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 1300, 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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  - Reduced red grouper bag limit from 2 to 1 (included in aggregate)—remains in effect
  - Recreational fishery closure for red grouper only from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2005
- New Council Chair and Vice-Chair elected
- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
- Protecting our marine resources

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We’re on the Web

New Council Chair and Vice-Chair elected

By a unanimous vote, the Gulf Council elected Robin Riechers as its new Chair, replacing outgoing Chair, Julie Morris. Council member Joe Hendrix, nominated Riechers, telling his colleagues that Riechers will be a great chair, “particularly considering a lot of the national issues we’re dealing with.”

Riechers is Director of Science and Policy for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s Coastal Fisheries Division. He has served on the council since 2000.

“The Council has a full agenda that includes a wide variety of fishery management issues, many of which are extremely controversial. I’m honored that my colleagues have the confidence in me to help move us forward with our agenda,” Riechers said.

William “Corky” Perret was named Council Vice-Chair and replaces Joe Hendrix. Perret is serving his 25th year on the Council and represents Mississippi. He is the director of Marine Fisheries for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources in Biloxi.
Council sends hurricane relief requests to Congress

In his briefing to the Gulf Council October 5, 2005, Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS, told Council members that the agency has hired translators, provided additional money for enforcement, and temporarily removed Turtle Excluder Device restrictions, among other things, in an attempt to help rebuild the fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

He urged the Council to send a letter to Congress outlining a request for funding to help rebuild and reorganize the fishery.

“We have a tremendous problem in the gulf,” Hogarth said.

He suggested the Council include in their list a permit buyback program, funding for rebuilding of infrastructure damaged by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as money for the restructuring of some of the fisheries.

“I just ask that you look at the tools you have and look at where we’re going,” he said.

“We need to strengthen the fishery and strengthen people’s lives at the same time,” he added.

In response, the Council prepared a list of recommendations to Congress related to disaster relief of the fishery, with the overall goals being the compassion-relief response to those affected; restoring infrastructure; addressing overcapacity and overfishing through voluntary buyouts and gear improvements; employing fishermen in clean-up and recovery efforts; providing employment training for fishermen leaving the fishery; and improving management tools to the fishery.

In a letter to Senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott, outgoing Chairman, Julie Morris, outlined the Council’s recommendations in her request for relief.

“Congressional funding of these management tools would be a tremendous boost for sustainable fishery management in the Gulf of Mexico,” Morris wrote. Many of the requests complement current efforts to address overcapitalization and overfishing in several of the Gulf fisheries, while at the same time, in the recovery of the social and economic impacts on both the Gulf of Mexico and the fishermen. Complicating matters, however, are fears among the general public that anything harvested from the Gulf is unsafe.

“Just it’s not true and it’s important for people to understand that. The situation is being closely monitored and safeguards are in place to protect the public from unsafe product—Gulf seafood is safe,” said Perret.

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The joint Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp Amendment 14, initiated by the Gulf Council in order to address bycatch in the shrimp trawl fishery and adjustments to the red snapper rebuilding plan is currently under development.

Scoping meetings originally scheduled for this month have been postponed while Council staff continue to refine the scoping document. Once the document is approved by Council, scoping meetings will be rescheduled to solicit public comment on possible ways to reduce bycatch in the directed reef fish fishery, as well as ways to further reduce bycatch in the shrimp fishery, particularly of red snapper.

The amendment will also adjust the red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) and possibly change red snapper fishing regulations, including possible changes to size limits and closed seasons. These changes are in response to a red snapper stock assessment that was completed in 2005 and are intended to maintain the rebuilding plan’s targets of ending overfishing by 2010 and rebuilding the red snapper stock to a recovered status by 2032.

The scoping document will outline proposed actions to reduce bycatch in both of those fisheries, including alternatives to reduce efficient fishing in the penaeid shrimp fishery.

Other issues included in the document for consideration will be actions affecting the shrimp fishery that may not have direct effects on bycatch, but could have bycatch implications, such as vessel monitoring systems and limited transferability of shrimp vessel permits.

The Council will review the draft scoping document during its next meeting, which is scheduled for November 14-17, in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. For more information on this or other issue, please contact the Council at 813-348-1630, or visit our web site at http://www.gulfcouncil.org.
COMMITTEE SCHEDULE
GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
RAMADA PLAZA BEACH RESORT
AMBASSADOR ROOM
FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA
NOVEMBER 14-15, 2005

AP Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION) (Tab D)*
Appointment of Ad Hoc Grouper IFQ AP

SEDAR Committee (Tab H)*
Appointment of Persons for SEDAR 10 gag grouper

Sunday, November 13, 2005
New Council Member Orientation Session
(3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

Monday, November 14, 2005
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Budget/Personnel Committee (Tab I)
• FMLA

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Plaice Tuna Survey Program (Team) (Tab E)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp/Red Drum Committee (Tab J)
• Aquaculture Amendment Alternatives

1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Reef Fish Management Committee (Tab D)
• Reef Fish Amendment 26 (IFQ for red snapper)
• Public Hearing Summaries
• Public Letters
• NMFS Recommendations – Ken Roberts
• SSC Recommendations – Walter Keithly
• Committee Recommendations
• Draft Reel Grouper Regulatory Amendment (for Recreational Sector)
• Report on Industry Business Plan for Longline Buy-Back Program (Spadi)

Wednesday, November 16, 2005
I. Call to Order and Introductions - Chair
(8:30 a.m. – 8:35 a.m.)

II. Adoption of Agenda - Chair
(8:35 a.m. – 8:40 a.m.)

III. Approval of Minutes (Tab A) - Chair
(8:40 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.)

IV. Appointment of Committees (Tab J) – Riechers
(8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

V. Committee Reports
a. Reef Fish Management (Tab B) – Minton
(1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

b. Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Management (Tab C)
Minton/Perret
(3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

c. AP Selection (CLOSED SESSION) (Tab D) – Horn
(5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.)

d. SEDAR Committee (CLOSED SESSION) (Tab H) – Riechers
(5:30 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.)

Thursday, November 17, 2005
VI. Committee Reports (continued)
a. AP Selection (Tab D)* - Horn
(8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.)

b. SEDAR Committee (Tab H)*
(8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

Riechers

c. Budget/Personnel Committee (Tab A) – K. Williams
(9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.)

d. Sustainable Fisheries/Ecosystem (Tab F) – Hendrix
(9:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.)

e. Law Enforcement (Tab G) – B. Walker
(9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.)

f. Administrative Policy Committee (Tab M)* - Hendrix
(10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.)

i. Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp/Red Drum Committee (Tab J) – Minton/

   Fischer/Spadi
(10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

II. Council Chairs Meeting – Riechers/Perret
(11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.)

IX. ICAT Advisory Committee – B. Walker
(11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.)

X. Enforcement Reports – Kraus/Rogers/McKinney
(11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.)

XI. Regional Administrator’s Report – Costure
(11:45 a.m. – 12:00 noon)

X. Director’s Reports
(12:00 noon - 12:30 p.m.)

XL. Other Business – Chair
(12:30 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.)