

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.

In This Issue:

- ! *COUNCIL REVISES PROPOSED GAG RULES AND CLOSED AREA*
- ! *MEXICAN PROJECT SAVING KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE POPULATIONS*
- ! *STOCK ASSESSMENT OF SHRIMP STOCKS GIVEN TO COUNCIL'S SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE*
- ! *NEW COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTED*
- ! *LAST CHANCE TO COMMENT ON MACKEREL AMENDMENT 9*
- ! *PUBLIC SCOPING WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED ON USE OF MARINE RESERVES IN THE GULF OF MEXICO*
- ! *REEF FISH STOCK ASSESSMENT PANEL TO MEET IN MIAMI*
- ! *SOCIOECONOMIC PANEL TO MEET ON REEF FISH*
- ! *NEW SOUTHEAST REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED*
- ! *AMENDMENT 16B TO THE REEF FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVED BY NMFS*
- ! *NEW COMMERCIAL SHARK REGULATIONS SUSPENDED BY COURT ORDER, NEW RECREATIONAL REGULATIONS IN EFFECT AS OF JULY 1, 1999*
- ! *A JOINT FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DOLPHIN AND WAHOO OF THE ATLANTIC, GULF OF MEXICO, AND CARIBBEAN SEA*
- ! *COUNCIL SEEKS MEMBERS TO SERVE ON A SPECIAL SSC AND AN AP FOR DOLPHIN/WAHOO*
- ! *GULF COUNCIL TAKES FINAL ACTION ON REEF FISH AMENDMENT 17 AND MACKEREL AMENDMENT 12*
- ! *TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING*

COUNCIL REVISES PROPOSED GAG RULES AND CLOSED AREA

At the July 12-15, 1999 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting in Key West, Florida, the Council revised its proposed rule changes for gag and closed areas in the Gulf of Mexico. The new proposed rule changes are as follows:

- Raise the commercial minimum size limit for gag/black grouper to 24 inches total length (TL).
- Raise the recreational minimum size limit for gag/black grouper to 22 inches TL, then increase it by 1 inch per year until it reaches 24 inches TL.
- Close the entire Gulf EEZ to commercial harvest and sale of gag, red grouper, and black grouper from February 15 to March 15 of each year.
- Establish two areas to be closed to fishing of all species under Council jurisdiction. These areas are shown in the map on the next page (the Florida Middle Ground is also shown for reference). Their sizes and coordinates are:

Madison and Swanson site (115 square nautical miles) - south of Panama City, Florida with boundaries

NW= 29° 17'N, 85° 50'W

NE= 29° 17'N, 85° 38'W

SW= 29° 06'N, 85° 50'W

SE= 29° 06'N, 85° 38'W

Steamboat Lumps (104 square nautical miles) west of Tarpon Springs, Florida with boundaries

NW= 28° 14'N, 84° 48'W

NE= 28° 14'N, 84° 37'W

SW= 28° 03'N, 84° 48'W

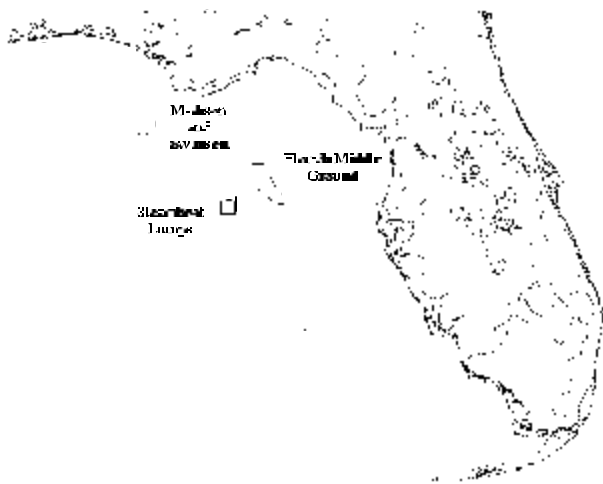
SE= 28° 03'N, 84° 37'W

The February 15 - March 15 commercial closed season
see *Gag Cont'd* on page 2

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

September 13-16, 1999
Gulf States Park Hotel Resort
21250 East Beach Blvd
Gulf Shores, AL 36547





is a new proposal to provide additional protection for spawning aggregations of several grouper species during the peak period of gag spawning. The original single large closed area proposal was changed to two smaller areas and a sunset provision was added after four years so that the effects of the closed areas can be evaluated. Both areas are along the 40 fathom depth contour. The Madison and Swanson site south of Panama City is a high relief site. Steamboat Lumps, west of Tarpon Springs, is the lower portion of the original 423 square nautical mile closed area proposal. It is a low relief site that has been reported by fishermen to be a good area for gag spawning.

These proposals will be submitted by the Council to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for review and implementation. An additional public comment period will be provided by NMFS before making a final decision. The proposed size limit increase is the same as in the previous proposals.

MEXICAN PROJECT SAVING KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE POPULATIONS

In 1966, the Instituto Nacional de la Pesca (INP) initiated conservation efforts for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle. The project began on the beach near the ranching community of Rancho Nuevo. This locale is the only area in the world where massive nesting aggregations of this species of sea turtle were known to occur and was declared a national preserve in 1977.

In 1978, the U.S. joined with Mexico to protect turtles at this site and others. When the Rancho Nuevo project started, roughly 300 Kemp's ridley sea turtles were nesting in Mexico. This compares to over 2,270 nests protected in

1997 and over 3,000 nests protected this past May (even before the peak of nesting activity began). In addition, eggs and hatchlings have been donated to the U.S. for relocation. Confirmed nests documented in Texas have risen from 9 in 1997, to 13 in 1998, and to 19 so far in 1999.

Compared to the millions of dollars that have been spent in the Gulf of Mexico for the development, implementation, and enforcement of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) on the American trawl fishery, the annual expenditure of approximately \$139,000 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and \$30,000 by the commercial industry on these conservation efforts is a bargain for the protection of this species.

Unfortunately, future funding for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle program is uncertain. While the USFWS will be able to fund the program through this year's nesting season (September), stable long term funding for this program has not been established as of yet.

STOCK ASSESSMENT OF SHRIMP STOCKS GIVEN TO COUNCIL'S SHRIMP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

NMFS presented the 1998 Stock Assessment Report to the Shrimp Management Committee in Key West, Florida. In general, shrimp stocks appeared to be in good shape. The brown shrimp harvest was 79.4 million pounds (MP) for 1998 and was the largest harvest since 1991. Over 54 MP of white shrimp were harvested in 1998 and was the highest harvest since 1986. While the 1998 pink shrimp harvest (14.7 MP) has declined from 1996 and 1997 levels, 1998 landings were higher than the historical average of 10-11 MP.

While catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) is still not as high as recorded in the 1960s and 1970s, CPUE has leveled out from the late 1980s. In addition, recruitment for both brown and white shrimp has steadily increased in recent years. Recruitment levels for pink shrimp have remained constant.

Because shrimp are an annual species, overfishing is defined in terms of spawning population size. For brown and white shrimp, this is the estimated number of 7+ month-olds. For pink shrimp, this is the estimated number of 5+ month-olds. Dr. James Nance reported that for all 3 species, the size of the parent stock was greater than the overfishing threshold values; particularly for brown shrimp, it was over 2 times the overfishing index level of 125 million individuals.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTED

James Fensom, an attorney from Panama City, Florida has been appointed to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council by U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley. Mr. Fensom will fill the at-large seat that was held by Dr. Felicia Coleman, a fishery biologist with the Florida State University's Institute of Fishery Resource Ecology.

Mr. Fensom was born and raised in Port St. Joe, Florida where commercial fishing was the second most important industry following paper production. He is an avid fisherman who enjoys fishing inshore for red drum and trout, and offshore for reef fish and king mackerel.

Mr. Fensom feels his background will allow him to hear both the commercial and recreational sides of fishing issues. Also because he has grown up on the west Florida coast, he is sensitive to the changes that have occurred to coastal communities over time.

Mr. Fensom is the only new member appointed to the Council this year. Mr. Pete Aparicio of Texas and Dr. Maumus Claverie of Louisiana were reappointed to the Council after completing their first three-year terms.

LAST CHANCE TO COMMENT ON MACKEREL AMENDMENT 9

A notice of availability for Amendment 9 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Region was published in the Federal Register on July 6, 1999.

Amendment 9 contains 10 proposed conservation and management measures. For the commercial fisheries for Gulf group king mackerel in the eastern zone (the zone comprising both coasts of Florida), Amendment 9 proposes 7 actions to:

- (1) create two new subzones (northern and southern) for the commercial hook-and-line fishery in the Florida west coast subzone;
- (2) establish separate commercial hook-and-line fishery quotas for the proposed Florida west coast subzones;
- (3) reallocate the commercial quota between the Florida east and west coast subzones to provide for commercial hook-and-line fishery quotas for the proposed northern and southern Florida west coast subzones;
- (4) implement a moratorium on issuing new gillnet

endorsements for commercial vessel king mackerel permits in the run-around gillnet fishery in the proposed southern Florida west coast subzone;

(5) establish eligibility criteria to reissue gillnet endorsements for commercial vessel king mackerel permits to fishermen who have historically participated in the run-around gillnet fishery in the proposed southern Florida west coast subzone;

(6) restrict the transfer of gillnet endorsements for commercial vessel king mackerel permits in the run-around gillnet fishery in the proposed southern Florida west coast subzone to the family members of vessel owners; and

(7) limit the operational area for vessels harvesting king mackerel under the run-around gillnet quota to the proposed southern Florida west coast subzone.

Amendment 9 also proposes 3 additional actions to:

(1) establish a 3,000-lb (1,361-kg) daily trip limit for the commercial vessels harvesting Gulf group king mackerel under the quota for the western zone (Texas through Alabama);

(2) increase the minimum size limit from 20 inches fork length (FL) to 24 inches (50.8 to 61.0 cm) FL for both the Gulf and Atlantic groups of king mackerel; and

(3) allow the sale of cut-off (damaged) fish from both the Gulf and Atlantic groups of king and Spanish mackerel as long as the cut-off fish meet or exceed the appropriate minimum size limit and are possessed within the established commercial trip limits.

NMFS has prepared a proposed rule to implement Amendment 9. In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, NMFS will ensure that the proposed rule is consistent with Amendment 9, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law, and will publish the proposed rule in the Federal Register for public review and comment. NMFS will only consider comments received by September 7, 1999, whether specifically directed to Amendment 9 or its proposed rule, in its decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve Amendment 9. Written comments on the Amendment must be mailed to the Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, Florida 33702, and received by September 7, 1999.

Requests for copies of Amendment 9, which includes an Environmental Assessment, a Regulatory Impact Review, and an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis can be obtained from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council contact information on page 8).

PUBLIC SCOPING WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED ON USE OF MARINE RESERVES IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will hold a series of 10 public workshops on the possible use of marine reserves as a fishery management tool in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. These workshops are to introduce the concept of marine reserves (i.e., zones of restricted or no fishing to the public) and to solicit public comment on whether they are an appropriate tool to use for fishery management in the Gulf of Mexico. There will be no specific options to create marine reserves presented at these workshops. The Council intends to use an outside facilitator to gain the greatest amount of input from

participants and avoid any perceptions of bias. Copies of the scoping documents that will be used at the workshops, *Marine Reserves for Fisheries Management: Questions and Answers* and *Marine Reserves Technical Document* can be obtained by calling the Council office at 813-228-2815. The documents can also be downloaded from the Council’s web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>.

These meetings are open to the public and are physically accessible to people with disabilities.

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

Monday, August 9, 1999

Four Points Sheraton
3777 North Expressway
Brownsville, Texas 78526

Monday, August 16, 1999

J. L. Scott Marine Education
Center & Aquarium
115 East Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, Mississippi 39566

Thursday, August 19, 1999

Steinhatchee Elementary School
1st Avenue South
Steinhatchee, Florida 32359

Tuesday, August 10, 1999

Ellis Memorial Library
700 West Avenue A
Port Aransas, Texas 78373

Tuesday, August 17, 1999

Hilton Beachfront Garden Inn
23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard
Orange Beach, Alabama 36561

Monday, August 23, 1999

Harvey Government Center
1200 Truman Avenue
Key West, Florida 33040

Wednesday, August 11, 1999

Texas A & M University
Auditorium
200 Seawolf Parkway
Galveston, Texas 77553

Wednesday, August 18, 1999

The Boardwalk Beach and
Conference Center
9600 South Thomas Drive
Panama City Beach, Florida 32408

Tuesday, August 24, 1999

Radisson Bay Harbor Inn
7700 Courtney Campbell Causeway
Tampa, Florida 33607

Thursday, August 12, 1999

Four Points Sheraton
333 Poydras Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

REEF FISH STOCK ASSESSMENT PANEL TO MEET IN MIAMI

The Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel will be meeting at the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center from September 20th to 24th. The panel will be examining stock assessments for red grouper and red snapper. In addition, documents reviewing gag life history and stock assessment submitted to the Council relative to the “Regulatory Amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan to set 1999 Gag/Black Grouper Management Measures” will be evaluated. For more information on this meeting, please contact the Gulf

Council (Council contact information is given on page 8).

SOCIOECONOMIC PANEL TO MEET ON REEF FISH

The SocioEconomic Panel will be meeting in Tampa, Florida on October 13th to 14th, 1999. The panel will meet to review red grouper and red snapper stock assessments. For more information on this meeting, please contact the Gulf Council (Council contact information is given on page 8).

NEW SOUTHEAST REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED

To strengthen habitat conservation activities while providing continued strong leadership in the Southeast region, NMFS Director Rolland Schmitt has reassigned two senior managers from within the agency.

Southeast Regional Administrator Dr. Andrew Kemmerer has been reassigned to lead the office of habitat conservation at NMFS headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Dr. William Hogarth has replaced Dr. Kemmerer as Southeast Regional Administrator in St. Petersburg, Florida, moving from his post as Southwest Regional Administrator in Long Beach, California.

"Bill has extensive past experience in Southeast fisheries management and has considerable knowledge of the concerns that face the resource and fishermen there," said NMFS Deputy Director Andrew Rosenberg. "Shifting Bill to head the Southeast region will ensure that the high quality of management and service will continue as we bring Andy to headquarters."

Before being assigned as Southwest Regional Administrator, Hogarth headed NMFS' Highly Migratory Species Management Division. Hogarth was previously director of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Richmond and a Ph.D. in fisheries biology from North Carolina State University.

AMENDMENT 16B TO THE REEF FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVED BY NMFS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that it has approved Amendment 16B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The Amendment authorizes new bag and size limits for several reef fish species and improve consistency with Florida state regulations thereby improving enforcement. Fish trap phase out measures taken to public hearing as part of draft Amendment 16 and approved by the Council were included in Amendment 16A, which was partially approved by NMFS. Amendment 16B will:

- Authorize a "slot limit" of 14 inches (minimum) fork length (FL) to 22 inches (maximum) FL for the commercial and recreational harvest of banded rudderfish and

lesser amberjack, establish a 5-fish aggregate bag limit for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack, and exclude both species from the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit.

- Include hogfish, dwarf sand perch, and sand perch in the management unit and remove queen triggerfish from the FMP. In addition, the proposed rule would clarify that sand perch and dwarf sand perch are excluded from the 20-fish aggregate bag limit. Sand perch and dwarf sand perch are often used as bait, and there is no evidence to suggest their stocks are in need of management.
- Authorize removal of queen triggerfish from the regulations implementing the FMP, and thus allow Florida to regulate vessels registered in the State of Florida and fishing for that species in the EEZ under that State's more conservative management measures. Although queen triggerfish occur rarely or occasionally throughout the Gulf of Mexico, they are only abundant off Florida and are seldom landed outside Florida.
- Authorize minimum size limits for cubera snapper (12 inches, total length (TL)), dog snapper (12 inches, TL), mahogany snapper (12 inches, TL), schoolmaster (12 inches, TL), mutton snapper (16 inches, TL), scamp (16 inches, TL), gray triggerfish (12 inches, TL), and hogfish (12 inches, FL); and establish a 5-fish bag limit for hogfish and exclude hogfish from the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit. This would bring limits in the EEZ that are compatible with Florida size and bag limits.
- Authorize a recreational bag limit of one speckled hind and one warsaw grouper per vessel. The NMFS Office of Protected Resources has added speckled hind and warsaw grouper to the list of candidates for possible listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Candidate status does not afford any specific level of additional protection to a species, but it does reflect a significant level of concern regarding a species' status.

NMFS has published a proposed rule to implement the above actions and is accepting written public comments until August 15, 1999. A final rule and implementation date will be announced shortly after the comment period ends.

NEW COMMERCIAL SHARK REGULATIONS SUSPENDED BY COURT ORDER, NEW RECREATIONAL REGULATIONS IN EFFECT AS OF JULY 1, 1999

On June 30, 1999, the National Marine Fisheries Service received a Court Order from Judge Steven D. Merryday relative to the May, 1997 lawsuit challenging commercial harvest quotas for Atlantic sharks. This new decision virtually eliminates many of the new shark management measures that were to go into effect July 1, 1999, *except* for limited access (including incidental catch limits), trip limits (4,000 lb. large coastal sharks), shark gillnet observer coverage, and all recreational shark measures. Specifically, the order states:

"... the Court hereby preliminarily, and until further order of the court, expressly ENJOINS the defendant and his designees from enforcing the 1999 regulations, 64 Fed Reg. 29090 (May, 28, 1999) with respect to Atlantic shark commercial catch quotas and fish-counting methods (including the counting of dead discards and state commercial landing after federal closures) that are different from the quotas and fish counting methods prescribed by the 1997 Atlantic shark regulations, 62 Fed. Reg. 16648 (April 7, 1997)."

Therefore, the pelagic, small coastal shark, and large coastal shark (LCS) quotas revert to 1997 levels, and for LCSs, there is no minimum size on ridgebacks. The 1997 prohibited list now applies in commercial fisheries only and includes 5 species: white, basking, whale, sand tiger, and bigeye sand tiger. Note in particular that duskies are again an allowed species.

Limited access (including incidental trip limits), the 4,000 lb. trip limit for LCS, the 100% observer coverage (for shark gillnets), and all recreational measures (minimum size, bag limits, and 1999 prohibited species list) still apply and will be enforced.

A JOINT FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR DOLPHIN AND WAHOO OF THE ATLANTIC, GULF OF MEXICO, AND CARIBBEAN SEA

The Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils (Councils) will be joint preparers of a new fishery management plan (FMP) for dolphin, *Coryphaena hippurus*, and wahoo, *Acanthocybium solandri*, fisheries throughout their range in the exclusive economic zone of the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea. NMFS has designated the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) as the Council with

the administrative lead in preparing and amending this new FMP.

Under the new FMP, the three designated Councils would jointly set the population parameters (e.g., maximum sustainable yield (MSY)) for dolphin and wahoo. NMFS has encouraged the Councils to develop a FMP framework regulatory adjustment procedure that would provide authority for each of the three Councils to independently establish regulatory measures in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils indicated a preference not to manage the stocks directly, but to serve in an advisory capacity to the other Councils with joint FMP preparation and amendment responsibility. It would be the responsibility of the South Atlantic Council to coordinate matters of international concern with the other Councils.

Currently, dolphin is managed under the FMP for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, and wahoo is not managed under any Federal FMP. NMFS' approval of a dolphin/wahoo FMP would require removal of dolphin from that FMP. Once completed, the dolphin-wahoo FMP, and any subsequent amendments, will be submitted for NMFS review, approval, and implementation, but only after approval by a majority of the voting members, present and voting, of the South Atlantic, Gulf and, Caribbean Councils.

COUNCIL SEEKS MEMBERS TO SERVE ON A SPECIAL SSC AND AN AP FOR DOLPHIN/WAHO

At the September meeting, the Council will appoint members to a Special Dolphin/Wahoo Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and Advisory Panel (AP). The SSC is comprised of scientists who assist in the development, collection, and evaluation of scientific information relevant to the development of a fishery management plan (FMP). The AP is comprised of persons who are familiar with the fisheries that will be managed under the FMP and will provide recommendations relevant to the plan development.

Persons interested in serving on either the Special SSC or AP should send a letter to the Council office (see page 8 for contact information) identifying their interest and include a short resume describing their background with dolphin/wahoo. Persons who have fishery resource violations within the last five years are ineligible to serve.

GULF COUNCIL TAKES FINAL ACTION ON REEF FISH AMENDMENT 17 AND MACKEREL AMENDMENT 12

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) took final action on "Draft Amendment 12 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, Including Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review" and "Draft Amendment 17 to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Resources, Including Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review." Both of these amendments seek to continue a moratorium on the issuance of new commercial permits.

Both Mackerel Amendment 12 and Reef Fish Amendment 17 seek a continuance of a moratorium on the issuance of new commercial permits for each fishery. The proposed alternatives accepted by the Council seek extensions of the moratoriums for 5 years. The major purpose of these moratoriums is to allow the Council time to evaluate controlled access systems for the respective commercial fisheries. At present, these evaluations would be limited by the current congressional ban on the use of individual fishing quotas (IFQs) or individual fisherman's effort (IFE). The Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) precludes the submission of amendments that include individual quotas; however, this prohibition is scheduled for expiration on October 1, 2000.

An additional benefit of the moratorium will be to prevent further increases in effort and possibly reduce the number of permittees.

TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING

Monday, September 13, 1999

AP Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION)

- Appointment of Dolphin/Wahoo AP

SSC Selection Committee (CLOSED SESSION)

- Appointment of Special Dolphin/Wahoo SSC
- Budget Committee

- Status of CY 1999 Budget
- Proposed CY 2000 Budget
- GSMFC Habitat Contract

Shrimp Management Committee

- BRD Evaluation AP Recommendations

Mackerel Management Committee

- Options Paper for Dolphin/Wahoo FMP

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Reef Fish/Mackerel Management Committees

- Preliminary Options Paper on Charter Vessel Permit Moratoriums

Ad Hoc VMS Committee

- National Standards and VMS System Recommendations
- Law Enforcement Committee Recommendations

Reef Fish Management Committee

- Status Report on Red Snapper Regulatory Amendment
- NMFS Recommendations for Management of Red Snapper Recreational Fishery
- NMFS Red Snapper Stakeholders Meetings
- FY 2000 Reef Fish Stock Assessments

Ad Hoc Marine Reserves Committee

- Summary of Workshop Recommendations
- Future Council Actions

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

I. Call to Order and Introductions

II. Adoption of Agenda

III. Approval of Minutes

IV. Public Testimony

Shrimp BRD Certification Standard

V. Committee Reports

- a. Shrimp Management
- b. Mackerel Management
- c. Budget
- d. Reef Fish/Mackerel Management
- e. Marine Reserves

VI. CLOSED SESSION

- a. AP Selection Committee Report
- b. SSC Selection Committee Report

Thursday, September 16, 1999

V. Committee Reports (Continued)

- f. AP Selection and SSC Selection
- g. Reef Fish Management
- h. VMS Committee

VII. Enforcement Reports

VIII. ICCAT Advisory Committee Report

IX. NMFS HMS/Billfish APs Report

X. Directors' Reports

XI. Other Business

XII. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

GULF FISHERY NEWS WANTS YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS

GULF FISHERY NEWS is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Any material in this newsletter may be reprinted or reproduced. We would like to hear from you regarding fishery questions you would like to see covered in GULF FISHERY NEWS. Send your comments to GULF FISHERY NEWS, c/o Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 3018 U.S. Highway 301 North, Suite 1000, Tampa, Florida, 33619-2266. Telephone: 813-228-2815 (toll-free 888-833-1844). Fax: 813-225-7015. E-mail: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

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. NA97FC0010.

Clarification: In our article titled "Fish trap phase-out enters Phase 2" (Volume 21, number 1), we stated that "NMFS will continue to allow leasing of fish trap endorsements to other reef fish permitted vessels without restriction." The regulations do not allow the leasing of permits however, a fisherman who exits the fishery can keep his endorsement active by designating another fisherman to operate his fish trap vessel. The owner or the operator must continue to meet the 50 percent income requirement for renewal of the reef fish permit. In addition, a fisherman with a fish trap endorsement may transfer his reef fish permit and fish trap endorsement to a leased vessel so he can continue to fish his traps. This would allow an individual to make arrangements to use an alternative vessel should his vessel break down, and thus be able to continue to fish.

*GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL
3018 U.S. Highway 301 N.
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