



**Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council**

Protecting our marine resources

NAVIGATING THE COUNCIL PROCESS

A guide to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL: 888-833-1844

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who is This Guide For?	4
What is the Gulf of Mexico	
Fishery Management Council?.....	5
The Magnuson-Stevens Act (M-SA).....	6
National Standards of the M-SA.....	7
Other Laws Affecting Fisheries Management	7
Who is in Charge	8
Common Acronyms	9
Components of the Council System	10
Council Members.....	10
Council Staff	12
Advisory Bodies.....	12
Council Meetings	13
Briefing Books	14
Handouts	14
Agendas and Agenda Items	14
Robert’s Rules of Order.....	15
Motions	15
Public Comment	16
Fishery Management Plans	17
Why Get Involved in Management?	18
Reference Desk	24
Mailing Lists.....	24
Contact Information	24
Web Resources	24
Important Telephone Numbers.....	26

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is designed for a variety of people. It is for those who want a voice in fisheries management issues; for those who may not want to become involved in fisheries management, but have a need to know how it works; for fishermen and women who want more control over the decisions affecting their livelihood; for those concerned about environmental issues; and for students, managers, fishing family members, and recreational anglers.



This guide is designed for both those who are unfamiliar with fisheries management, as well as those who are already involved in the process. It can be used to guide you through a formal Council meeting, or to get involved in management issues when there is no time to attend Council meetings. The [Reference Desk](#) chapter provides contact information, mailing list information, and useful telephone numbers.



The eight regional fishery management councils

WHAT IS THE GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL?

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (also known as the Council, Gulf Council, or GMFMC) recommends fishery management measures to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The Gulf Council is one of eight fishery management councils in the United States and manages fisheries for reef fish, shrimp, spiny lobster, stone crab, coastal migratory pelagics, corals, essential fish habitat, and red drum in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The EEZ extends from three to 200 miles off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and nine to 200 miles off Texas and the west coast of Florida.

The Gulf Council is made of 17 voting representatives: The Southeast Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the directors of the five Gulf state marine resource management agencies, and 11 members who are nominated by the state governors and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. Appointments are three-year terms, with a maximum of three consecutive terms. In addition, there are four non-voting members representing the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of State, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The other Councils include the North Pacific, Western Pacific, Pacific, Caribbean, New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. While these Councils all operate in similar ways, there are many regional differences among them.

The entire fisheries management process is overseen by Congress, which controls funding for the Councils, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard. States are also involved through membership on the Councils, through the individual state legislatures, and sometimes through research and enforcement. Interstate fishery management commissions help coordinate state efforts. For example, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission coordinates efforts between Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas and the regional fishery management councils.

THE MAGNUSON-STEVENSON ACT

The fishery management council system was set up by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which Congress originally passed (as the Fishery Conservation and Management Act) in 1976. We refer to it as the Magnuson-Stevens Act. It is named for the late Senator Warren Magnuson of Washington and Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is the main law governing management of living marine resources in the United States and guides nearly all Council actions. Originally designed to encourage local-level participation and representation through the eight regional Councils, the Magnuson-Stevens Act set up a regional fishery management council system and described how it would

work. The Act extended control of U.S. waters to 200 miles offshore; phased-out foreign fishing activities within the EEZ; and created measures to prevent overfishing - especially by foreign fleets - to allow overfished stocks to recover, and to conserve and manage fishery resources.



The Magnuson-Stevens Act has been amended several times since it was first passed in 1976. In 1996, it was revised by the Sustainable Fisheries Act. That revision includes provisions to reduce bycatch, consider the effects of management decisions on

communities, protect essential fish habitat, and modify council procedures. These goals are embodied in ten “national standards” that each council is required to meet.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is currently under review for reauthorization. Any revisions may significantly change how fisheries are managed.

OTHER LAWS AFFECTING FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

U.S. fishery regulations must comply with many laws apart from the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Some of these include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Endangered Species Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. International agreements and organizations, such as the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, and the United Nation's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, also play a role in shaping management of U.S. fisheries.

National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Act

Conservation and management measures shall:

- (1) Prevent overfishing while achieving optimum yield.
- (2) Be based upon the best scientific information available.
- (3) Manage individual stocks as a unit throughout their range, to the extent practicable; interrelated stocks shall be managed as a unit or in close coordination.
- (4) Not discriminate between residents of different states; any allocation of privileges must be fair and equitable.
- (5) Where practicable, promote efficiency, except that no such measure shall have economic allocation as its sole purpose.
- (6) Take into account and allow for variations among the contingencies in fisheries, fishery resources, and catches.
- (7) Minimize costs and avoid duplications, where practicable.
- (8) Take into account the importance of fishery resources to fishing communities to provide for the sustained participation of, and minimize adverse impacts to, such communities (consistent with conservation requirements).
- (9) Minimize bycatch or mortality from bycatch.
- (10) Promote safety of human life at sea.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Managing fisheries is a complicated task, in part because there are so many states involved, all of which have their own agencies and laws. In some cases, other countries are also involved. In the U.S., individual states are responsible for managing fisheries three to nine miles offshore. Regional fishery management councils recommend management measures for fisheries in the EEZ; these measures are in turn subject to approval and implementation by NMFS.

MANAGEMENT AREA

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council develops management plans for the EEZ off the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. These are federal waters.

State waters cover the area from shore to three to nine miles out into the Gulf. Because fish move between state and federal waters without regard to political boundaries, the Council's plans cover the entire area out to 200 miles.

The Council manages fish species, so while regulations apply in federal waters, they may also apply in state waters.

States are encouraged to adopt regulations that are at least as stringent as federal laws.



FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

ABC	Acceptable Biological Catch
AP	Advisory Panel
BRD	Bycatch Reduction Device
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort
DOC	Department of Commerce
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FMP	Fishery Management Plan
HAPC	Habitat Area of Particular Concern
HMS	Highly Migratory Species
HPUE	Harvest Per Unit Effort
IFQ	Individual Fishing Quota
ITQ	Individual Transferable Quota
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MRFSS	Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
OY	Optimum Yield
SAP	Stock Assessment Panel
SEP	Socioeconomic Panel
SERO	Southeast Regional Office (NMFS)
SSC	Scientific and Statistical Committee
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TED	Turtle Excluder Device
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System

COMPONENTS OF THE COUNCIL SYSTEM

The Council system is composed of Council members, Council staff, advisory bodies who advise the Council, and the public who participate in the Council decision-making process.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Council is the system's decision-making body. The Council has 17 voting members and four non-voting members.

Technically, the Council recommends regulations to the Secretary of Commerce (through NMFS). The decisions made by the Council are not final until they are approved by the Secretary of Commerce through NMFS.

Council members must balance competing interests while trying to make decisions for the public good. Council members are advised by the Council's advisory panels and committees, Council staff, the public, states, academia, and NMFS.

The 17 voting members include:

- ◇ The directors of state fish and wildlife departments from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, or their designees.
- ◇ The Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office or a designee.
- ◇ Eleven private citizens who are familiar with the fishing industry, marine conservation, or both. These citizens are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce from lists submitted by the governors of the member states. They include one "obligatory member" from each state, which ensures that each state is represented. The others are "at-large" members who may come from any state.

There are also four non-voting members who assist the Council in decision making. They represent:

- ◇ The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, which coordinates data and research for the Gulf states
- ◇ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which serves in an advisory role
- ◇ The U.S. Department of State, which is concerned about management decisions that have international implications
- ◇ The U.S. Coast Guard, which is concerned about enforcement and safety issues



The 2005-2006 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Back row, from left to right are Philip Horn, Kay Williams, Degraaf Adams, Myron Fischer, Bobbi Walker, Larry Simpson, Doug Fruge, Karen Foote, Julie Morris, Roy Williams, Bill Daughdrill, Karen Bell, Bob Shipp, Joe Hendrix. Seated in front are Chad Brick, Corky Perret, Robin Riechers, and Stevens Heath. Not pictured are Vernon Minton, Walter Thomassie, and Roy Crabtree.

COUNCIL STAFF

Council staff support the Council by providing information for management decisions, providing information to the public about Council activities, helping the public participate in the process, coordinating the process and meetings, assisting advisory groups, and creating fishery management documents.

The Council staff consists of an Executive Director, Deputy Director, technical staff and support staff. Technical staff oversee each fishery management plan (reef fish, shrimp, spiny lobster, stone crab, coastal migratory pelagics, corals, essential fish habitat, and red drum), and also focus on economics, social science, and habitat, as well as outreach and education. As of July, 2006, there are 13 members of the Council staff.

The Council is a nonprofit organization; as such, the Council staff are not federal government employees. The Executive Director carries out tasks assigned by the Council and, with the Deputy Director, directs and oversees staff.

For a complete list of staff members and their contact information, please visit the staff page of our web site at www.gulfcouncil.org.

ADVISORY BODIES

When reviewing potential rule changes, the Council draws upon the services of knowledgeable people from other state and federal agencies, universities, and the public, who serve on panels and committees.

Advisory bodies include advisory panels, management teams, technical teams, the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and other committees.

Advisory bodies provide comments, both written and oral, on relevant issues being considered by the Council.

Advisory Panels (APs) - Recreational and commercial fishermen, charter boat operators, buyers, sellers, NGO members and consumers who are knowledgeable about a particular fishery.

Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs) - Economists, biologists, sociologists and natural resource attorneys who are knowledgeable about the technical aspects of fisheries in the Gulf.

Stock Assessment Panels (SAPs) - 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.

Socioeconomic Panel (SEP) - Sociologists and economists who review the findings of the SAPs and advise the Council of the social and economic impacts of setting total allowable catches at the various levels recommended by the SAPs.

There are also ad hoc committees, which focus on specific timely topics, then disband.

Meetings of the various panels and committees are open to the public. Anyone may attend and provide comments for the public record. Written comments are also accepted and considered by the Council.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Council meets five times each year, usually in January, March, June, August, and November, with meetings held in each of the five Gulf states. Meetings are usually held in large cities where there are adequate meeting rooms and airport connections.

Most Council meetings take four to five days and are open to the public, except for an occasional short closed session in which the Council deals with personnel or litigation issues. Minutes are taken for each Council meeting and are available to the public.

BRIEFING BOOKS

Council members and staff receive either a CD or hard copy of a briefing book prior to the meeting. The briefing book contains brief summaries that provide background information for each agenda item, reports and materials for each item, and written public comment. The briefing book table of contents is categorized by subject and coordinated with the agenda. The material has an identifying tab/number located in the upper right corner.

Complete copies of the briefing books are available to the public on CD. Due to the size of the briefing book and the effort required to create it, requests for hard copies are limited to the section relevant to the subject of interest.

There are three briefing book deadlines that fall on the Friday three, two, and one week prior to the meeting. Material provided after the last mailing is included in a final packet provided to members upon arrival at the meeting. Public comments can be e-mailed, mailed, or faxed to the Council at any time and on any issue. Copies of these comments and other correspondence are provided to Council members twice a week.

HANDOUTS

Copies of the agendas and pertinent briefing book materials are provided at a table in the back of the Council chambers. Copies of all reports, handouts, and statements generated during the Council meetings are also provided at the table.

AGENDAS AND AGENDA ITEMS

The Council works from an agenda. The agenda is posted on the Council's web site, mailed to individuals who have requested to be included on our mailing list, and provided on the table at the back of the Council chambers.

The contents of the agenda are set by the Council Chair, working in concert with Council staff. To have an item placed on the agenda, talk to the Executive Director, Chairman, or an individual Council member; suggest the agenda item during an advisory panel meeting; or make the suggestion during the public comment period.

Each agenda item has several parts. First, a staff person usually gives an overview of what to expect during the agenda item, based on the situation summary provided in the Briefing Book. This may be followed by presentations or discussion of the item. Finally, the Council discusses the topic and may vote on it.

ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

The Council meeting process follows “Robert’s Rules of Order,” rules for parliamentary procedure that were first developed in 1876. The Executive Director serves as the “parliamentarian” and sits next to the Council Chair to assist with questions regarding rules of order.

MOTIONS

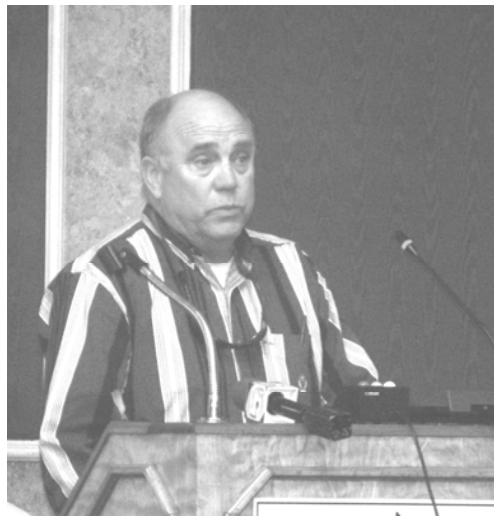
During discussion, voting Council members may move to take action. The motion must receive a second by another Council member before it is voted on. Sometimes Council members will make a “friendly amendment” to a motion. A friendly amendment is a suggestion for a minor change that does not alter the overall intent of the motion. Other times, a Council member may make a “substitute motion” which is used to propose action significantly different than the motion on the floor. Amendments may be made to any action on the floor and must be voted on. No more than three proposed actions may be on the floor at one time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Council holds two public comment periods—one for interested parties to provide testimony regarding specific agenda items—the other, Open Public Comment, is time set aside for interested parties to comment on any fishery issue of concern.

Anyone wishing to testify during either comment period must complete a registration card before the beginning of public testimony. When your name is called, approach the podium, introduce yourself, and give your testimony. Due to time constraints, public comment is usually limited to five minutes per person.

For those wishing for Council members to have copies of written testimony or information, 30 copies should be provided to staff for distribution. All written information shall include a statement of the source and date of such information. Oral or written statements shall include a brief description of the background and interests of the person testifying.



Public input is encouraged and appreciated as the Council works toward managing and conserving our fisheries.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

The fisheries management process is based on fishery management plans (FMPs). An FMP is a set of management objectives and strategies for achieving those objectives. The Council develops FMPs, amends them, and makes decisions such as setting harvest limits within the framework of existing FMPs. In its decision-making process, the Council is required to use the best scientific information available and to meet the ten national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. It must also comply with the other federal laws. The Gulf Council currently has FMPs for reef fish, shrimp, spiny lobster, stone crab, coastal migratory pelagics, corals, and red drum.

The Council does not manage harvesting of all fish species. There is not enough funding available to do so, and state or inter-state management works for many species. The Council focuses its efforts on the major fisheries that require regional management. For the Gulf Council, those include the following:

- Reef Fish
- Shrimp
- Spiny Lobster
- Stone Crab
- Coastal Migratory Pelagics
- Corals
- Red Drum

For more information on any of these Fishery Management Plans, click on [Fishery Management Plans](#) under the [Library](#) section of our web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>, or call our offices at 813-348-1630.

WHY GET INVOLVED IN MANAGEMENT?

WHY GET INVOLVED?

Different people have different reasons for becoming involved in the fisheries management process. Many groups are concerned about fisheries, including commercial fishermen, fishing families, recreational fishers, environmentalists, consumers, scientists, the tourism industry, and local communities. Whatever background or motivations, these groups share a common desire to ensure the health of fish populations and the marine ecosystems on which they depend.

If you are a member of the commercial fishing community or if your business serves recreational fishers, the best reason to get involved is because the process affects your livelihood. And while you have no control over the weather, ocean conditions, or market prices, becoming involved in the Council process gives you a voice in the decisions that affect your business.

Getting involved means commitment and hard work. It may mean reading documents, talking to people you don't know, attending meetings, speaking in public, writing letters or e-mails, joining or forming an association, or joining an advisory panel or committee.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Many members of the fishing community and the public don't have the time or resources to attend Council meetings. Fortunately, there are other ways to get involved without leaving home. Many of the suggestions below come from the publication *Fish or Cut Bait*, a guide to fisheries management written by anthropologists Bonnie McCay and Carolyn Creed (1999).

LEARN

The first step to getting involved in the Council process is to learn about it. Learn how the Council system operates; learn the back-

ground of the problem in which you are interested. Learn the views of Council members and why they hold those views. Learn the meaning of terms and acronyms like “CPUE” and “optimum yield”.

Remember, knowledge is power. The more you know the greater your level of confidence and the more valuable your input. Some ways to learn include:

- ◇ Visiting other websites related to fisheries management.
- ◇ Getting on a mailing list. The Council maintains extensive mailing lists of organizations and individuals who wish to receive meeting notices, agendas, newsletters, statistical documents, FMPs, and proposed regulations. If you would like to be on our e-mailing list, email pressreleases@gulfcouncil.org with the word “Subscribe” in the subject line. To receive information via U.S. mail, call Charlene Ponce 1-888-833-1844 ext. 229 and request to be added to our mailing list.
- ◇ Visiting the Council office.
- ◇ Reading the Council newsletter to learn about recent issues and decisions.
- ◇ Reading other resources about how fisheries management works. *Understanding Fisheries Management* and *Fish or Cut Bait* are two excellent sources targeted to the fishing community.
- ◇ Reading *Fisheries Management in a Nutshell*.
- ◇ Attending Council, committee, or advisory panel meetings.

JOIN A GROUP

Groups are organized around different issues and interests. For example, environmental issues, fishing gear types, fisheries, communities, and other interests. There are also groups that cut across interests and gear types. Join a group that represents your interests. If you can't find a group, create one. Joining a group will give you a greater voice, more motivation, and a larger pool of knowledge from which to draw.

MAKE INFORMED COMMENTS

Your comments will be most effective if they show that you know about the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the “National Standards” used to evaluate fishery management plans. Try to frame your comments and objections in these terms.

Whether writing or testifying, make sure that your comments are relevant to whatever the Council is discussing at the moment. Know what stage of the process the Council is in. For example, are there important deadlines approaching? What political pressures are influencing the decision?

GET TO KNOW SOMEONE

Getting to know someone is one of the best ways to make sure your voice is heard. Get to know your Council representatives, committee members, and staff.

TALK INFORMALLY

One of the best ways to interact with the Council is simply to call a Council member or staff person. This type of contact provides a more personal way to discuss issues that concern or interest you. When calling, explain who you are, what your question or problem is, and ask for help in understanding the issue.

Ask for a list of the committees and Council members most directly involved with the fishery in which you are interested. Ask to whom you should speak to get more background or advice. You can also speak at meetings and hearings, in the halls during meetings, or at the Council offices. Be sure to attend informal events associated with Council meetings. You may also want to speak with state agency staff and your state and federal representatives.

ATTEND A MEETING

All regular Council meetings, committee meetings and advisory panel meetings are open to the public. Council meetings include a section for public testimony regarding issues on the agenda, as well as an open public comment section for those interested in speaking about general fishery issues. Council meetings and public hearings are held throughout the Gulf coast, and public comment summaries are provided to Council members for review and consideration.

TESTIFY

Members of the commercial and recreational fishery, the environmental community, and the public at-large are encouraged to testify at Council meetings and hearings. This involves speaking in a formal public forum. You will have to speak into a microphone to make your comments. Due to time constraints, public comment is limited to five minutes for individuals and ten minutes for group representatives. Comments submitted at least two weeks before the meeting are included in the briefing book that is distributed to Council members at least a week before the Council meeting.

It is best to be well prepared when providing testimony. Read up on Council decisions related to your topic of interest, and make sure that your comments are organized and relevant. Sign-up cards are provided at the entrance of the meeting room for those who wish to address the Council.

WRITE

The Council is very interested in hearing your opinions and comments on current management issues. Council members read and consider all letters and emails that arrive prior to the briefing book deadline, which is two weeks before a Council meeting.

Generally, letters are addressed to the Council Chair or the Executive Director. However, depending on the situation and the stage of the decision-making process, you may write letters or emails to a specific Council member, the Regional Administrator of NMFS, or others.

Following is a list of tips for writing the Council.

- ◇ **Keep it short.** A one page letter is best. If your letter is too long you run the risk that key points may be overlooked.
- ◇ **Stick to one subject.** If you are writing concerning a Plan Amendment that addresses a number of issues, it's okay to comment on all the issues in one letter. However, when writing about separate issues, it's best to write separate letters.
- ◇ **Identify yourself at the beginning.** Are you a marine scientist, recreational fishermen, commercial fisherman, etc.? If you are representing a group, provide the name of the group and the size of its membership.
- ◇ **State your opinion.** State the reasons for that opinion. Be explicit. Don't leave the reader guessing your meaning.
- ◇ **Make sure your letter is legible.** If the reader has to decipher handwriting, it will detract from the message. A typed or printed letter is best.
- ◇ You may also write letters to trade magazines, such as the *Florida Sportsman* or *National Fisherman*, which many managers read. Since the National Marine Fisheries Service reviews all Council decisions, it is also effective to write or call the Southeast Regional office of NMFS.

SERVE

Interested citizens may serve on panels or committees. If you are interested in serving, talk to the Executive Director and the key staff person for the fishery in which you are interested.

WILL I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Your influence on Council decisions is relative to the amount of energy you put into being involved. Involvement can range from writing a letter to serving on an advisory panel.

No matter what your level of involvement, your views will have more weight and influence if you learn about the context of the decisions being made, the timeline for the decision-making process, and the best ways to communicate with Council members and advisory panel members.



Testifying at a Council meeting

Photo courtesy of Wade Osborne/Afishionado Radio

REFERENCE DESK

MAILING LISTS

To receive notices, newsletters, and other information by US mail, call 888-833-1844 and request to be placed on our mailing list. If you prefer to receive information via e-mail, please send a blank E-mail to pressreleases@gulfcouncil.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line. This will automatically add you to our E-mail list.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Toll-free: 888-833-1844
Fax: 813-348-1711

Email comments to gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

WEB SITE RESOURCES

- ◇ Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council:
<http://www.gulfcouncil.org>
- ◇ NOAA Home page
<http://www.noaa.gov>
- ◇ NOAA Fisheries Service Home Page
<http://www.nmfs.gov/>
- ◇ NOAA Southeast Regional Office (St. Petersburg, Florida)
<http://www.caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>
- ◇ NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center
<http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/>
- ◇ Commercial Fishery Statistics
<http://www.st.nmfs.gov/commercial/index.html>

WEB SITE RESOURCES continued

- ◇ MRFSS Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey
<http://www.st.nmfs.gov/recreational/index.html>
- ◇ Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
<http://www.myfwc.com>
- ◇ Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Marine Resources Division
<http://www.dcnr.state.al.us/>
- ◇ Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
<http://www.wlf.state.la.us/>
- ◇ Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
<http://www.dmr.state.ms.us>
- ◇ Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us>
- ◇ Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
<http://www.gsmfc.org>
- ◇ Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
<http://www.psmfc.org>
- ◇ Gulf of Mexico Program
<http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/>

Additional web resources can be found on the [Links](#) page of our web site—www.gulfcouncil.org

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

NMFS Operations Branch 727-824-5305
NMFS Permits and Regulations Branch 727-824-5326
(see below for tuna permit applications)

To apply for permits online: www.nmfspermits.com

NMFS nationwide federal fishing violations
hotline 800-853-1964
NMFS 24-hour tuna information line 888-872-8862
(also for tuna permit applications) 978-281-9260
NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division 301-713-2347
NMFS Swordfish/Billfish Recreational Reporting 800-894-5528

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council 843-571-4366

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission 228-875-5912

U.S. Coast Guard, 7th District 305-415-6781
(Florida east of St. Marks)

U.S. Coast Guard, 8th District 504-671-2245
(St. Marks, Florida to Texas)

Regional NMFS Office for Law Enforcement 727-824-5344

NMFS Enforcement Field Offices:
Marathon, FL 305-743-3110
Niceville, FL 850-729-8628

Baton Rouge, LA 225-769-5477
Austin, TX 512-916-5401
Galveston, TX 409-770-0812
Harlingen, TX 956-423-3450

State Agencies:

Alabama Department of Conservation and Marine Resources	251-861-2882
Information or to report state fishing violations	251-968-7576
24hour voice mail to report state fishing violations	251-476-1256
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission information	850-488-4676
To report state fishing violations	850-488-9924 888-404-3922
Cellular phone	*FWC
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries information	225-765-2800
To report state fishing violations	800-442-2511
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Information and to report state fishing violations	228-374-5000
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Information	800-792-1112
To report state fishing violations	512-389-4848 281-842-8100 800-792-game

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For more information on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council visit our web site gulfcouncil.org or call us toll free at 888-833-1844.



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