

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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KAY WILLIAMS AND ROY WILLIAMS ELECTED COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2000/2001

At the September Council meeting, the Gulf Council elected a new Chairman and Vice-Chairman to serve for the coming year. The Gulf Council elected Ms. H. Kay Williams (Mississippi) to be the new Chairman, and Mr. Roy Williams (Florida) to be Vice-Chairman. They replace outgoing Chairman Dr. Bob Shipp (Alabama) and Vice-Chairman Mr. Karl Lessard (Florida). Both Dr. Shipp and Mr. Lessard have left the Gulf Council with the expiration of their terms.

Ms. Williams has served on the Gulf Council since 1997. Previously, she has participated at Council meetings as an industry spokesman beginning in 1992 and has served on three Advisory Panels (APs) to the Council. Ms. Williams said that she looks forward to her role as chairman and will make sure all voices are heard.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

November 13-16, 2000
Isle of Capri Hotel
151 Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, Mississippi 39350





Kay Williams (right) and Roy Williams (left) are the new Gulf Council chairman and vice-chairman, respectively.

Mr. Williams has worked with marine fisheries for the state of Florida for over thirty years and is currently the Assistant Division Director, Division of Marine Fisheries for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC). In 1987, he started working for the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) which, through a merger, became part of the FFWCC. Mr. Williams has been a Florida designee to both the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC). He has served on the Gulf Council in 1987 and from 1994 to the present.



Bill Hogarth (left) of NMFS swears in Gulf Council members (from left to right) Dan Dumont, Karen Bell, Kay Williams, Bobbi Walker, and Myron Fischer to their new three-year terms. Mr. Dumont, Ms. Bell, and Ms. Walker are new members of the Council.

MISSISSIPPI DMR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Glade Woods, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, has announced his retirement from the state regulatory agency effective October 16, 2000. Mr. Woods was appointed by former Governor Kirk Fordice to head the new agency created by the Mississippi legislature in 1994, and has been instrumental in helping the department mature to its current status. He has served on the Gulf Council from 1994 to 2000, though Mr. Corky Perret has served as his designee in recent years.

"I am going to miss the Commissioners, the legislators, and most of all, the department employees who have given me support and friendship during these challenging, but rewarding years," Woods said. "It has been an honor and pleasure to serve the people of this great state." Mr. Woods cited a need to spend more time with his wife and family as reasons for his departure.

Commission on Marine Resources Chairman William Mitchell is in the process of recommending a replacement for Mr. Woods to Mississippi's Governor Fordice.

DR. JOE POWERS APPOINTED ACTING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR OF NMFS SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

Dr. Joe Powers has been appointed as acting regional administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Southeast Regional Office. Dr. Powers has been with NMFS since 1975, serving in various capacities including Director of the Miami Laboratory of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and most recently as the Southeast Center's Senior Stock Assessment Scientist. He has received several honors including an EPA/AAAS Environmental Science Fellowship, a US/South Africa Binational Commission Fellowship and the Chair of the Scientific Committee of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Over the years, Dr. Powers has worked closely with the Council to integrate science into the Council's deliberations. NMFS feels that Dr. Powers' experience, coupled with his familiarity with the issues facing the Gulf Council, will be a positive asset for the Council.

GULF COUNCIL TENTATIVELY APPROVES DOLPHIN/WAHOO FMP

After hearing public comments through hearings and letters, the Gulf Council moved at its September 2000 meeting 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) contingent upon resolution of issues and comments made by NMFS and the Gulf Council to the SAFMC. The SAFMC is acting as administrative lead for the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP which has been drafted in conjunction with the Gulf Council and the Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CMFC). Prior to submission to the Secretary of Commerce, the Gulf Council requested to see a copy of the final document for review and approval.

The first 10 actions, with options, of the Dolphin/Wahoo FMP contain measures that are applicable to the dolphin and wahoo stocks in the jurisdictions of all 3 councils (Gulf Council, SAFMC, and CFMC). These actions are:

1. The management unit is the population of common dolphin and pompano dolphin from the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. South Atlantic, the U.S. Caribbean, the Mid-Atlantic, and the New England coasts.
2. The management unit is the population of wahoo from the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. South Atlantic, the U.S. Caribbean, the Mid-Atlantic, and the New England coasts.
3. Any dealer, defined as the person who first receives dolphin or wahoo harvested in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) by way of purchase, barter, trade, or transfer in commerce, would be required to possess a valid permit issued by NMFS and to report data needed to monitor the dolphin and wahoo fisheries.
4. Require that the owner of a commercial or for-hire vessel obtain a vessel permit from NMFS to harvest or possess dolphin or wahoo in or from the Atlantic and U.S. Caribbean. This provision will currently not apply to the Gulf of Mexico EEZ.
5. Require that the operator of a commercial or for-hire vessel obtain an operator's permit issued by NMFS to harvest or possess dolphin or wahoo in or from the Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, or Gulf of Mexico EEZ.
6. Reporting requirements in the Gulf of Mexico by dolphin and wahoo permit holders and dealers will be specified through framework. In the Atlantic and U.S. Caribbean, reporting requirements will occur through different specifications.
7. The maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for dolphin in the Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico EEZs is between 18.8 and 46.5 million pounds. The MSY proxy for wahoo in the Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico EEZs is between 1.63 and 2.176 million pounds.
8. Optimum Yield (OY) for dolphin and wahoo is the amount of harvest that can be taken by fishermen while not exceeding 75% of MSY (GMFMC). Optimum yield for wahoo is equal to MSY or 1.63 million pounds (SAFMC).
9. Overfishing - In the Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, overfishing for dolphin and wahoo is defined as a is maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT) fishing mortality rate (F) 100% of F_{MSY} . Overfished - In the Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico is a minimum stock size threshold (MSST) biomass (B) 50% of B_{msy} .
10. Establishes a framework procedure to provide the South Atlantic, U.S. Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Councils with mechanisms to independently adjust several management measures for their respective areas.

In addition, the Gulf Council acted to establish a fishing year of January 1 to December 31, prohibit the sale of fish caught in a recreational fishery, and allocate dolphin and wahoo based on the 1984-97 historical annual average catches (8% commercial and 92% recreational for dolphin, and 34% commercial and 66% recreational for wahoo).

A PERFECT STORM AND AN IMPERFECT OCCUPATION by D. A. Cinalli, LCDR, USCG

The riveting motion picture *The Perfect Storm* has captured the public's attention through its portrayal of the doomed crew of a longlining fishing vessel. Having commanded a patrol boat in New England, USCGC ADAK (WPB 1333) and piloted the waters in the Northeast, I can attest to the awesome power of nature on the sea, but weather is not the only peril faced by the commercial fishing industry.

The Bureau of Labor, which began ranking occupational fatality rates in 1992, rates commercial fishing as the most dangerous occupation in the United States. Commercial fishermen are exposed to a myriad of hazards beyond severe storms and weather. Those hazards include capsizings, flooding, fires, loss of propulsion, falling overboard, and threats posed by heavy machinery and fishing gear. Records show that 75 commercial fisherman are killed each year in the United States. With fish stocks declining worldwide, fishermen are forced to travel farther and farther offshore, stay at sea for longer periods of time and work long, strenuous hours. In fact, the swordfish fishery depicted in *The Perfect Storm* is severely stressed and is a research priority for the new Center for Sustainable Fisheries at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences.

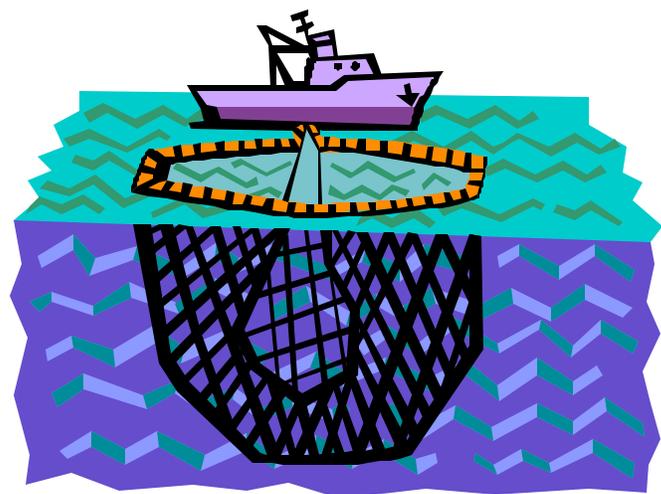
Thousands of boats of varying types are engaged in commercial fishing activities in our local waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Southeast Atlantic. The vast majority of these (over 95%) are shrimp trawlers, crab and lobster trappers, grouper and snapper boats, and longliners. When these vessels encounter problems far at sea help is often not readily available so the presence of safety equipment and the ability of the crew to properly use it can literally mean the difference between life and death.

One of the many missions of the Coast Guard is the oversight of vessel safety and includes the safety of the commercial fishing industry. The Coast Guard plays an important role in promoting the safety of commercial fishing through the development of requirements for safety and lifesaving gear, dockside vessel examinations, and at-sea boardings.

The Coast Guard in this region performed more than 1,000 voluntary dockside examinations of commercial

fishing vessels in 1999. The purpose of these free exams was to check safety and survival equipment, structural integrity, and general seaworthiness to ensure that fishing vessels are safe. No penalties are assessed if discrepancies are found during the dockside exam. In this regard, both the fishing industry and the Coast Guard benefit. From the Coast Guard's standpoint, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A safer fishing industry results in fewer injuries, fewer deaths, and fewer calls for Coast Guard Search and Rescue.

Within the past year, the Coast Guard intensified its fishing vessel safety oversight through a targeted program called Operation Safe Catch. It was designed to identify and examine high-risk fishing vessels. During the six month-long effort (November 1999 through April 2000), Coast Guard units in Florida and elsewhere in the Southeast conducted more than 650 dockside examinations and nearly 100 underway boardings of fishing vessels to improve fishing vessel safety. A similar effort was implemented throughout the Atlantic seaboard.



The Coast Guard's primary goal is to prevent machinery and equipment casualties. However, these safety audits have secondary benefits that have been successful in saving numerous lives. One such example involved the fishing vessel BAY WOLF that sank near the Dominican Republic on July 2nd. This past February, the vessel voluntarily worked with the Coast Guard in Miami to obtain all required safety and lifesaving equipment. On the date of the vessel's sinking, the Coast Guard Command Center in Miami received a MAYDAY call and a signal from a registered Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) belonging to the BAY

WOLF. A Coast Guard helicopter was launched. It rapidly located the vessel's life raft containing three crew members seven nautical miles from shore and several hundred miles from the nearest Coast Guard base. The crew was safely rescued. Luckily, the radio used for the MAYDAY call, the EPIRB, and the life raft (all integral to the rescue) were obtained following the Coast Guard examination.

Commercial fishermen work under demanding and often hazardous conditions to make their livelihood. Our cooperative efforts with the commercial fishing industry will continue as we strive to make the seas safer for all mariners.

Commercial fishermen can request a free dockside exam from their local Coast Guard Marine Safety Office. Additional information is available on-line at: www.uscg.mil/d7/d7m/mc/cfvs.htm.

LCDR David A. Cinalli is the Chief of the Fisheries Section, in the Seventh Coast Guard District, Miami Florida. He is assigned as the designee for Admiral Allen, Seventh Coast Guard District Commander to the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fisheries Management Councils.

GULF COUNCIL COMMENTS TO NMFS ON POTENTIAL ATLANTIC BILLFISH MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

NMFS has requested comments on options to improve reporting, to reduce bycatch mortality, and to achieve a 25% reduction in landings of Atlantic blue and white marlin from 1996. In 1997, the ICCAT recommended a reduction of Atlantic blue and white marlin landings by at least 25% from 1996 levels. This measure began in 1998 to reduce mortality levels of billfish stocks in the Atlantic Ocean. Current information on U.S. recreational blue marlin landings during 1999 indicate that a 25% reduction was not achieved with the 99-inch lower jaw fork length minimum size. Amendment 1 of the Atlantic Billfish FMP indicated that size limits would be the primary mechanism utilized by NMFS to control recreational landing restrictions. Therefore, further increases in blue marlin minimum size limits may be necessary.

NMFS also requested comments on options to improve the monitoring of recreationally-landed billfish and swordfish, on prohibiting retention of Atlantic billfish on board any U.S.-flagged vessel that has been issued a commercial fishing permit for any Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS), on the use of circle hooks or other gear modifications to reduce mortality of released fish, and on allowing exemptions to the minimum size for those anglers seeking fly rod/light tackle records from certifying organizations.

The Gulf Council responded to the NMFS request. Their comments regarding the potential Atlantic billfish management actions were:

- ! The Gulf Council was disappointed that conservation measures taken by U.S. fishermen prior to 1996 were not being acknowledged by ICCAT.
- ! That circle hooks should not be required to recreationally fish for billfish because these hooks do not work in this type of fishery.
- ! If additional measures are needed to reduce blue marlin landings, the appropriate action is an increase in the minimum size limit.
- ! The Gulf Council has no objection to an exemption to the minimum size limit for anglers seeking fly rod/light tackle records, but it does not feel that will have much impact in the Gulf.
- ! The Gulf Council acknowledges that there is a long-standing fish counting system in the Gulf for marlins, swordfish, and sailfish. Therefore, tags are not needed to track landings except for fish landed outside of that system.



COUNCIL MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS ON MAGNUSON-STEVEN'S REAUTHORIZATION

At its September 2000 meeting, the Gulf Council reviewed three proposed amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA). Two came from the U.S. Senate (one from Senators Kerry and Holling, the other from Senator Snowe), and one from the House of Representatives (from Representative Gilchrest). The following are some of the recommendations to Congress made by the Gulf Council on the reauthorization amendments.

- ! The Council reiterates its stand on Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQ) and requests that Congress eliminate any language that would prohibit the Council from beginning to develop a red snapper Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system.
- ! The Gulf Council recommends that Section 303(b) of MSFCMA be amended to provide authority to Councils to regulate activities by individuals or vessels that adversely impact fisheries or essential fish habitat (EFH). This would include: (1) anchoring of any vessels near habitat areas of particular concern (HAPC) or other EFH such as coral reefs; and, (2) non-consumptive diving when adverse cumulative affects on coral reef complexes become noticeable.
- ! The Gulf Council recommends that the Incidental Harvest Research program be extended and funded because this program has been the principal vehicle under which research and data collection of bycatch has been implemented.
- ! The Gulf Council recommends that Congress define *overfishing* as harvest activities (i.e., rate of fishing mortality) that would result in too many fish being harvested and *overfished* as a level (i.e., minimum fishery biomass) resulting in too few fish left in the water.
- ! The Gulf Council recommends that Congress provide authorization for increased funding support for NMFS enforcement and for NOAA General Counsel's office to prosecute violations.

Final action on reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act by Congress will likely be deferred until next year so the Gulf Council may make further recommendations. However, it is likely that the Senate will try to resolve the issue of IFQ termination or extension of the moratorium this year. For a detailed list of recommendations made by the Gulf Council, visit the Gulf Council webpage at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org> or contact the Gulf Council (see page 12 for details).

CHANGE IN THE STARTING DATE OF THE FALL COMMERCIAL RED SNAPPER SEASON FROM SEPTEMBER 1 TO OCTOBER 1 AND OTHER MANAGEMENT MEASURES

NMFS is publishing a final rule to implement management measures for the Gulf of Mexico red snapper season that are contained in a regulatory amendment prepared by the Gulf Council. Most of these measures, including all measures pertaining to recreational fishermen and a change in the spring commercial season, were previously implemented by interim rules beginning January 2000. This final rule extends those provisions indefinitely and adds a change in the start date of the fall commercial season and a minor change in the seasonal allocation of the commercial quota between the spring and fall seasons.

This final rule:

- ! changes the starting date of the fall commercial season from September 1 to October 1;
- ! allocates two-thirds of the commercial red snapper quota to the spring season with the remainder available for the fall season;
- ! continues the 10-day openings each month of the spring red snapper commercial season;
- ! continues a recreational minimum size limit of 16 inches (commercial minimum size limit remains 15 inches);
- ! continues a recreational season of April 21 to October 31; and,
- ! continues the 4-fish bag limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels.

COUNCIL HEARS FURTHER INFORMATION ON RED SNAPPER BIOLOGY

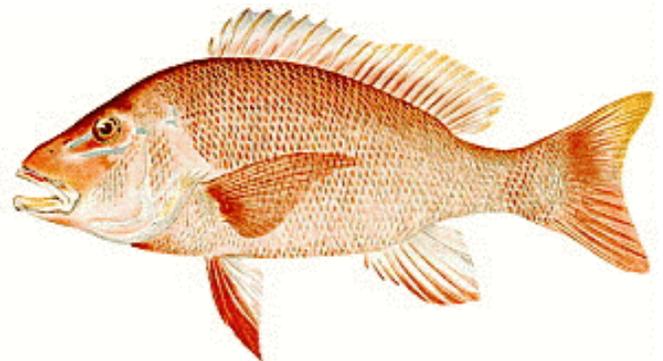
At its September 2000 meeting, the Gulf Council heard Dr. Stephen Szedlmayer (Auburn University) present an update on his research on oyster shell as artificial habitat for juvenile red snapper, and on fishery independent estimates of red snapper abundance, age frequency, fecundity, and mortality. Dr. Szedlmayer has been observing age-0 and age-1-year-old juvenile red snapper on small artificial reefs made from oyster shell or shell and concrete blocks. These reefs were placed at depths between 50 and 65 feet in an area south of Dauphin Island, Alabama. Each year there were three sites that were sampled. Age-1 red snapper dominated the reefs in July. However, in August age-0 red snapper would recruit to the reefs in numbers much higher than age-1 fish. Age-1 fish were significantly more abundant on reefs with concrete blocks. Dr. Szedlmayer speculated that artificial shell reefs may attract young red snapper away from areas of intensive trawl fishing, thus enhancing survival.

Dr. Szedlmayer also conducted a fishery independent survey for red snapper on artificial reefs off Alabama. They tested 6 capture methods: bandit rigs, gill nets, fish trap, hook-and-line, drop net, and spear gun. Traps worked best at capturing fish but did exclude larger fish. SCUBA visual counts were also used to estimate the red snapper remaining after fishing. The visual survey was the best abundance estimator.

The population size off Alabama between depths of 45 and 200 feet estimated by Dr. Szedlmayer was 1.3 million red snapper with a mean standard length of about 11 inches and a mean age of 2 years. Spawning occurred over a 142-day period peaking from May to July. The average batch fecundity (the number of eggs released for each spawn) was estimated at 83,870 eggs per fish, and the average annual fecundity was estimated to be 2.9 million eggs per fish. Total mortality was high ($Z = -2.0$) over the year classes sampled and growth rates averaged about 0.5 inches per year. Dr. Szedlmayer thought that abundance estimates might be low, because they sampled only heavily fished reef sites. Preliminary estimates from "unpublished" reef sites this year suggest a much higher abundance compared to 1999.

Dr. Benny Gallaway (LGL Associates) summarized red snapper stock assessment information that he had collected. He felt that the general linear model (GLM) that NMFS has used in their stock assessment overestimated bycatch. Because the data available did not appear suited for use in a GLM, he preferred the delta model instead. His proposal was peer reviewed by a 5-member panel with mixed results. Most members of the peer review panel felt that the GLM should be used, with fixes to address data deficiencies. Using the recommendations of the panel, Dr. Gallaway and colleagues published estimates of juvenile red snapper bycatch in the peer review literature. Using a revised GLM, they concluded that red snapper bycatch was initially 30 to 47% lower than estimated by the original GLM. Those estimates were never utilized in the NMFS stock assessment.

NMFS biologists have recently published a paper that now concludes that a delta model is more appropriate for some species, particularly red snapper. Using the delta distribution, the NMFS biologists concluded that in recent years bycatch was overestimated by 37.5%, and by a somewhat higher percentage in the pre-1985 years. Dr. Gallaway felt that the impacts of these changes as documented in the published literature had not been fully evaluated. He suggested that before the Gulf Council went forward with a rebuilding plan based on 5-year intervals, an update to the red snapper stock assessment was needed to determine the state of the stock. Based on Dr. Gallaway's input, the Gulf Council has asked NMFS to provide an updated assessment incorporating Dr. Gallaway's information and that it be presented at the November 2000 Gulf Council meeting that will be held in Biloxi, Mississippi.



CHARTER VESSEL/HEADBOAT MORATORIUM PUBLIC HEARINGS POSTPONED

The Gulf Council tabled any further action and deferred public hearings on the proposed Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium Amending the Reef Fish FMP and the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP until the Gulf Council's November 2000 meeting. This amendment would principally limit any future expansion of the charter vessel and headboat fishery while the Gulf Council considers the need for a more comprehensive limited access system. However, after hearing information on red snapper from Dr. Benny Gallaway (see "Council Hears Further Information on Red Snapper" on page 7), several Gulf Council members felt that it would be premature to proceed with this amendment until NMFS provides abundance estimates based on Dr. Gallaway's information. Red snapper is one of the species of concern driving the proposed amendment. If the re-assessment of red snapper stocks indicates that this stock is not being overfished at as high a level as currently thought, then effort limitations to the charter vessel and headboat fisheries may not be needed.

Because of this action, public hearings that were scheduled for October have been cancelled. The Gulf Council may reschedule hearings at its November 13-16, 2000 meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, depending on information provided by NMFS. If hearings on the draft amendment are rescheduled, they will likely occur early in 2001.

PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULED FOR A STONE CRAB AMENDMENT

The Gulf Council has scheduled public hearings for Stone Crab Amendment 7. The Amendment proposes to create a federal trap certificate program for the commercial stone crab fishery in federal waters off Florida. This program will be similar to the trap certificate program adopted by the state of Florida.

A summary of the proposed federal program is as follows:

- Recognizes the state license and tags for use in the EEZ, but not require them.
- Persons who could not obtain or chose not to obtain the state license could apply for a federal vessel permit.
- The same qualifying criteria would apply, i.e., 300 pounds of claws landed in one of the six fishing seasons of 1993/1994 through 1998/1999. May 15, 1999, is end of the qualifying period.
- Persons would have 90 days to apply after the effective date of implementation of the final rule.
- Persons qualifying would be issued a trap certificate and federal trap tags based on their landings divided by 5 pounds which is the annual harvest level that would occur when the number of traps is reduced to the optimum level of 600,000 traps.
- Federal vessel permits, trap certificates, and tags would be non-transferrable.
- It is anticipated that the cost of the federal trap tags would be higher than the cost of the state trap tags, i.e., \$1.10 versus \$0.50.
- It includes a federal appeals process.

The hearings will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

Monday, October 16, 2000

Marathon Government Center
BOCC, Room 9301

2798 Overseas Highway MM 47.5

Marathon, Florida 33050

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Plantation Inn & Gulf Resort
West Fort Island Trail
Crystal River, Florida

The Gulf Council will hear public testimony on this amendment on November 15 at its meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, before taking final action. Written comments will be accepted if received at the Gulf Council office by November 3, 2000.

HEARINGS SCHEDULED TO REVIEW DRAFT AMENDMENT 11 TO THE SHRIMP FMP

The Council will hold public hearings to review Draft Amendment 11 to the Shrimp FMP. This amendment contains alternatives for requiring shrimp vessel permits, shrimp vessel registration, operator permits, and prohibiting trap gear in the royal red shrimp fishery of the EEZ. A copy of the draft amendment can be obtained by calling 813-228-2815. In addition, public testimony will be accepted at the Gulf Council meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, on November 15, 2000. Written comments

will be accepted if received at the Gulf Council office by November 3, 2000.

The meetings are open to the public and physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be directed to the Gulf Council office by September 25, 2000.

The public hearings will be held beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

Monday, October 2, 2000

Laguna Madre Learning Center
Port Isabel High School
Highway 100
Port Isabel, Texas 78578

Wednesday, October 4, 2000

Palacios Recreation Center
2401 Perryman
Palacios, Texas 77465

Thursday, October 5, 2000

The Victorian Hotel
& Conference Center
6300 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston Island, Texas 77551

Friday, October 6, 2000

Police Jury Annex
Courthouse Square
110 Smith Circle
Cameron, Louisiana 70631

Monday, October 9, 2000

Larose Regional Park
2001 East 5th Street
Larose, Louisiana 70373

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

MS Department of Marine
Resources
1141 Bayview Drive
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Tuesday, October 10, 2000

New Orleans Airport Hilton
901 Airline Drive
Kenner, Louisiana 70062

Wednesday, October 11, 2000

Adam's Mark Hotel & Resort
64 South Water Street
Mobile, Alabama 36602

Thursday, October 12, 2000

Franklin County Courthouse
33 Market Street
Apalachicola, Florida 32320

Monday, October 23, 2000

Holiday Inn Beachside
3841 North Roosevelt Blvd.
Key West, Florida 33040

Wednesday, October 25, 2000

Edison Community College
Lee Campus
Corbin Auditorium, Room J-103
8099 College Parkway
Fort Myers, Florida 33919

Thursday, October 26, 2000

Ramada Hotel &
Conference Center
5303 West Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33609

PERMIT MORATORIUM EXTENDED FOR THE MACKEREL FISHERIES OF THE GULF OF MEXICO AND SOUTH ATLANTIC

NMFS has published a final rule, effective October 2, 2000, to implement the regulations in Amendment 12 to the FMP for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. Amendment 12 extends the expiration date of the commercial king mackerel vessel permit moratorium from its current expiration date of October 15, 2000, to October 15, 2005, or until the moratorium can be replaced with a license limitation, limited access, and/or individual fishing quota or individual transferrable quota system, whichever occurs earlier.

The commercial king mackerel fisheries of both the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, valued at approximately \$7 million, are subject to annual closures when quotas are reached. Such closures in these fisheries indicate that fleet size and fishery effort are still excessive to harvest the allowable quotas. The Gulf Councils are concerned that an expiration of the moratorium would result in an increased number of participants in the king mackerel fishery, exacerbating the early closures. The intended effect of this rule is to prevent increases in effort, to possibly reduce the number of permittees in the king mackerel fishery, and to stabilize the economic performance of the current participants, while protecting king mackerel stocks from overfishing.

NOAA PROPOSES PENALTIES OF \$12,500 AGAINST TWO PANAMA CITY RED SNAPPER FISHERMEN

NOAA has charged two Panama City, Florida, fishermen in separate cases with multiple Magnuson-Stevens Act violations and proposes to assess them with civil penalties totaling \$12,500 and a permit sanction of 45 days.

James E. Hoffman, operator of the F/V JAMIE LEE, allegedly harvested red snapper while the recreational and commercial seasons were closed, filleted fish at sea, and hid them in a compartment aboard the vessel. Bill P. Archer, owner and operator of the F/V SEMINOLE WIND, allegedly exceeded the bag and possession limit for red snapper and filleted fish at sea. Both fishermen allegedly made false statements to officers concerning their fishing activities which resulted in a proposed penalty of \$2,500 being added to their base assessments. Hoffman was assessed a total of \$7,000, and Archer was assessed a total of \$5,500 plus a 45-day permit sanction. They will have 30 days from the date they were notified to either pay the penalties, seek to have them modified, or request a hearing before an administrative law judge to deny or contest all or any part of the charges and penalties assessed.

"The discovery and investigation of these violations was made possible because of the outstanding partnership that's in place between the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Enforcement Division and NOAA Fisheries' Office for Law Enforcement," said NOAA Enforcement attorney Cynthia Fenyk. "Fishermen must understand that illegal fishing activities will not be tolerated. Making false statements to authorized officers and any effort to conceal illegal fishing can only worsen their predicament."

NOAA Fisheries urges citizens to report fishery violations during weekly business hours of 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, to its Southeast Region Law Enforcement Division at (727) 570-5344, or after hours and weekends at its National Enforcement Hotline at (800) 853-1964.

RED DRUM STOCK ASSESSMENT PANEL RECOMMENDS RESEARCH METHODS

The Red Drum Stock Assessment Panel (RDSAP) was convened via conference call on August 14, 2000, to review methods, time lines, and costs to achieve research needs they identified in the last stock assessment conducted by NMFS. The RDSAP recommended that at least 200 fish per Gulf state be sampled to determine the age composition of the adults in offshore waters. Purse seines with spotter planes were the preferred method of capture because this gear is less size selective than other methods and boats can be directed to specific schools. However, if this methodology cannot be employed, using existing hook-and-line and net fisheries may need to be considered to obtain fish.

The stock assessment also needs to have accurate absolute abundance estimates of adult red drum, estimates of inshore contributions to offshore stocks, and estimates of release mortality. Besides redoing tag-and-recapture experiments, the RDSAP suggested that technologies such as hydro-acoustics and Light Detecting And Ranging (LIDAR) systems could be employed. Information on the specific contributions by the states to the offshore adult stock could be collected by using high-tech tags to follow fish, biochemical analysis for area-specific markers, or analyses of historical tagging data sets. The RDSAP noted that release mortalities can be obtained through a sampling program asking anglers to note the size and fate of fish caught and released would be useful.

The RDSAP thought that state fishery agencies could enhance information useful to the NMFS assessment. With a little added effort, sampling of the recreational fishery could obtain red drum for recreational age composition data. In addition, a search of state databases for overlooked information on shrimp bycatch and on fish lengths from historical commercial landings would aid the assessment.

Finally, the RDSAP recommended that a workshop be held prior to the next NMFS stock assessment to review the conceptual framework of assessment models and work cooperatively with the NMFS assessment biologist to choose an appropriate model. The Gulf Council concurred with this recommendation at their September 2000 meeting and has asked NMFS to schedule a workshop.

**TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE NOVEMBER
GULF COUNCIL MEETING**

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Monday, November 13, 2000

Orientation Session for New Members

Shrimp Management Committee

- Draft Amendment 11
 - Public Hearing Summaries
 - Public Letters
 - AP/SSC Recommendations
 - Federal Comments
 - Committee Action

Stone Crab Management Committee

- Draft Amendment 7
 - Public Hearing Summaries
 - Public Letters
 - AP/SSC Comments
 - Federal Comments
 - Committee Action

Mackerel Management Committee

- Cobia Presentation - Franks
- Dolphin/Wahoo FMP
 - Approval of Revised Draft

Tuesday, November 14, 2000

Reef Fish Management Committee

- SEP Report
- Red Snapper Restoration Scenarios
 - Management Strategies - Crabtree
 - Discussion of Bycatch Estimates - SEFSC
 - Alternative Assessment Scenarios - Legault
 - Management Implications - Crabtree

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Management Committees

- Charter Vessel Permit Moratorium Amendment
 - Committee Action

Habitat Protection Committee

- Turkey Creek Development Project
- MMS Offshore Storage and Loading Facilities
- District Court (of D.C.) Ruling on EFH Amendments
- Texas AP Recommendations
- Wetland and SAV Policies

Administrative Policy Committee

- Magnuson-Stevens Act Amendments
- Proposed Change to Administrative Handbook

COUNCIL SCHEDULE

Wednesday, November 15, 2000

- I. Call to Order and Introductions - K. Williams
- II. Adoption of Agenda - K. Williams

- III. Approval of Minutes - K. Williams
- IV. Committees Appointments - K. Williams
- V. Public Testimony - K. Williams
 - a. Stone Crab Amendment 7
 - b. Dolphin/Wahoo FMP
 - c. Shrimp Amendment 11
- VI. Shrimp Management Committee Report - Aparicio
- VII. Invasion of Australian Spotted Jellyfish - Graham

Thursday November 16, 2000

- VIII. Council Member Orientation - New Travel Procedures - Martin-Rosa
- IX. Committee Reports
 - a. Reef Fish Management - Minton
 - b. Mackerel Management - R. Williams
 - c. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Management - Minton/R. Williams
 - d. Habitat Protection - Frugé
 - e. Administrative Policy - Fensom
 - f. Stone Crab - Fischer
- X. SAFMC Liaison Report - R. Williams
- XI. ICCAT Advisory Committee Report - Claverie
- XII. Enforcement Reports - Fiedler/Cinalli/Proulx
- XIII. Regional Administrator's Report - Hogarth
- XIV. Director Reports - R. Williams/Minton/Perret/Foote/Osburn/Simpson/Frugé
- XV. 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 MSFCMA, those issues may not be the subject of formal Gulf Council action during the meeting. Gulf Council action 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:

January 15-18, 2001
San Louis Resort and Conference Center
5222 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston, Texas 77551

GULF FISHERY NEWS WANTS YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS

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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 news release was provided by grant funds pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA07FC0015.