



Gulf Fishery News

Volume 29, Issue 1

January–March, 2007

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The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council *Protecting our marine resources*

Council bids farewell to longtime member Roy Williams

Roy Williams, Section Leader, Marine Fisheries Management Section, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission and long-time member of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, was honored Tuesday evening, January 24, 2007, by colleagues and friends. Williams retired in January.

During an impromptu roasting of sorts, Gulf Councilwoman Karen Foote, Louisiana

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, presented Williams with a cleverly crafted parody highlighting his service.

“I recently learned that antique clocks are a passion of yours, which gives a whole new perspective to the term *rebuilding time*,” she quipped.

Several others rose to the occasion. In all, Williams received high praise from not only his colleagues, but also



Council Member Roy Williams says goodbye

See [Williams](#), page 6

A Reminder about Fish Traps

Gulf of Mexico fish trap endorsements expired as of February 7, 2007. Fish traps are prohibited in the EEZ..

Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper AP to Form

[Details on page 2](#)



Photo Courtesy of TPWD © 2007

Red Snapper draws a crowd

Open public comment at the January Council meeting drew quite a crowd. While nearly 100 people signed up to speak, more than 200 filled the meeting room. Most were there to talk about red snapper.

At issue is the need to set management measures to ensure that red snapper reaches the targets outlined in its rebuilding plan—to end overfishing by 2010 and to have the stock rebuilt by 2032.

“The fishery remains overfished and is undergoing overfishing,” said Richard Leard, Deputy Director Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

By law, the Council has one year to act once a fishery is declared overfished or undergoing overfishing.

Based on federal rules promulgated in

1989 requiring Councils to address overfished stocks, a rebuilding plan has been implemented and modified as new data became available.

Amendment 1, which specifies a commercial quota and recreational bag limits served as the first rebuilding plan. It was replaced by the current rebuilding plan, Amendment 22, which will be replaced by Reef Fish Amendment 27/ Shrimp Amendment 14.

Additionally, a commercial red snapper IFQ program has been put in place, and new BRDs have been approved, with the development of even more efficient devices expected.

Various other management measures

See [Red Snapper](#), next page

Red Snapper *(from page 1)*

also have been implemented, all designed to address the issue.

Still, according to a 2005 stock assessment, the fishery continues to experience overfishing and remains overfished. The Council is currently considering a new slate of management alternatives aimed at addressing overfishing and reducing bycatch in both the red snapper directed fishery and the shrimp fishery in the form of Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp Amendment 14.

However, questions and concerns about the data used to develop draft alternatives caused a delay in the amendment process, prompting NOAA Fisheries Service to step in with a proposed interim rule.

Those who testified at the January Council meeting spoke largely against the proposal, which would set TAC at 6.5 million pounds, decrease the

recreational bag limit from four to two, and reduce the commercial size limit to 13 inches for the 2007.

But the Council has no say when it comes to the interim rule, and in the meantime continues to move forward with the joint amendment.

At its January meeting, the Council selected preferred alternatives for the draft amendment and is scheduled to hold public hearings on that document in May before finalizing those selections.

Those selected alternatives, which will be implemented in 2008 include:

- a 5.0 mp TAC and a 2-fish recreational bag limit
- set the red snapper bag limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels to zero
- reduce the minimum size limit

in the commercial red snapper fishery to 13 inches

- require the use of non-stainless steel circle hooks when using natural bait in the harvest of reef fish, as well as the use of NMFS approved venting tools and dehooking devices when harvesting all reef fish

- establish a framework procedure to adjust the effort target and closed season for the shrimp fishery

- establish a seasonal shrimp closure in the 10-30 fathom zone in the Gulf on the same start date as the closure of the EEZ off Texas, and annually evaluate the level of effort and associated red snapper reduction and adjust the duration and area of the closure as necessary, in accordance with the framework.

The amendment will replace the interim rule in 2008.

See page 10 for hearing dates



A crowd gathers for open public testimony during the January 2006 Gulf Council Meeting held in Point Clear, Alabama

Council seeks applicants for Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper AP

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is currently seeking applicants to serve on an Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper Advisory Panel. The Panel will discuss and develop new ideas for managing the recreational and for-hire red snapper fisheries.

Interested parties should submit a resume or letter of interest to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Letters must be received by March 16, 2007.

Appointments to the AP will be made during the March 26 – 30, 2007 regular Council meeting, which will be held in Destin, Florida.

Individuals currently serving on an AP are eligible to serve on this newly formed panel.

Applications are also being accepted for all Advisory Panels, Scientific & Statistical Committees, Stock Assessment Panels and the Socioeconomic Panel.

For more information, please contact the Gulf Council Office at 888-833-1844.

Gulf of Mexico fishery closures

Recreational Closures:

Grouper

Seasonal closure from February 15—March 15, 2007 for gag, red grouper, and black grouper. These fisheries will reopen at 12:01 a.m., local time on March 15, 2007.

Red Snapper

NOAA Fisheries Service closed the recreational fishery for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico federal waters beginning at 12:01 a.m., local time, on November 1, 2006. The recreational fishery will remain closed until 12:01 a.m., local time, April 21, 2007.

Commercial Closures:

King Mackerel

The Commercial run-around gillnet fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the **southern Florida west coast subzone** is closed. The gillnet fishery will remain closed in the EEZ through 6:00 a.m., local time, January 22, 2008, unless changed by future notice in the *Federal Register*.

The daily vessel trip limit for commercial hook-and-line fishing of King mackerel in the **east coast subzone** is increased to 75 fish beginning 12:01 a.m., February 2, 2007. The 75-fish trip limit will remain in effect until March 31, 2007, unless the subzone's quota is reached and the fishery is closed before the end of the fishing year.

The daily vessel trip limit for commercial hook-and-line vessels fishing for Gulf group king mackerel in the **northern Florida west coast subzone** is reduced to 500 pounds beginning 12:01 a.m., Monday November 27, 2006. The 500 pound trip limit will remain in effect until the quota is reached and the fishery closes or until the end of the current fishing year (June 30, 2007), whichever comes first.

The commercial fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the **western zone** is closed, effective 12:00 noon (local time) October 6, 2006, through June 30, 2007. NOAA Fisheries Service has determined the 2006/2007 **western zone** commercial quota of 1.01 million pounds of king mackerel has been reached.

Spanish Mackerel

The trip limit for the commercial fishery for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel is adjusted to 1,500 pounds per day, effective 6:00 a.m. local time, February 5, 2007, through February 28, 2007, in the **Southern Zone**, which extends from 30°42'45.6" N. lat. To 25° 20.4'N lat..

Grouper

Seasonal closure from February 15—March 15, 2007 for gag, red grouper, and black grouper. These fisheries will reopen at 12:01 a.m., local time on March 15, 2007.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Wayne Swingle Richard Leard
Executive Director Deputy Director

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TENTATIVE COMMITTEE SCHEDULE
GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
 Embassy Suites Hotel
 Destin-Miramar Beach, Florida
 March 26–28, 2007

Monday, March 26, 2007

1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

AP Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION)

- Appointment of AP Members

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

SSC Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION)

- Appointment of SSC, SAP, and SEP members

5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Budget/Personnel Committee

- State Liaison Budget Increases

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Management Committees

- SEFSC Analyses Runs
- Public Hearing Draft of Reef Fish 27/Shrimp 14
- SSC Recommendations
- Committee Recommendations
- NMFS Final Interim Rule for Red Snapper
- SEFSC Report on Release Mortality in Relation to Depth and Dolphin Predation
- Framework Action to Revise List of Allowable BRDs
- Options Paper for Reef Fish Amendment 31/Shrimp Amendment 15

1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Management Committee (Continued)

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

8:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Reef Fish Management Committee

- Update on Reef Fish Amendment 29 (Grouper Allocation)
- Ad Hoc Grouper IFQ AP recommendations for IFQ Program
- Referendum Guidelines for Grouper/Tilefish IFQ
- Scoping Document for Amendment 30
- Public Hearing Comments
- SSC Recommendations
- Formation of Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper AP for developing new ideas to manage recreational/for-hire red snapper fishery (CLOSED SESSION)
- Charge
- Selection of Members

1:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum Management Committee

- Status on Public Hearing Draft of Aquaculture Amendment
- SSC Recommendations on Red Drum SEDAR Stock Assessment

2:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Administrative Policy Committee

- MSFCMA Requirements for Annual Catch Limits

4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.

Data Collection Committee

- Discussion paper on an Amendment to Require Trip Tickets for Recreational-for-Hire Sector

TENTATIVE COUNCIL AGENDA
GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
 Embassy Suites Hotel
 Destin-Miramar Beach, Florida
 March 29–30, 2007

Thursday, March 29, 2007

- I. Call to Order and Introductions – Riechers (8:30 a.m. – 8:35 a.m.)
- II. Adoption of Agenda – Riechers (8:35 a.m. – 8:40 a.m.)
- III. Approval of Minutes – Riechers (8:40 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.)
- IV. Public Testimony ^{1 2}–Riechers
 - a. Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) (if any) (8:45 a.m.–9:00 a.m.)
- V. Open Public Comment ³– Riechers (9:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.)
- VI. Committee Reports
 - a. Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp–Minton/Perret (1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.)
 - b. Reef Fish Management Committee - Minton (3:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.)
 - c. CLOSED COUNCIL SESSION for AP and SSC Selection Committees (4:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.)

Friday, March 30, 2007

- VI. Committee Reports–**Continued**
 - d. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum–Minton/Adams/Foote (8:30 a.m.– 9:00 a.m.)
 - e. Budget/personnel–Shipp (9:00 a.m.–9:15 a.m.)
 - f. Data Collection Committee–Adams (9:15 a.m.–9:45 a.m.)
 - g. Administrative Policy–Morris (9:45 a.m.–10:15 a.m.)
- VII. Other Business - Riechers (10:15 a.m.–11:15 a.m.)

A note about open public comment: In the interest of giving everyone an opportunity to speak, speakers are asked to limit comments to three minutes. If your sentiments are reflected in comments made by others, please state so and allow the next speaker to address the Council.

Individuals may be asked to reduce speaking time even further in order to accommodate all those who wish to speak.

¹Persons wishing to testify must turn in a registration card before the beginning of the public testimony period.

²Persons wishing Council members to have copies of written testimony or information should provide 30 copies to staff for distribution to members. 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.

³The Council has set aside this time for open public comment regarding any fishery issue or concern. People wishing to speak before the Council should complete a public comment card, making sure to check the box marked *Open Public Comment*.

Council Maintains Texas Shrimp Closure

In a unanimous vote during its January meeting, the Gulf Council approved a motion to continue the Texas shrimp closure for 2007, to the 200-mile limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The management objectives of the Texas closure are to increase the yield of brown shrimp and eliminate the waste of the resource caused by discarding undersized shrimp caught during a period in their life cycle when they are growing rapidly.

The closure results in larger shrimp in the fishery and subsequently a higher market value. This enables fishermen to harvest premium marketable-sized shrimp, thereby increasing revenues to the shrimping industry.

Since 1981, when the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) was implemented, there has been some form of closure off the coast of Texas. In 1989, though, the 200-mile closure went into effect and has remained in effect since.

The closure is part of cooperative seasonal closure with the State of Texas and runs concurrent with its mid-season closure.

Texas Shrimp Closure:

- Closed from the coast line to 200-miles off Texas
- Closure for 2007, approximately May 15 until approximately July 15. Actual duration depends on sampling done by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Protects migrating juvenile shrimp which results in larger shrimp
- Larger shrimp result in increased revenues to the shrimping industry



The Texas Shrimp closure extends from the coast line to 200 miles off Texas

Frequently Used Acronyms

ABC Acceptable Biological Catch

AP Advisory Panel

BRD Bycatch Reduction Device

CPUE Catch Per Unit Effort

EEZ Exclusive Economic Zone

EFH Essential Fish Habitat

FMP Fishery Management Plan

GSMFC Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

HAPC Habitat Area of Particular Concern

HMS Highly Migratory Species

IFQ Individual Fishing Quota

MSY Maximum Sustainable Yield

MRFSS Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey

NMFS National Marine Fisheries Service

OY Optimum Yield

SEDAR Southeast Data, Assessment and Review

SSC Scientific and Statistical Committee

SFA Sustainable Fisheries Act

TAC Total Allowable Catch

TED Turtle Excluder Device

VMS Vessel Monitoring System

Williams (from page 1)

from the commercial, recreational and for-hire fishers, researchers and NGO's, for being a gentleman, and for his dedication to fisheries conservation.

"Roy always sought input from all sides, explored issues thoroughly, and was willing to change his approach when new and better information was brought to the table," said Foote.

Williams, who spent 38 years with the state of Florida conserving and protecting its valuable saltwater fisheries resource, began his tenure on the Gulf Council in 1987.

He served as the Council's Chair for the 01-02 Council year and as its Vice-Chair for the 00-01 Council year. He also chaired the Mackerel Management Committee for seven years, from 1994—2001.

Mackerel was one of Williams' biggest successes. In 1974, he served as project leader of the highly successful king mackerel tagging and stock assessment program.

A pioneer of modern marine fisheries management, Williams played a major leadership role in crafting successful long-term management strategies for king and Spanish mackerel, along with many other species.

"The scope and breadth of Williams' achievements in development of key marine fisheries management plans is truly remarkable," said Ken Haddad, FWC executive director.

"He's played a major role in helping Florida maintain its status as the 'Fishing Capital of the World'."

Best Wishes, Roy!



Council members bid farewell to Roy Williams. Clockwise, from top left, Karen Foote, Debbie and Roy Williams, Corky Perret, Bobbi Walker with Debbie and Roy , Robin Riechers, and, of course, Roy Williams.

Development Plan Created for Recreational Fisheries Survey Upgrade

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service office of Science and Technology has completed a development plan that outlines a strategy to address the National Research Council's (NRC) recommendations for solving the most critical questions facing recreational fisheries data collection and analysis.

"Ultimately, our goal was to develop an inclusive yet efficient plan for improving recreational fishing data collection programs," said Dr. John Boreman, Director, NOAA NMFS Office of Science and Technology, in a letter transmitting the plan.

The plan outlines the steps for a successful redesign of the current survey statistics programs. The objective of the plan is to "formulate a system of surveys that provides the best possible scientific information for use in management of the nation's marine recreational fisheries."

At the core of the plan is the establishment of an Executive Steering Committee that will coordinate the efforts of teams and workgroups, which will include an Operations Team, Design and Analysis

Group and a Communications and Education Group.

Also stressed is a commitment to maximize constituent input into the process.

Last year the NRC, at the request of the NMFS, reviewed the current methods used to collect and analyze recreational marine fisheries data for application to fisheries management.

Some of the recommendations made by the NRC include:

- Redesigning the MRFSS to improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of sampling and estimation procedures.
- Achieve a greater degree of standardization among state surveys and between state surveys and the central MRFSS.
- For-hire sector marine recreational fisheries should be considered a commercial sector and should be reflected in the survey methods and reporting requirements.

To review the plan visit www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/RecSurveyUpgrade/RecSurveyUpgrade.html

See **FAQ's**, page 11

Gulf Council Amendment Update

Reef Fish Amendment 18A—Resolves several issues related to monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations, updates the framework procedure for setting TAC, and reduces bycatch mortality of incidentally caught endangered sea turtles and smalltooth sawfish. Most actions became effective September 8, 2006. The VMS deadline was extended 90 days, from December 7, 2006 to March 7, 2007. As of January 11, 2007, 248 VMS units had been installed, with an additional 30 ordered. **Approximately \$2.732 million is left for reimbursement of VMS units;** however, this money is available to other fisheries throughout the U.S. on a first come, first served basis.

Shrimp Amendment 13—Established a separate vessel permit for the royal red shrimp fishery, status determination criteria for penaeid shrimp, standardized bycatch reporting methodology, a permit moratorium, and a requirement to complete a Gulf shrimp vessel and gear characterization form. The amendment became effective October 26, 2006. **Moratorium permits are required in the Gulf shrimp fishery beginning March 26, 2007. Fishermen may apply for a moratorium permit until October 26, 2007.**

Recreational Grouper Regulatory Amendment—Reduced the red grouper bag limit from 2—1 fish per person, per day. It also prohibits the recreational harvest of red grouper, black grouper, and gag from February 15, to March 15 each year, and prohibits captain and crew from retaining bag limits of all grouper while under charter.

Reef Fish Amendment 26—Establishes an individual fishing quota program for the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery. The IFQ is intended to reduce overcapacity in the commercial red snapper fishery and to eliminate, to the extent possible, the problems associated with derby fishing. The IFQ was implemented on January 1, 2007. As of January 17, 2007, 11 IFQ appeals have been received. **Appeals must be submitted no later than April 1, 2007.**

Red Snapper/Shrimp Interim Rule—Proposes to reduce TAC to 6.5 million pounds, reduce the red snapper recreational bag limit from four to two, reduce the commercial size limit to 13 inches, set the for-hire captain and crew bag limit to zero, and establish a target reduction of shrimp trawl bycatch mortality on red snapper 50% less than the benchmark years of 2001-2003. The interim rule is expected to publish in mid-February.

NOAA GCEL Southeast NOVA Quarterly Report

Case No.	Respondent's Name	Vessel Name	Area	LE Unit	Case Description	NOVA* Amount	NOPF** Amount	NOPS*** Duration
NE050074FM	Billfishing Xtreme Release League Ross Tanner		GOM	USCG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in an activity for which a permit is required without such permit (dolphin-wahoo) Fish for, possess, or land Atlantic HMS without proper permit (swordfish and shark) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,500 \$3,000 		20 days
SE0602024FM	Atlantic Coast Charters, Inc. Ronald Surrency, Jr.	Miss Daisy	GOM	NMFS FFWCC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> possess spiny lobster from which eggs have been removed Possess wrung tails in violation of (tailing) permit conditions Make false statement Possess spiny lobster harvested with prohibited gear or methods. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$7,500 \$4,000 \$2,500 \$1,000 	101 spiny lobster tails	
SE0602247FM	Dan T. Nguyen	Miss Katryn	GOM	NMFS LDFW	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> shark finning Fail to land shark fins and carcasses at one time Exceed commercial retention limit for shark Impede, interfere with or delay investigation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$50,000 \$50,000 \$40,000 \$25,000 	\$10,969.80	170 days
SE0602751FM	Rodney Rogers Jarod Rogers	Sea Hag	GOM	NMFS FFWCC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> fish during closure (commercial red snapper) Fail to release undersize fish (red grouper) Interfere with investigation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$ 500 \$2,000 \$3,500 	\$105	60 days
SE0602781ES/FM	Ramblin Cajun LLC Philip Stanfield	Ramblin Cajun	GOM	USCG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> TED violation BRD violation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$8,000 \$1,000 		

A Reminder About the Shrimp Permit Moratorium—Shrimp 13

Shrimpers intending to participate in the shrimp fishery during the 2007 season are reminded that a moratorium permit is required beginning **March 26, 2007**. Vessel owners are encouraged to submit moratorium applications prior to that date in order to allow time for processing.

The final rule implementing actions contained within Amendment 13 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan for the Gulf of Mexico was published last year. The intended effect of the final rule is to stabilize participation in the shrimp fishery, and to provide better information by which to manage the fishery.

The rule establishes a 10-year moratorium on the issuance of new federal shrimp vessel permits. Permits under the moratorium are fully transferable, giving permit holders the flexibility to enter or exit the fishery as they choose.

To be eligible for a commercial shrimp vessel permit under the moratorium, vessels must have been issued a valid commercial shrimp vessel permit by December 6, 2003. In addition, an owner who either sold a qualified vessel, had a qualified vessel repossessed, or otherwise lost use of a qualified vessel (such as, damage, sinking, unaffordable repairs), but who obtained a valid commercial shrimp vessel permit for the same vessel, or another vessel equipped for offshore shrimp fishing of at least five net tons and documented by the Coast Guard prior to September 26, 2006, is eligible for a permit under the moratorium.

Vessel owners who meet eligibility and desire a commercial vessel permit for Gulf shrimp must submit an application postmarked or hand deliv-

ered no later than **October 26, 2007** to the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office Permits Branch, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (727) 824-5301.

No applications for commercial vessel permits for Gulf shrimp will be accepted after October 26, 2007. Failure to apply before October 26, 2007, precludes permit issuance regardless of whether the applicant meets the permit eligibility criteria. Although there is a one-year period to obtain a moratorium permit, the permit is needed if the vessel is shrimping in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico beginning **March 26, 2007**.

Commercial vessel permits for Gulf shrimp are fully transferable, with or without the sale of the vessel. To request a transfer of a commercial vessel permit for Gulf shrimp, the owner of a vessel who is to receive the transferred permit must complete the transfer information on the reverse of the permit and return it, along with a completed application for transfer to the NOAA Permits Branch. All transfer documents must be notarized.

Renewal of commercial vessel moratorium permits for Gulf shrimp is contingent upon compliance with the recordkeeping and

reporting requirements also established by this final rule. If a commercial vessel permit for Gulf of Mexico shrimp is not renewed, the permit will be terminated, and it will not be reissued during the moratorium. A permit is considered "not renewed" when an application for renewal, as required, is not received within 1 year of the permit expiration date.

For more information contact: Steve Branstetter, (727) 551-5796; fax: (727) 824-5308; or e-mail: Steve.branstetter@noaa.gov.



Double-rigged shrimp trawler dumping its catch on deck.

Photo credit—NOAA Fisheries

Public Hearings for Joint Reef Fish 27/Shrimp 14 and Scoping Hearings for Reef Fish Amendment 30, and a Generic Aquaculture Amendment are scheduled

Scoping Hearings Reef Fish Amendment 30

March 19, 2007

Orange Beach, Alabama
Biloxi, Mississippi

March 20, 2007

Panama City, Florida
New Orleans, Louisiana

March 21, 2007

Naples, Florida
Galveston, Texas

March 22, 2007

Madeira Beach, Florida

Public Hearings Joint Reef Fish 27/Shrimp 14

May 14, 2007

Brownsville, Texas

May 15, 2007

Port Aransas, Texas
New Orleans, Louisiana

May 16, 2007

Palacios, Texas
Chauvin, Louisiana

May 17, 2007

Galveston, Texas
Abbeville, Louisiana

May 21, 2007

Destin, Florida
Tampa, Florida

May 22, 2007

Orange Beach, Alabama
Ft. Myers, Florida

May 23, 2007

Mobile, Alabama

May 24, 2007

Biloxi, Mississippi

Scoping Hearings Generic Aquaculture Amendment

July 16, 2007

Madeira Beach, Florida
Biloxi, Mississippi

July 17, 2007

Panama City, Florida
New Orleans, Louisiana

July 18, 2007

Orange Beach, Alabama
Corpus Christi, Texas

July 19, 2007

Galveston, Texas

Actual meeting locations to be determined. Visit www.gulfcouncil.org and click on Upcoming Panel and Committee Meetings to check for updated information, or call Charlene Ponce at 888-833-1844 extension 229.

Public input is an important part of the amendment process, particularly during the scoping phase. It offers the public an opportunity to have ideas heard and possibly included as alternatives presented to the Council for consideration. Therefore, the Council strongly encourages public participation. Please contact the Gulf Council for more information on how you can become part of the process.

Recreational Fisheries Survey Upgrade FAQs

What is the role of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), and is it the only way public input will be considered?

MAFAC is an officially sanctioned advisory body to the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce. It is comprised of 21 members of various expertise “knowledgeable in fisheries and living marine resources” to advise the Secretary on the general direction of national policy. There are no fixed or specified seats dedicated to specific interest groups or geography. The current membership includes six individuals with expertise and knowledge of marine recreational fisheries.

The agency intends to use MAFAC to enhance outreach capability, provide an additional point for public access, as well as to serve in its traditional advisory role.

Additional information, records and transcripts of MAFAC’s deliberations, and advisory products are available at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac.

Now that the Development Plan is complete, what are the next steps?

Our first order of business is to create the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) and its coordination arm, the Operations Team (OT). The OT, working in consultation with the ESC, will create individual working groups as necessary to focus on specific tasks. Chief among them is evaluating past and current data collection and analysis efforts along with forecasting future needs.

Filling the slots on those work groups should begin within the next few weeks. The OT will define the roles and reporting responsibilities of the various work group, and within a month and a half of the OT forming, the various work groups will be prioritizing issues and developing work plans for these specific tasks.

How does the recent reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act impact NOAA’s effort to upgrade recreational fishing statistics?

Specifically, the reauthorized MSA tasked NOAA to work with the community, states, and appropriate scientific experts to develop and implement an improved data collection program by 2009. The law also contains language establishing regional angler registration systems to help create an angler directory and make data collection more efficient.

Other constituents besides anglers have an interest in recreational fisheries data. Is there a role in this process for other groups?

Although the sportfishing community is most directly affected by the data collection and analysis, other constituents may also be impacted. Anglers have a highlighted role in the process, but there will also be a robust public participation process to ensure that all interests have an opportunity to offer input .

How can I find out more?

To view these and other frequently asked questions, or to review the Development Plan for Improving Recreational Fisheries Statistics, visit www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac

Restrictions on Vermilion Snapper Relaxed

The Gulf Council, at its January meeting, took action that will reduce the recreational and commercial size limit of vermillion snapper to 10 inches, eliminate the 10-fish recreational bag limit (20 fish aggregate bag limit will apply), and eliminate the April 22—May 31 commercial closure.

The measures are part of a regulatory amendment that was drafted in response to a recent stock assessment indicating vermillion is not overfished or undergoing overfishing.

The amendment will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.



Photos Courtesy of Getaway Charters, Orange Beach, Alabama

GMFMC wants your news and views

The Gulf Council would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments, or concerns you would like to see covered in the *Gulf Fishery News*. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials, or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management are encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Charlene Ponce, Public Information Officer, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Materials can also be sent via fax to 813-348-1711, or e-mail; charlene.ponce@gulfcouncil.org.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 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.

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Protecting our marine resources

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