



GULF FISHERY NEWS



VOLUME 24, NO. 5

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2003

GULF FISHERY NEWS is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council for persons interested in the Gulf's fishery resources. Editor: Steven Atran.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- NEW GULF COUNCIL LOGO CHOSEN
- BOBBI WALKER AND JULIE MORRIS ELECTED COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2003/2004
- NOAA FISHERIES REVISIONS TO SECRETATIAL AMENDMENT 1 (RED GROUPER REBUILDING PLAN) PREVIEWED BY COUNCIL
- DEVELOPMENT OF RED SNAPPER REBUILDING PLAN CONTINUES - PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED
- VERMILION SNAPPER DECLARED OVERFISHED
- YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER STOCK ASSESSMENT FINDS HEALTHY STOCKS
- KING MACKEREL SEDAR MEETINGS SCHEDULED
- HOGFISH AND GOLIATH GROUPER SEDAR ASSESSMENT REVIEW WORKSHOP SCHEDULED
- GULF COUNCIL ADOPTS OFFSHORE MARICULTURE POLICY
- COUNCIL RECOMMENDS DENIAL OF PERMIT FOR FLORIDA OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE PROPOSAL
- PROPOSED OFFSHORE ALABAMA MARICULTURE FACILITY OF CONCERN TO GULF
- COUNCIL PRESENTS REVIEW OF GULF FISHERIES AT FISHERIES CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC
- NOAA FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT REPORTS
- COUNCIL CONSIDERS HAPC DESIGNATION FOR PULLEY RIDGE
- NATIONAL SURVEY OF EMPLOYMENT IN MARINE COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FOR-HIRE FISHERIES
- GULF COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 2004
- VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT - SENIOR FISHERY ECONOMIST (FILING DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JAN. 2, 2004)
- TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE JANUARY GULF COUNCIL MEETING

NEW COUNCIL LOGO CHOSEN

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has selected its new logo from more than 40 designs submitted by 18 contestants. Congratulations to Sasa Antonijevic from Serbia & Montenegro, who submitted the winning design and will receive the \$500 prize offered by Council member Irby Basco.



BOBBI WALKER AND JULIE MORRIS ELECTED COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2003/2004

Ms. Bobbi Walker (Orange Beach, Alabama) and Ms. Julie Morris (Sarasota, Florida) were elected by the Gulf Council to be this year's Chairman and Vice-

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

January 12-15, 2004
Omni Austin Hotel Downtown
700 San Jacinto at 8th Street
Austin, Texas 78701



Chairman, respectively, at the September 2003 Council meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Ms. Walker is a charterboat owner from Orange Beach, Alabama. She was appointed to the Council in 2000, and served as the Council's Vice-Chair during 2002/2003. During 2002/2003, Ms. Walker served as Chair of the Council's AP Selection Committee and Ad Hoc Marine Reserves Committee. (Council Chairs typically do not serve as committee chairs as well.)

Ms. Morris is the coordinator of the Environmental Studies Program at New College in Sarasota, Florida. Prior to being appointed to the Gulf Council, Ms. Morris was a Commissioner of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, and served as the first Chair of the newly created Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission during 1999 and 2000. During 2002/2003 and again in 2003/2004, Ms. Walker served as Chair of the Council's Habitat Protection Committee and Spiny Lobster Committee.

NOAA FISHERIES REVISIONS TO SECRETARIAL AMENDMENT 1 (RED GROUPE REBUILDING PLAN) PREVIEWED BY COUNCIL

The Gulf Council got a preview of the revisions that NOAA Fisheries is planning to make to Reef Fish Secretarial Amendment 1 (red grouper rebuilding plan) during the November Council meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi. Although the Council initially began working on the rebuilding plan shortly after NOAA Fisheries declared red grouper overfished, and submitted the plan in May 2003, the Council's one-year deadline under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to submit a plan was missed. That meant that the rebuilding plan, rather than being submitted as a Council plan amendment which NOAA Fisheries could either accept or reject, the plan became a Secretarial amendment which NOAA Fisheries could revise as it saw fit.

The red grouper rebuilding plan is a ten-year plan, with management to occur in three-year stages. For the first three years, approximately a ten percent reduction in the fishing mortality of red grouper is needed. To achieve this reduction, the Council proposed a reduction in the commercial shallow-water grouper aggregate quota from 9.35 to 8.80 million

pounds gutted weight, a 5,200 pound gutted weight commercial shallow-water grouper trip limit, and revising the recreational five-grouper bag limit so that no more than two of the five can be red grouper. The Council also proposed eliminating the February 15 to March 15 commercial closed season on red grouper, black grouper and gag, since it appeared to result in little if any reduction in fishing mortality due to increased fishing effort before and after the closed season. In order to pro-actively prevent effort shifting from shallow-water grouper to the deep-water reef fish, the Council proposed reducing the commercial deep-water grouper quota from 1.35 to 1.02 million pounds gutted weight (corresponding to the average annual landings during 1996-2000), and proposed a quota for the currently unregulated tilefish at 0.44 million pounds gutted weight (corresponding to the average annual landings during 1996-2000).

NOAA Fisheries revised the Council's proposals by adding a red grouper quota (within the aggregate shallow-water grouper quota) of 5.31 million pounds gutted weight with the provision that the commercial shallow-water grouper fishery will close when either the shallow-water grouper quota or the red grouper quota is reached, whichever comes first. NOAA Fisheries also eliminated the trip limit proposal, feeling that it would be counteracted by fishermen making an increased number of trips. The February 15 to March 15 commercial closed season was retained on the basis that it may be providing some reduction in fishing mortality, although smaller than expected, and it was still useful for its original purpose to protect gag spawning aggregations during the peak of gag spawning season. NOAA Fisheries projected that, in an average year, the revised proposals would result in a shallow-water grouper quota closure approximately five weeks before the end of the year.

NOAA Fisheries is currently putting the finishing touches on the revised Secretarial Amendment 1. Once it is completed, NOAA Fisheries will publish a Notice of Availability and will open a 60 day public comment period on the revised amendment. In addition, the Council, which took public testimony on the amendment at its November meeting, will again take public testimony at its January meeting in Austin, Texas. The Council will also review the completed revisions at the January meeting and will provide its recommendations to NMFS.

DEVELOPMENT OF RED SNAPPER REBUILDING PLAN CONTINUES - PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED

The Gulf Council reviewed a draft of Reef Fish Amendment 22 and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (red snapper rebuilding plan) at its November meeting, and selected preferred alternatives. For status determination criteria, the following preferred alternatives were selected:

Section 4.1.2 - Alternative Biological Reference Points and Status Determination Criteria

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) - Alternative 2: MSY for red snapper equals the yield associated with fishing at F_{MSY}, (where F_{MSY} = 0.092) or 41.13 million pounds, assuming low maximum recruitment and an initial steepness of 0.90 for the stock recruitment relationship.

Optimum Yield (OY) - Sub-option B: $F_{OY} = 0.75 * F_{MSY} = 0.069$. (The OY yield corresponding to this F_{OY} is not specified, but it typically is 94-96 percent of MSY.)

Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST) - Sub-option E: $(1-M) * B_{MSY} = 2,453$ billion pounds where $B_{MSY} = 2,726$ billion pounds, and M (natural mortality rate) = 0.10.

Section 4.22 - Rebuilding Strategy

Alternative 2: Maintain TAC at 9.12 million pounds and rebuild red snapper by 2032. Review and adjust this policy, as necessary, through periodic 5-year assessments. Monitor annual landings to ensure quota is not exceeded.

Section 4.3.3.1 - Bycatch Reporting Methodologies for Commercial and Recreational For-Hire Vessels (2 preferred alternatives adopted)

Alternative 4 (amended): Develop an observer program managed by NOAA Fisheries for the reef fish fishery. NOAA Fisheries will develop a random selection procedure for determining vessels that will be required to carry observers in order to collect bycatch information. In selecting vessels, the agency will consider the suitability of the vessel for such purpose and ensure that the universe of vessels included are representative of all statistical sub-zones in the Gulf. Vessel permits will not be renewed for vessels that fail or refuse to carry observers in accordance with this process. The requirement for the observer program be implemented contingent on NOAA Fisheries obtaining sufficient funding for the program.

Alternative 6 - Enhance the MRFSS by including headboats using the same sampling methodology as used for charter vessels. This motion is contingent on the ongoing studies demonstrating that this would be an improvement in the current estimates.

Section 4.3.3.2 - Bycatch Reporting Methodologies for Private Recreational Fishery

No preferred alternatives were adopted for this section.

Public hearings on draft Amendment 22/SEIS have been scheduled for early January 2004 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

Monday, January 5, 2004

Laguna Madre Learning Center
Port Isabel High School
Highway 100
Port Isabel, TX 78578
956-943-0052

Monday, January 5, 2004

MS Department of Marine Resources
1141 Bayview Drive
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530
228-374-5000

Tuesday, January 6, 2004 (corrected)

Port Aransas Civic Center
710 West Avenue A
Port Aransas, TX 78373
361-749-4111

Tuesday, January 6, 2004

Hilton Beachfront Garden Inn
23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard
Orange Beach, Alabama 36561
334-974-1600

Wednesday, January 7, 2004

San Luis Resort
5222 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston Island, TX 77551
409-744-1500

Wednesday, January 7, 2004

Destin Community Center
101 Stahlman Avenue
Destin, Florida 32541
850-654-5184

Thursday, January 8, 2004

New Orleans Airport Hilton
901 Airline Drive
Kenner, Louisiana 70062
504-469-5000

Thursday, January 8, 2004

Holiday Inn
15208 Gulf Boulevard
Madeira Beach, Florida 33708
727-392-2257

VERMILION SNAPPER DECLARED OVERFISHED

On October 30, 2003, NOAA Fisheries formerly notified the Gulf Council that the vermilion snapper stock in the Gulf of Mexico is overfished and undergoing overfishing. Based on the results of a July 2001 stock assessment, the vermilion snapper stock was estimated to be at 32% of the biomass capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (B_{MSY}) in 2000, well below the minimum threshold level of 75% of B_{MSY} recommended in the NOAA Fisheries technical guidance document, and also below the minimum allowable threshold of 50% of B_{MSY} ¹. In addition, the fishing mortality rate in 1999 was estimated to be nearly twice the rate associated with the maximum fishing mortality rate, which is fishing at MSY (F_{MSY}).

Under the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Council has one year to prepare and submit to NOAA Fisheries a plan to end overfishing and to rebuild the vermilion snapper stock to its B_{MSY} level in ten years or less. The Council was already in the process of developing a regulatory amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan to end overfishing, the result of a November 1999 determination by NOAA Fisheries that overfishing was occurring (but the overfished status had not yet been determined). The regulatory amendment will now be expanded to a full plan amendment that will include both measures to end overfishing and to rebuild the stock.

Although the stock assessment from which the overfished determination was made was completed in 2001, NOAA Fisheries delayed its finding that the stock was overfished due to the conclusion by the Council's Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel (RFSAP), upon review of the assessment, that the results were highly uncertain. The age-structured VPA model provided estimates of the stock status that varied greatly due to the highly variable growth rate

¹ In the 1998 Technical Guidance on the Use of Precautionary Approaches to Implementing National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, NOAA Fisheries recommends that the Minimum Stock Size Threshold be set equal to $(1 - M) * B_{MSY}$ (where M is the natural mortality rate), but not to go any lower than 50% of B_{MSY} . The natural mortality rate for vermilion snapper is $M = 0.25$, so the resulting threshold is 75% of B_{MSY} .

of this species. The Pella-Tomlinson production model used was limited to 14 years of catch and effort data when this method is optimally used when there are longer time series (50-100 years). Regardless of these deficiencies, the RFSAP felt that there was enough information in the landings data and catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) indices to conclude that the stock had declined, and that a reduction in the fishing mortality rate of between 40 and 50 percent is needed to halt overfishing.

At the November 9-12, 2003 Council meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, several Council members expressed concern about developing a rebuilding plan based on a stock assessment that had data only through 1999. The earliest time when a new updated vermilion snapper assessment can be conducted under the SEDAR (Southeast Data, Assessment and Review) process is Fall 2004/Spring 2005. For NOAA Fisheries to conduct a stock assessment at that time, a planned scamp stock assessment will have to be deferred until a later date. The Council will consider asking NOAA Fisheries to replace the 2004/2005 scamp assessment with a vermilion snapper assessment at a future Council meeting. In the meantime, development of a rebuilding plan for vermilion snapper will proceed.

YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER STOCK ASSESSMENT FINDS HEALTHY STOCKS

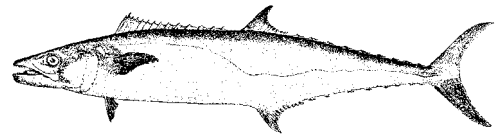
A yellowtail snapper stock assessment prepared by the Florida Marine Research Institute became the first stock assessment to be prepared and reviewed by the Gulf Council under the new Southeast Data, Assessment and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment process (the South Atlantic Council previously prepared black sea bass and vermilion snapper assessments under SEDAR). For purposes of this assessment, yellowtail snapper along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the continental U.S. were considered a single stock, and separate from yellowtail snapper in the Caribbean or Mexico. However, researchers are continuing to conduct genetic studies, and the stock definition and range could change in the future. The assessment found that yellowtail snapper are neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing. One likely reason for this is because the minimum size limit for yellowtail snapper (12 inches total length) is well

above the average size of maturity (8 inches total length), allowing ample opportunity for yellowtail snappers to spawn before being harvested. However, when the assessment was reviewed by the Council's SSC, questions were raised about the unusually low variability in annual recruitment. One possible explanation could be if larval fish are being carried by loop currents into U.S. waters from other areas, which would mean that the U.S. yellowtail snapper population is not a unit stock. SSC members were also concerned with a lack of fit of the spawner-recruit curve due to all the data points being bunched up near the top of the curve. The SSC felt that additional research is needed to address these questions. Despite these concerns, the SSC concluded that the yellowtail snapper assessment contained the best available scientific information and was adequate for management. Since the stock is healthy, no new management measures are needed. However, the Gulf Council needs to adopt status determination criteria to use as benchmarks for future assessments. The South Atlantic Council also needs to adopt status determination criteria within their area of jurisdiction. Since the yellowtail snapper stock occurs in both South Atlantic and Gulf waters, with most of the landings occurring in the South Atlantic's jurisdiction, the Gulf Council has decided to defer action until the South Atlantic Council adopts its status determination criteria, and then adopt compatible criteria in the Gulf of Mexico.

KING MACKEREL SEDAR MEETINGS SCHEDULED

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils will convene the first of a series of king mackerel SEDAR meetings beginning with a Data Workshop scheduled for the week of December 1, 2003. The Data Workshop will review all available data and modeling approaches that will be used to develop an assessment of the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups of king mackerel. A second Assessment Workshop to actually conduct the assessments is scheduled for the week of February 16, 2004, and a final Review Workshop to peer review and critique the assessment is scheduled for the week of April 5, 2004. These workshops involve population dynamics scientists, NOAA fisheries scientists, industry members, Scientific and Statistical Committee members, Advisory Panel members,

environmental organization representatives, and others. The purpose of this three-tiered approach to developing stock assessments is to provide a more thorough analysis than has been previously used and to involve stakeholders in an effort to make the process more transparent and increase overall confidence that the results are based on the best available scientific information.



HOGFISH AND GOLIATH GROUPEL SEDAR ASSESSMENT REVIEW WORKSHOP SCHEDULED

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC), will convene a SEDAR Assessment Workshop on January 27-29, 2004 in Tampa, Florida to review stock assessments on hogfish and goliath grouper. The hogfish assessment was conducted by the University of Miami under contract to the Florida FWCC. Because hogfish are managed by the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils as well as by Florida, and much of the harvest occurs in federal waters, Florida FWCC asked the Councils to be involved in the assessment review and to coordinate any regulatory changes that may result so that the hogfish regulations remain consistent throughout the stock's range. A goliath grouper SEDAR Data Workshop that was held in March 2003 concluded that there was insufficient biological information on goliath grouper to conduct a stock assessment at this time. However, a SEDAR Assessment Review Workshop held in July 2003 reviewed the conclusions of the data workshop, and recommended that some analyses could be done on the available data even if a complete stock assessment was not possible. NOAA Fisheries subsequently re-examined the data and produced analyses to estimate the rebuilding time for goliath grouper, standardized visual counts of goliath grouper off south Florida, and standardized catch rates of juveniles from Everglades National Park. The hogfish and goliath grouper documents can be downloaded from the Gulf Council website.

GULF COUNCIL ADOPTS OFFSHORE MARICULTURE POLICY

The Gulf Council, at its November meeting, finalized its policy concerning mariculture in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ. Recognizing that mariculture presents both potential benefits as well as potential negative impacts, it is the policy of the Council to encourage environmentally responsible mariculture. The new mariculture policy encourages the use of native species to the Gulf of Mexico, and it opposes the use of non-native species unless demonstrated there would be no detrimental impacts on native species. The Council particularly opposes use of non-native species in open water environments where escapement can occur. The policy addresses record keeping of all transactions to verify the origin of the cultured species, protection of the genetic fitness of wild populations, protection of habitat, and ongoing research. The policy also contains provisions for location, design and operation of mariculture facilities to prevent adverse impacts to estuaries, marine habitats and native fishery stocks, and to avoid or at least minimize conflicts with or restrictions on recreational, for-hire, or commercial fishing activities. Mariculture facilities should be designed, maintained, and operated in such a manner that avoids impacts to the local environment and minimizes negative impacts of discharge from the facility. In addition, mariculture facilities should develop procedures for effective disease control, using only FDA approved therapeutic and chemical treatments as part of best management practices.

The full mariculture policy can be viewed on the Gulf Council's website (<http://www.gulfcouncil.org>).

COUNCIL RECOMMENDS DENIAL OF PERMIT FOR FLORIDA OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE PROPOSAL

In July 2003, NOAA Fisheries published a notice of receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. of Madeira Beach, FL in order to conduct a feasibility study for 24 months of net cage culture of cobia, mahi-mahi, greater amberjack, Florida pompano, red snapper and cubera snapper. According to the applicant, the purpose of the proposed study was to determine the feasibility to grow commercial

quantities of native fish species in the offshore environment of the eastern Gulf of Mexico using mariculture techniques. Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. proposed to place four to eight cages at a site approximately 33 miles WSW. of John's Pass, Florida. No wild fish would be used and only Gulf brood stock fish would be used.

The Gulf Council reviewed the EFP application at its September meeting, along with a presentation by Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. An environmental assessment prepared by NOAA Fisheries concluded that the project would not have a significant impact on the environment. However, Council members raised several concerns about their plan and this project. These concerns included: (1) locations of nearby licensed aquaculture dealers, (2) which boat would be used by the company for transporting feed and fish to and from the cages, (3) who would be conducting the DNA fingerprinting that would allow tracking of the aquaculture fish throughout their sale, (4) possible escapement and its impact on wild stocks, (5) the type of food used for feeding, (6) possible transfer of diseases to wild fish, (7) timing of cage placement offshore, (8) timing of acquiring fingerlings, (9) the expertise and ability of the present group to undertake this endeavor, (10) associated penalties for violating the EFP, (11) who is responsible for any environmental damage, (12) staff expertise on treating disease, (13) how disease outbreaks would be treated, (14) liability and environmental insurance, (15) paper trail on aquacultured fish throughout the marketing chain, (16) possible conflicts or impacts on or with other fishing activities, (17) possible interactions of wild fish or organisms with the cages, (18) response to storm events, (19) why a smaller number of cages will not be used if this is an experiment, and (20) the range of species selected for possible stocking.

The Council felt there were too many unanswered questions regarding general operational procedures and environmental concerns to justify the issuance of an EFP, and strongly recommended that the EFP for Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc be denied.

On October 6, 2003, Florida Offshore Aquaculture responded by letter to the questions raised by the Council. They stated that questions 2, 4, 6, 10, 15, 18 and 20 were covered in the application and environmental assessment. In response to the

remaining questions, 1) They pointed out that Florida does not have “licensed aquaculture dealers”, but does have a saltwater products wholesale dealers license, and allows aquaculture products from certified aquaculture facilities to be sold without restriction so long as the product origin can be identified. 3) A biologist from the University of Florida (Dr. Patrick Baker) was named to conduct DNA fingerprinting of the fish. 5) The type of feed to be used was identified by brand (Burris Mill & Feed, Franklinton, LA). 7 and 8) The timing of cage placement offshore and of acquiring fingerlings would depend upon issuance of the permits. 9 and 12) Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. identified a staff biologist (Jason Davenport), and also indicated an intention to contract with Council member Joe Hendrix, who is an aquaculture consultant. 11 and 14) A performance bond and insurance will be obtained to cover any liability or responsibility for environmental damage, with the parameters to be determined. 13) Disease outbreaks would be treated according to the rules and regulations of the Food and Drug Administration, and Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. has contacted Dr. Roy Yanong, University of Florida for recommendations on how to treat disease outbreaks. 16) Florida Offshore Aquaculture chose its proposed site to minimize conflicts or impacts with other fishing activities. 17) Although the cages are expected to attract fish, there have been no reports of adverse possible interactions from similar cages deployed off Hawaii and Puerto Rico. 19) the large number of cages is needed in order to establish the commercial feasibility of the project, and to address concerns about profitability and return on investment due to the short duration of the experimental project.

At the time that this article was published, the Florida Offshore Aquaculture, Inc. application for an EFP was still under review by NOAA Fisheries.

PROPOSED OFFSHORE ALABAMA MARICULTURE FACILITY OF CONCERN TO GULF COUNCIL

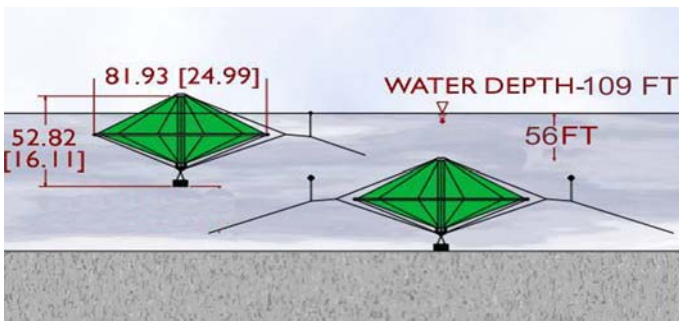
The Gulf Council, at its November meeting, reviewed Joint Public Notice MD02-02232-G dated October 31, 2003, regarding the proposed relocation by Biotechnologies Inc. of a mariculture facility in the Gulf of Mexico off Alabama. The current authorized location of the facility is in 47-foot-deep waters, 4.7 nautical miles off Fort Morgan, Alabama. The proposed relocation is in 85-foot-deep waters, 7.5 nautical miles off Alabama Point, Alabama. Biotechnologies Inc. proposes to annually produce 5 million pounds of cobia, red drum, red snapper, hybrid striped bass, grouper, mahi-mahi, greater amberjack, and red porgy. The Council is concerned that project relocation and fencing 27.5 acres of public waters will cause user conflicts between the operation and recreational and commercial fishermen that currently use the area. Also, the proposed relocation area is immediately adjacent to a safety fairway and the Council is concerned that this would create a hazard to navigation.

The benthic area in the vicinity of the proposed relocation serves as essential fish habitat (EFH) for brown, white, and pink shrimp, and juvenile red snapper. Increased nutrients from fish waste and excess feed could lead to areas of low dissolved oxygen under and outside the area, adversely affecting these species.

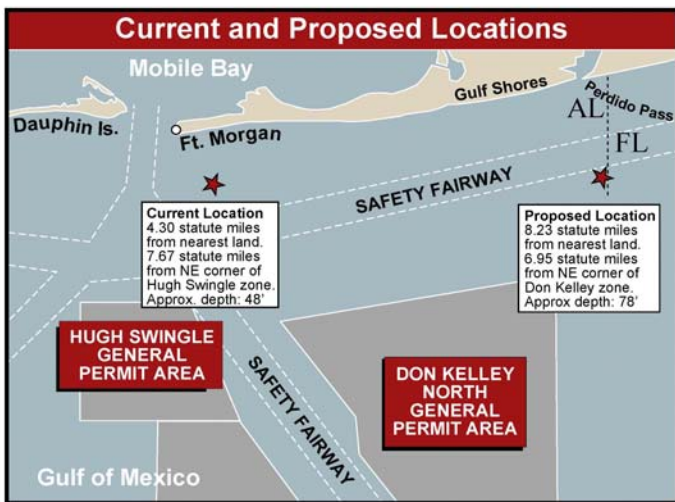
The Council is also concerned that the applicant has not applied for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). An EFP is required for any mariculture facility raising and harvesting fish in pens in the EEZ since it would be considered fishing as defined in the MSFCMA and subject to applicable fishing regulations.

The Council’s EFH Conservation Recommendation is that the current application for a proposed relocation be held in abeyance until the applicant has applied for and received an EFP. The Council does not see the need to permit the proposed location unless the applicant can legally raise fish. Furthermore, even if the applicant receives an EFP, the Council’s concern related to conflicts, EFH degradation, and safety need to be addressed.

The Council has conveyed these concerns to the U.S.



Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, which is responsible for approving or disapproving the proposed relocation of the mariculture facility.



COUNCIL PRESENTS REVIEW OF GULF FISHERIES AT FISHERIES CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC

The Gulf Council participated in the *Managing our Nation's Fisheries* conference held in Washington, DC on November 13-15, 2003. The conference brought together representatives from each of the eight regional fishery management councils and NOAA Fisheries to review what the regional councils and NOAA Fisheries are doing to protect and preserve our nations living marine resources. As part of the conference, the Gulf Council's Deputy Executive Director/Senior Fishery Biologist, Rick Leard, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the past, present and future of fisheries management in the Gulf of Mexico, including an overview on the status of stocks in the Gulf. Both accomplishments and ongoing problems in the Gulf's fishery resources were reviewed, as well as possible future directions in fishery management. The presentation can be viewed at the Gulf Council website (<http://www.gulfcouncil.org>).

NOAA FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT REPORTS

At the November Council meeting in Biloxi, NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement reported on a number of significant enforcement actions during the period July 1, 2003 - September 30, 2003. Among the actions reported were:

- An Alabama charter boat captain was indicted by a Florida federal grand jury on three felony counts as a result of a boarding by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officers and a follow-up investigation by NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement special agents from Niceville, Florida. The charter boat captain is being charged with destruction of property to avoid seizure, resisting officers in the performance of their duties, and making false statements to federal law enforcement officers. The charges stem from alleged illegal red snapper fishing in federal waters during a recreational closure.

- NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement special agents from Niceville, Florida investigated information regarding a dealer purchasing federally caught fish without a permit. The agent's visit to the business in question in Freeport, Florida, resulted in the discovery of approximately 7,000 pounds of assorted reef fish located in the business' cooler and a six-wheel truck owned by the company. A subsequent interview of the owner proved the business had been operating for two months without a federal permit. The business was charged with three counts of purchasing reef fish without a permit. A fishing vessel found to have sold its catch will also be charged with three counts of selling to a non-permitted dealer.

- NOAA General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation issued a Notice of Violation Assessment (NOVA) for \$45,000 and a 120-day permit sanction to the owner(s) and operator of the fishing vessel, Si Ky Lan II, for violations of regulations relative to the take, possession, landing and sale of shark and shark fin products. The case was initiated by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) while conducting a dealer inspection. Business documents possessed by the dealer indicated the subject vessel routinely landed in excess of the allowable shark fin ratio. LDWF and NOAA Office for Law Enforcement conducted a joint investigation which resulted in the following charges in regard to shark fishing:

- 1) Fishing without the proper Limited Access Permit;
- 2) Exceeding the commercial retention limit;
- 3) Sale of fins disproportionate to the weight of the shark carcasses; and
- 4) Failure to maintain shark in proper form.

COUNCIL CONSIDERS HAPC DESIGNATION FOR PULLEY RIDGE

The Council received presentations in July from Robert Halley of the U.S. Geological Survey, and in November from Walter Jaap of the Florida Marine Research Institute, on an area off the southwest coast of Florida known as Pulley Ridge. Pulley Ridge is a 62 plus mile-long series of North-South trending, drowned, barrier islands on the southwest Florida Shelf approximately 155 miles west of Cape Sable, Florida. The ridge has been mapped using multibeam bathymetry, submarines and remotely operated vehicles, and a variety of geophysical tools. It is about 3 miles across with less than 32 feet of relief. The shallowest parts of the ridge are about 200 feet deep. Surprisingly at this depth, the southern portion of the ridge hosts an unusual variety of corals, green, red and brown macro algae, and typically shallow-water tropical fishes.

Coral plates up to 20 inches in diameter account for up to 60% live coral cover at some localities. Sponges, calcareous and fleshy algae, octocorals, and sediment occupy surfaces between the corals, and coralline algal nodule and cobble zones surround much of the ridge in deeper water (greater than 262 feet). Larger macro algae covers many acres, constructing regions that appear like lettuce fields growing in the dusk at this depth on the sea floor.

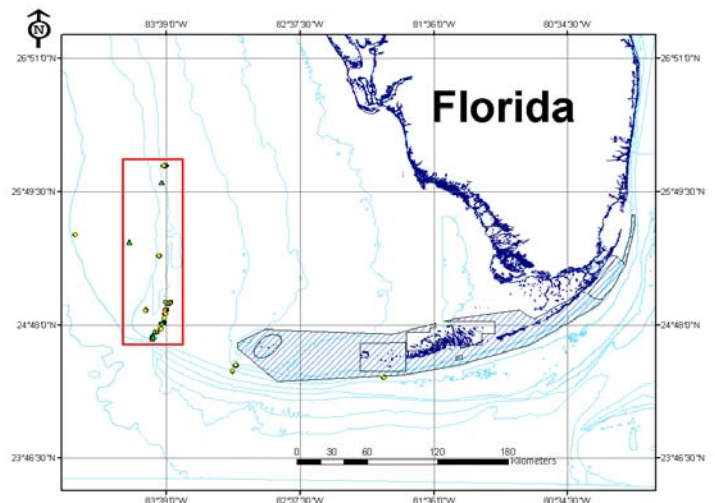
More than 60 species of fish have been identified at Pulley Ridge. These include red grouper, scamp, bluehead, bicolor damselfish, coney, hogfish, French angelfish, rock beauty, bank butterflyfish, deepwater squirrelfish, spotfin hogfish, roughtongue bass, and wrasse bass. Sand tilefish and several other species construct large burrows and mounds that serve as refuge for multiple species. Mounds and pits larger than 10 square feet are apparent on side-scan sonar images and have been counted in excess of 77 square miles for parts of the ridge.

The extent of algal cover and abundance of herbivores suggest benthic productivity is moderate to high on parts of the ridge. Such productivity is unusual, if not unique at this depth in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. The largely photosynthetic community appears to be thriving on 1-2% of the available

surface light and about 5% of the light typically available to shallow-water reefs. The corals generally appear to be healthy, with no obvious evidence of coral bleaching or disease. Although the community is clearly one adapted to low light conditions, the variety and extent of photosynthetic organisms between 200 and 230 feet depth is impressive.

Is southern Pulley Ridge the US's deepest coral reef? That depends on one's preferred definition of a coral reef. There are deeper, ahermatypic coral buildups both in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic off Florida coasts. Classically, a coral reef is a wave resistant structure built by hermatypic corals and hazardous to shipping. From a geologist's point of view, Pulley Ridge corals appear to have built a biostrome, an accumulation at least a few meters thick, although corals may not account for the bulk of the topography. From that of a biologist, the most abundant corals in the ridge are hermatypic corals but they are lying, mostly unattached, on the surface. Clearly a ship's captain could not run his vessel aground on this reef, so mariners would not consider this a reef. Nevertheless, from the scientific perspective of a structure built from hermatypic corals, southern Pulley Ridge may well be the deepest coral reef in the United States.

Because of its unique features and ecosystem, the Gulf Council has voted to designate Pulley Ridge as a habitat area of particular concern (HAPC) in the Preferred Alternatives of the Essential Fish Habitat Environmental Impact Statement that is currently being developed.



NATIONAL SURVEY OF EMPLOYMENT IN MARINE COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FOR-HIRE FISHERIES

NOAA Fisheries will be conducting a survey in February 2004 to collect information on employment in the commercial and recreational fisheries. If you are an owner or captain of a vessel in the commercial or recreational for-hire fisheries and you are selected to participate in the survey, your responses will help NOAA Fisheries and the Councils to better understand the socioeconomic factors affected by fisheries management. The following is a description of the survey program and a sample of what the survey sheet will look like.

What Information Do We Need?

We want to learn how many people work on commercial fishing and for-hire vessels throughout the United States. National employment figures are important information on any industry. Fishing is no exception.

How Will We Use the Information?

The information will be used to help NOAA Fisheries, the management councils, state agencies, and the interested public understand the potential economic effects of proposed regulations on commercial and for-hire fishermen in the commercial and recreational fisheries, and on fishing communities. These analyses are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), and Executive Order 12866.

Your information will make it possible for NOAA Fisheries to estimate the number of people employed in the industry for the regions and the nation. NOAA Fisheries hasn't published nation wide estimates of employment for many years because it hasn't collected this kind of information for the whole country for a long time. This information is essential for characterizing and tracking the magnitude of the commercial and for-hire recreational harvest sectors.

How Will The Information Be Collected?

A short survey will be mailed to vessel owners and/or captains beginning in February 2004. Each owner or captain who gets drawn in the sample will be asked to report the number of crew employed on an average trip in each fishery in which they participated in 2003, as well as the number of days per two month period that they fished per fishery. Any vessel that 1) holds

a federal or state permit or license, and 2) participated in fishing activity in either state or federal waters in 2002 or 2003 may be contacted to participate.

What Will the Survey Look Like?

You can see an example of the survey on the following page. The survey will be printed in six languages including English, Spanish, Portuguese, Sicilian Italian, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Who Will Use This Information?

The results of this research will be used by NOAA Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service), the fishery management councils, state agencies, industry, and all interested citizens.

Information Confidentiality

No confidential information will be released or published.

For more information contact:

Susan Abbott-Jamieson

NOAA Fisheries, Office of Science and Technology
1315 East-West Hwy SSMC3 #12609

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone (301) 713-2328

Susan.Abbott-Jamieson@noaa.gov



SAMPLE SURVEY

INTRODUCTION: We are interested in learning how many people work on commercial fishing and for-hire vessels throughout the United States. At this time it is not possible to calculate an accurate employment figure because no one has collected the necessary information in a consistent way. Yet when fishing regulations are proposed, it is critical to understand how many fishermen might be affected. To estimate how many people are employed in the Nation's fisheries, we need to know how many crew worked on each fishing vessel throughout the year, and how many days a vessel spent fishing in each fishery.

INSTRUCTIONS: First, write down the names of each fishery you fished in **2003** in the first column. **Next**, write in your best estimate of average crew size per trip (*including the captain*) for each two-month interval in which you operated in each fishery and the number of days in which you fished in each fishery. Please be sure to identify all fisheries that you operated in during each two-month interval. Below is an example to see what a completed form might look like.

When you have completed the survey, please return the form in the prepaid envelope provided. Please note that you have been randomly selected from a list of vessels registered or licensed to fish in federal or state waters. All information provided will be treated as confidential in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, "Confidentiality of Fishery Statistics."

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

EXAMPLE FILLED IN:

FOR 2003	Jan / Feb		Mar / Apr		May / June		July / Aug		Sept / Oct		Nov / Dec	
<i>(write in the name of each fishery)</i>	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)
Summer Flounder					3	10	3	20				
Bluefin Tuna	2	20	2	30								
Gulf Shrimp									1	10	1	20

If your vessel was not used for fishing in 2003, please check here and return this survey in the enclosed prepaid envelope.

COMMERCIAL FISHING EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

FOR 2003	Jan / Feb		Mar / Apr		May / June		July / Aug		Sept / Oct		Nov / Dec	
<i>(write in the name of each fishery)</i>	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)	Average Crew Size per trip	Days at-sea (include days fished, search and steaming time)

If you are interested in receiving survey results, please check here

GULF COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS - 2004

Issues discussed at Council meetings are typically discussed in committees (consisting of a subset of the Council members) before being brought to the full Council. The Gulf Council's standing and ad hoc committees and members for 2004 were approved at the November 2003 Council meeting and are as follows:

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY	AP SELECTION	ARTIFICIAL REEF	BUDGET	PENSION PLAN TRUSTEES
Fensom, Chr Claverie, V Chr Basco Fischer Morris Haddad/R. Williams K Williams	Basco, Chr R. Williams, V Chr Bell Crabtree/Fay Fischer Jenkins/Foote Minton/Heath	Hendrix, Chr Basco, V Chr Bell Fensom Fischer Riechers Thomassie	Riechers, Chr Perret, V Chr Crabtree/Fay Hamilton/Brown/Fruge Morris Simpson/Lukens Thomassie	Walker Morris Fensom Readinger
DATA COLLECTION	HABITAT PROTECTION	PERSONNEL	LAW ENFORCEMENT	SSC SELECTION
Riechers, Chr Fischer, V Chr Claverie Hendrix K. Williams Minton/Heath Simpson/Lukens	Morris, Chr Hendrix, V Chr Bell Brown/Fruge Claverie Crabtree/Fay Thomassie	K. Williams, Chr Foote, V Chr Basco Fensom Fischer Haddad/R. Williams W. Walker/Perret	Minton, Chr Fensom, V Chr Duncan/Sherlock Haddad/R. Williams Johnson/Rogers K. Williams Riechers	Foote, Chr Perret, V Chr Crabtree/Fay Haddad/R. Williams Minton/Heath Saucier Simpson/Lukens
Management Committees				
BUTTERFISH	MACKEREL	CORAL	DEEP-WATER CRABS	MIGRATORY SPECIES
K. Williams, Chr Saucier, V Chr Bell Duncan/Sherlock Fischer Simpson/Lukens Thomassie	Fischer, Chr Perret, V Chr Basco Fensom Jenkins/Foote K. Williams Minton/Heath	R. Williams, Chr Hendrix, V Chr Bell Morris Saucier Simpson/Lukens Thomassie	Perret, Chr Bell, V Chr Duncan/Sherlock Fischer Hamilton/Brown/Fruge Saucier Simpson/Lukens	Claverie, Chr Saucier, V Chr Basco Fensom Fischer Hendrix Simpson/Lukens
RED DRUM	REEF FISH	SHRIMP	SPINY LOBSTER	STONE CRAB
Foote, Chr Hendrix, V Chr Claverie Fensom Hamilton/Brown/Fruge Riechers Simpson/Lukens	Minton, Chr R. Williams, V Chr Bell Crabtree/Fay Fensom K. Williams Riechers	Perret, Chr Foote, V Chr Haddad/R. Williams Hendrix Morris Riechers Thomassie	Morris, Chr Claverie, V Chr Basco Crabtree/Fay Fischer Haddad/R. Williams W. Walker/Perret	Bell, Chr R. Williams, V Chr Claverie Fischer Morris Saucier W. Walker/Perret
AD HOC COMMITTEES				
MARINE RESERVES		SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES		VESSEL MONITORING
K. Williams, Chr Morris, V Chr Crabtree/Fay Duncan/Sherlock Fischer Jenkins/Foote Minton/Heath		Hendrix, Chr K. Williams, V Chr Claverie Hamilton/Brown/Fruge Morris Simpson/Lukens Thomassie		Basco, Chr R. Williams, V. Chr Bell Duncan/Sherlock Fensom Johnson/Rogers Thomassie

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT - DEADLINE EXTENDED

Date: December 2, 2003

Title: Senior Fishery Economist

Location: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Office
3018 North Highway 301, Suite 1000
Tampa, Florida 33619-2272
Phone: 813-228-2815
Fax: 813-225-7015
e-mail: wayne.swingle@gulfcouncil.org

Duties: This is a non-federal position. The incumbent will serve as technical advisor to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council on fishery management plan development, revision, and implementation. Principal duties will involve conducting Regulatory Impact Reviews and Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis, analyzing the social and economic impacts of proposed regulatory changes, compilation and analysis of socioeconomic information on recreational and commercial fisheries, presentation of these analyses to the Council and advisory groups, general application of economic theory and techniques to fishery problems, and providing guidance to the staff fishery economist. Activities will involve contact with commercial and recreational fishermen, members of the fishing industry, fishery support personnel, supply and distribution firms, various public groups, the Socioeconomic Panel, and the Gulf Council.

Salary Range: \$ 56,463 to \$ 87,289 per year (starting salary negotiable based on applicant's qualifications.)

Evaluation Factors: A M.S. or higher degree in economics or a multi-disciplinary resource management degree including economics training is required. Applications will be rated on the level of education in economics attained and demonstrated ability in the application of economics to resource problems as evidenced by written works or fishery management experience. Preference will be granted for demonstrated experience in addressing fishery-related resource problems particularly within the framework of Regulatory Impact Analysis and Regulatory Flexibility Act Analysis, knowledge of computer science particularly with respect to accessing and analyzing data bases, professional experience, and demonstrated technical writing skill.

Application Deadline: Applications will be accepted through the close of business on January 2, 2004.

**Where to Apply/
Required Documents** By the indicated closing date, send a complete resume, list of references, examples of technical documents, studies, and publications authored related to the subjects enumerated above to:

Mr. Wayne Swingle
Executive Director
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
3018 North Highway 301, Suite 1000
Tampa, Florida 33619-2272
813-228-2815

Distribution: National Marine Fisheries Service
Regional Fishery Management Councils
Gulf State Directors of Fisheries
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Florida Marine Research Institute
Southeast Academic Institutions
Southeast Governmental Agencies

Reasonable Accommodations: This agency provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities. If you need a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please notify the agency. The decision on granting reasonable accommodation will be on a case-by-case basis.

Nondiscrimination: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. All employment actions will be free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, status as a parent, and reprisal.

Privacy Act Notice: The information requested here is used to determine qualifications for employment and is authorized under Title 5 U.S.C. 3302 and 3361.

**TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE JANUARY GULF
COUNCIL MEETING**

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Monday, January 12, 2004

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Personnel Committee (**Tab I**)

- Contracting for Court Reporter

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum Committee (**Tab E**)

- Review and Approval of Aquaculture Amendment Scoping Document
- Scoping Hearing Sites
- Cage Culture Study (Benetti)

– recess –

1:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Reef Fish Management Committee (**Tab B**)

- CPUE Indices for Vermilion Snapper
- Vermilion Snapper Draft Amendment 23
 - Preliminary review of alternatives for rebuilding plan
 - Public hearing sites
- Secretarial Reef Fish Amendment 1
 - SSC Recommendations
 - Committee Recommendations
- Reef Fish Amendment 22 (Red Snapper Rebuilding Program)
 - AP Recommendations
 - SSC Recommendations
 - Public Hearing Summaries
 - Public Letters
 - Committee Recommendations
- Selection of Participants under the SEDAR Process

– recess –

Tuesday, January 13, 2004

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Shrimp Management Committee (**Tab D**)

- Texas Closure Analyses
- Draft Amendment 13/EA

9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Red Drum Management Committee (**Tab H**)

- Shipping of Stock Across the EEZ
- Overfishing

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Mackerel Management Committee (**Tab C**)

- Options Paper for Amendment 15
- Trip Limit Revisions
- Scoping Meeting Sites

– recess –

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Committees (**Tab F**)

- Scoping Document for Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Limited Access Programs

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Law Enforcement Committee (**Tab K**)

- Criminal Penalties Under MSA

3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Habitat Protection Committee (**Tab J**)

- Review of Comment/Response Section of EIS
- Texas Habitat AP

COUNCIL SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 14, 2004

I. Call to Order and Introductions - B. Walker
(8:30 a.m. - 8:35 a.m.)

II. Adoption of Agenda - B. Walker
(8:35 a.m. - 8:40 a.m.)

III. Approval of Minutes (**Tab A**) - B. Walker
(8:40 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.)

IV. Public Testimony - B. Walker

- a. Texas Cooperative Shrimp Closure
- b. Secretarial Reef Fish Amendment 1
- c. Draft Reef Fish Amendment 22 (Red Snapper Rebuilding Plan)

(8:45 a.m. - 12:00 noon)

-recess-

IV. Public Testimony (continues) - B. Walker

- c. Draft Reef Fish Amendment 22 (Red Snapper Rebuilding Plan)
(1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.)

V. Committee Reports

- a. Reef Fish Report (**Tab B**) - Minton
(3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

-recess-

Thursday, January 15, 2004

V. Committee Reports (Continued)

- b. Habitat Protection (**Tab J**) - Morris
(8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.)

- c. Shrimp Management (**Tab D**) - Perret
(9:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.)
- d. Mackerel Management (**Tab C**) - Fischer
(9:15 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.)
- e. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum (**Tab E**) -
Minton/Fischer/Foote
(9:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.)
- f. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel (**Tab F**) - Minton/Fischer
(10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.)
- g. Red Drum Management (**Tab H**) - Foote
(10:15 - 10:30 a.m.)
- h. Personnel (**Tab I**) - K. Williams
(10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.)
- i. Law Enforcement (**Tab K**) - Minton
(10:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.)

VI. SAFMC Liaison Report - Fischer
(11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.)

VII. Gulf Safety Committee - Fischer
(11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.)

VIII. Joint Council Meeting (**Tab G**) - B. Walker/Swingle
(11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.)

IX. Enforcement Reports - Sherlock/Rogers/Livingston
(11:45 a.m. - 12:00 noon)

X. Regional Director's Report - Crabtree
(12:00 noon - 12:15 p.m.)

XI. Directors' Report - R. Williams/Minton/Perret/Foote/
Riechers/Simpson/Brown
(12:15 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.)

XII. Other Business (**Tab K**) - B. Walker
(12:30 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.)

The above agenda is tentative and is not final until it becomes noticed. Updates to the agenda will be posted on the Gulf Council web site as they become available. Although non-emergency issues not contained in the agenda may come before the Gulf Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), those issues may not be the subject of formal Gulf Council action during the meeting. The Gulf Council's actions will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the noticed agenda and any issues arising after publication of that notice that require emergency action under section 305 (c) of the MSFCMA, provided the public has been notified of the Gulf Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

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. GULF FISHERY NEWS or the Gulf Council office can be contacted at 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 Website: <http://www.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 newsletter was provided by grant funds pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA03NMF4410028.

January Meeting:

January 12-15, 2003
Omni Austin Hotel Downtown
700 San Jacinto at 8th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

March Meeting:

March 8-11, 2003
Adam's Mark Hotel
64 South Water Street
Mobile, Alabama 36602

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
3018 North U.S. Highway 301
Suite 1000
Tampa, Florida 33619-2272

FIRST-CLASS MAIL POSTAGE & FEES PAID U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PERMIT NO. G-19

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER