Sue, Inc.	GOM	USCG	SW Florida trawl closure violation	\$ 4,000		
SE000204FM	Michael T. Davis Sea Hawk, Inc.	GOM	USCG	1) fail to maintain grouper intact; 2) fail to maintain a shark in its proper form	\$ 1,500 \$ 1,500		30 days
SE000468FM	Randy R. Hisler	GOM	USCG	BRD violation	\$ 3,000		
SE000473ES	Artemio Mendoza Ochoa Annie Thornton, Inc.	GOM	USCG	TED violation	\$ 8,000		

SE000603FM	H & H Marine Harvest, Inc. Bryon H. Holland	GOM	USCG	1) fail to maintain grouper intact 2) possess or fail to release undersize grouper; 3) fail to maintain a shark in its proper form	\$ 1,500 \$ 1,500 \$ 1,500		30 days
SE000644FM	Tam T. Nguyen	GOM	USCG	BRD violation	\$ 3,000		
SE000701FM	Anthony Paul Chiodo, Jr.	GOM	FWCC	red snapper seasonal closure violation	\$ 800	6 red snapper fillets	
SE000771ES	Phuoc An Thai Bay Van Nguyen	GOM	NMFS	TED violation	\$ 4,000	\$12,000.00	
SE000925FM	Jeffrey Sheldon Hunter	GOM	USCG	fail to comply with restrictions on sale/purchase (assorted reef fish)	\$ 1,500		15 days
SE000998AT	A&B Fisheries, Inc. d/b/a G.A. Fish, Inc.	GOM	USCG/ NMFS	unlawfully fish for, catch, possess, retain or land an Atlantic HMS w/o vessel permit on board	\$ 2,000		
SE001038FM	Tommy Lamont Butler, Jr.	GOM	NMFS	1) engage in an activity for which a valid permit is required; 2) fail to comply w/restrictions on sale/purchase of assorted reef fish; 3) exceed a bag or possession limit of assorted reef fish	\$ 3,000 \$ 1,500 \$ 1,500		
SE001046MS	Gusavo Sosa	FNKMS	FWCC	fish in a sanctuary preservation area	\$ 800		
SE001047MS	Jose G. Castro	FKNMS	FWCC	operate a vessel at a speed greater than 4 knots w/in 100 ft. of "divers down" flag	\$ 150		
SE001105ES/ FM	Phan Van Nguyen Van Ha	GOM	USCG	1) TED violation 2) BRD violation	\$ 4,000 \$ 3,000		
SE001271MS	Thomas R. Seiter	FKNMS	FWCC	operate a vessel in such a manner as to strike or otherwise injure coral, seagrass or any other immobile organism	\$ 1,750		
SE001272MS	Robert C. Marta	FKNMS	FWCC	operate a vessel in such a manner as to strike or otherwise injure coral, seagrass or any other immobile organism	\$ 2,000		
SE001274MS	Felix Bravo	FKNMS	FWCC	operate a vessel in such a manner as to strike or otherwise injure coral, seagrass or any other immobile organism	\$ 1,800		
SE001275MS	Charles S. Watts	FKNMS	FWCC	operate a vessel in such a manner as to strike or otherwise injure coral, seagrass, or any other immobile organism	\$ 1,500		
SE001276MS	Jose A. Robaina	FKNMS	NMFS	fish in a sanctuary preservation area	\$ 2,500		
SE001303FM	John Frank Mauldwin Gulf Stream Seafood, Inc.	GOM	USCG	fish in violation of the prohibition, restrictions and requirements applicable to seasonal closures (red snapper)	\$ 4,500	\$1,699.25	15 days
SE001318MS	Juan Ruiz	FKNMS	FWCC	unlawfully fish inside a sanctuary preservation area	\$ 200		

*NOTICE OF PROPOSED FORFEITURE **NOTICE OF PERMIT SANCTION

COUNCIL STILL SOLICITING FOR MEMBERS TO ADVISORY GROUPS

The Gulf Council will be appointing members to all Advisory Panels (AP), Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC), Stock Assessment Panels (SAP), and the Socio-Economic Panel (SEP).

S APs are comprised of recreational and commercial fishermen, charterboat operators, buyers, sellers, consumers, and others who are knowledgeable about a particular fishery. APs include Billfish, Butterfish, Ad Hoc Charter Vessel/Headboat, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Coral, Deep Water Crab, Dolphin/Wahoo, Habitat Protection (3 panels for Florida/Alabama, Mississippi/Louisiana, and Texas), Highly Migratory Species, Red Drum, Red Snapper, Reef Fish, Shrimp, Spiny Lobster, Stone Crab, and Special Bycatch Reduction Device.

S SSCs are comprised of economists, biologists, sociologists, and natural resource attorneys who are knowledgeable about the technical aspects of fisheries in the Gulf. Besides the standing SSC, special SSCs include Butterfish, Coral, Deep Water Crab, Dolphin/Wahoo,

Mackerel, Ad Hock Marine Reserves, Special Oceanic Migratory Species, Red Drum, Reef Fish, Shark, Shrimp, Spiny Lobster, and Stone Crab.

S SAPs are comprised of biologists who are trained in the specialized field of population dynamics, and who assess the available biological data and advise the Council on the status of stocks and level of acceptable biological catch. SAPs include Ad Hoc Crustacean, Ad Hoc Fishfish, Mackerel, Red Drum, Reef Fish, and Shrimp.

S The SEP is comprised of economists and sociologists who are trained to evaluate the economic and social costs associated with various management measures and advise the Council of the economic and social costs associated with these measures.

Persons interested in serving on either an AP, SSC, SAP, or SEP should submit a letter of interest, along with a vitae or resume containing relevant background information. This documentation should be sent to the Gulf Council no later than March 5, 2001 (see page 16 for Council addresses).



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The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils that were established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act in 1976. The Council is responsible for the development and modification of fishery management plans (FMPs) that are designed to manage fishery resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico from state boundaries to the 200-mile limit. This is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and financial assistance for this newsletter was provided by grant funds pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA07FC0015 and NA17FC1052.

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