



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

*Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico*

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Daniel "Herb" Leedy  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region  
1201 Elmwood Park Blvd  
New Orleans, LA 70123-2394

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Subject: Siting criteria for artificial habitat

Dear Mr. Leedy

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) convened its Ad Hoc Artificial Reef Advisory Panel (AP) and Shrimp AP in March, 2014. At this meeting, there was discussion on the appropriate criteria for identifying new artificial reef areas with emphasis on decommissioned structures within the rigs to reefs program. The two advisory panels developed a list of criteria and requested Council staff overlay available GIS data relative to these criteria in order to identify areas which best met the identified criteria. Main criteria the AP's felt would be important for consideration were the distance from operating rigs, presence of other artificial structures, depth, distance to shore and human population centers, and historical shrimping effort. Overarching goals in selecting potential reef sites were to minimize distance from the majority of existing rig structures (to less than 35 nautical miles) to the proposed siting area(s) and minimize effects on existing fisheries (shrimping).

Council staff has completed this review, sent the attached white paper to the APs in July, 2015, and presented these results to the Council in August, 2015. The Council recommends that a similar approach be used in the siting of rigs to reefs to maximize the benefits to anglers while minimizing the footprint of artificial reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. It should be noted that the example provided is strictly that, an example of how these data could be used, and that the resulting "prioritized areas" are not what are recommended by the Council. The recommendation of the Council is to use a variety of spatial data to analyze areas that would be appropriate for artificial reefs or rigs to reefs siting.

Sincerely,

Kevin Anson  
Chair, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Enclosures (1):

cc: Dale Shively  
Mike McDonough  
James Sanders  
Craig Newton  
Jon Dodrill  
Gulf Council