
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.

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GULF COUNCIL PROPOSES CHANGES TO RED SNAPPER REGULATIONS

At its November meeting in Orlando, Florida, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) reviewed a new red snapper stock assessment prepared by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and listened to recommendations from Council panels and from the public. Based on this input, the Council

decided to maintain the existing red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) of 9.12 million pounds each

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

January 18-21, 2000
Ramada Plaza Beach Resort
1500 Miracle Strip Parkway, SE
Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32548



year for the years 2000 and 2001, pending an annual review of the assessment. This TAC is allocated between the recreational and commercial fisheries based on the historical levels of catch during 1979-1987, with 49 percent (4.47 million pounds) allocated to the recreational fishery and 51 percent (4.65 million pounds) to the commercial fishery. The commercial quota is further subdivided into a Spring sub-quota with two thirds of the allocation (3.1 million pounds) and a Fall sub-quota (1.55 million pounds) that is adjusted for any over or under harvest during the Spring.

The Council also proposed setting the recreational red snapper minimum size limit at 16 inches total length. This size limit will help to slow the harvest rate and extend the recreational season further than the previous 15-inch minimum size limit did. In addition, the 16 inch minimum size will reduce the high levels of release mortality that the Council was told occurred in some parts of the Gulf during the temporary implementation of an 18-inch minimum size limit in 1999.

The 4-fish recreational red snapper bag limit will be retained for 2000, and the bag limit allowance for captain and crew of for-hire (charter and headboat) vessels has been reinstated. NMFS recently approved a previous Council proposal to set a 0-fish red snapper bag limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels beginning in 2000 to help extend the recreational season. However, NMFS analyses indicated that the measure will only extend the season by a few days. The Council did not feel that the few additional fishing days justified eliminating a segment of the fishing population from being allowed to retain their recreational catch.

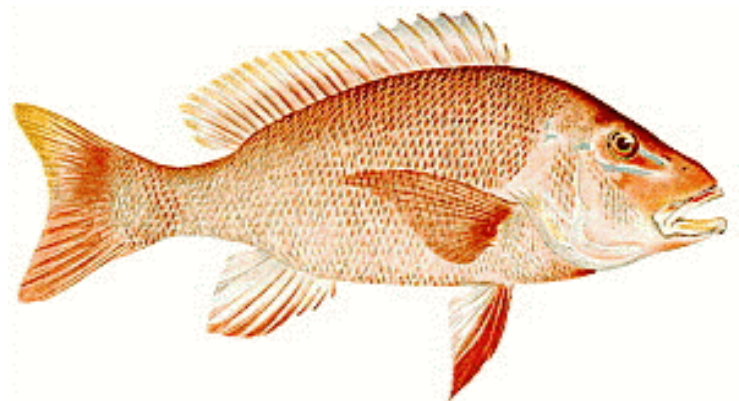
The fixed recreational red snapper season for the year 2000 was set from April 21 through October 31 in order to alleviate uncertainties associated with a quota closure at an unknown future date, and to provide recreational red snapper fishing at a time when it will provide the greatest benefits to all Gulf Coast fishermen. NMFS projected that these dates would result in the recreational fishery filling its year 2000 quota under the 16-inch minimum size limit and 4-fish bag limit (including bag limit allowances for captain and crew of for-hire vessels). Had the 0-fish red snapper bag limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels been left in place, NMFS projected that the opening and closing dates

would have been from April 15 and October 31, respectively.

For the commercial fishery, the Council proposed shortening the monthly openings in the Spring season (February 1 opening) from 15 days to 10 days (noon on the 1st until noon on the 10th). The Council also proposed opening the Fall season on October 1 instead of September 1 and continue the monthly 10 day openings (noon on the 1st until noon on the 10th). Both measures are intended to help sustain price stability by spreading out the harvest in the Spring, and by opening the Fall season at a time when fishermen can generally get better prices for their catch. The Council also proposed retaining the 15-inch minimum red snapper size limit for the commercial fishery, since other methods are used to control harvest in the commercial sector, including monthly openings and limited access.

The above proposals will be submitted to NMFS through a regulatory amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan for review, approval, and implementation. Since the NMFS review and implementation process for regulatory amendments takes several months, the Council had requested that the above measures be approved through an interim rule that must be in place by January 1, 2000 in order to be effective for the 2000 fishing year. NMFS has complied with this request and approved the measures.

As an additional potential measure to help promote price stability and eliminate an unfair competitive disadvantage against foreign imports, the Council has asked NMFS legal counsel to evaluate the legal ramifications of requiring that foreign red snapper catches imported to the Gulf states be consistent with the minimum size limits for U.S. fishermen.



NMFS PARTIALLY APPROVES THE GENERIC SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT TO THE GULF COUNCIL'S FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLANS

The Council submitted a Generic Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) Amendment to Gulf Coral and Coral Reef Resources, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Red Drum, Reef Fish, Shrimp, Spiny Lobster, and Stone Crab Fishery Management Plans (FMP). The purpose of this amendment was to address new provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA). These provisions required the Council to review consistency of definitions between FMPs and SFA; address bycatch; establish new definitions of "overfishing" and "overfished", with rebuilding periods; consider the effects on fishing communities; and review consistency with regard to reporting requirements.

The NMFS has approved the sections of the amendment that deal with descriptions of the fisheries and fishing communities, and the portion which contains proposed changes in the construction characteristics of stone crab traps. The NMFS has disapproved the portion of the amendment that deals with bycatch reporting, bycatch reduction, setting overfishing targets and thresholds, and rebuilding schedules for king mackerel and red snapper.

According to the NMFS, the Council had not proposed any new measures to improve bycatch reporting and that measures listed by the Council (e.g. Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Cooperative State-Federal Program) have not been implemented yet. Therefore, there are not any measures in place to monitor shrimp bycatch that will allow an assessment of the extent of bycatch reduction in the fishery. The NMFS also felt that the Council has not taken enough aggressive action to substantially reduce finfish bycatch in the shrimp trawl fishery. Such action could include extending the requirement of bycatch reduction devices into Federal waters east of Cape San Blas, Florida, effort reduction in the fishery, closed areas, seasonal closures, or requirement of more effective BRDs.

Since the time the amendment was submitted to the NMFS, the NMFS has determined that biomass-based proxies for maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and

optimal sustainable yield (OY) are superior to fishery mortality-based reference points such as spawning potential ratio (SPR). Therefore, the NMFS disapproved the Council's SPR-based reference points of MSY and OY listed in the amendment. Furthermore, the rebuilding plans for red snapper and king mackerel were SPR-based. The NMFS consequently disapproved these measures. The Council will address these issues at the January Meeting (see page 8).



COUNCIL CONCURS WITH REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR'S DETERMINATION TO WITHDRAW BRD PROTOCOL

At its November meeting, the Council concurred with NMFS Southeast Regional Administrator William Hogarth that NMFS withdraw the bycatch reduction device (BRD) testing protocol and develop an internal NMFS process with guidelines that are more flexible in getting BRDs certified. This recommendation is in part due to industry concerns that the current testing protocols are too complicated and rigid.

The BRD provides a small opening in the top of the shrimp trawl for red snapper and other finfish to escape while retaining nearly all of the shrimp catch. To be certified, a BRD must reduce the bycatch mortality of juvenile red snapper by 44 percent compared to the average mortality level during the years 1984-1989. Current protocol to certify a BRD requires 30 trials using paired trawls, one net containing the BRD and one net without the BRD. A trial cannot be counted if either net does not fish correctly and consistently.

Amendment 9 to the Gulf Shrimp FMP required, with limited exceptions, that certified BRDs be used in shrimp trawls towed in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone (EEZ) shoreward of the 100-fm (183-m) depth contour west of 85° 30' W. longitude, the approximate longitude of Cape San Blas, FL. However, the Council is considering bycatch reduction requirements for shrimp trawling south and east of Cape San Blas.

COUNCIL ENCOURAGES FISHERMEN TO USE CIRCLE HOOKS WHEN FISHING FOR RED SNAPPER AND OTHER REEF FISH

One problem often encountered by fishermen is that when they bring up an undersized red snapper or other reef fish (a regulatory discard), the fish may have swallowed the bait and is deep hooked. There is a very good possibility that this fish will die because of internal damage from the hook wound. One way to avoid deep hooking fish is to use a circle hook.

A circle hook is a c-shaped hook that has its own built in, mechanical hooking feature - the hook point curves in on itself. When a fish takes the bait, the hook is drawn toward the point of resistance, usually the hinge of the jaw or some point along the jaw. It then rotates and sets itself. There is no need to yank the pole back to set the hook, just bring the line tight and begin reeling.



Circle hooks have other advantages. Because the hook point curves inward, they are less likely to snag. Circle hooks also provide good solid hook ups and once set, are hard for a fish to throw. Finally, because of the way the hook sets in the fish's mouth, it is usually away from the teeth so a lighter leader can be used.

Fishermen can do other things to increase the chances of a released fish surviving. Fish should be landed quickly and not played to exhaustion. If the fish is caught in deep water, it should be brought to the surface slowly so it can adjust to the pressure change. If it is at all possible, the fish should be left in the water when the hook is removed or leader cut (the leader should be cut as short as possible).

If the fish must be handled, a wet glove or rag should be used to hold the fish and the fish should be held on its back or its eyes covered with a wet towel to calm it. Removing mucous or scales should be avoided since this leaves the fish open to infection. Once the hook is out, the fish should be returned back to the water as quickly as possible. If the air bladder from a fish taken from deep water has expanded, deflate the air bladder with a sharp object. An exhausted fish can be

resuscitated by moving it back and forth through the water.

COAST GUARD PROMOTES COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL SAFETY WITH FREE INSPECTION PROGRAM

The United States Coast Guard will commence Operation Safe Catch December 1, a Coast Guard commitment to improve commercial fishing vessel safety and prevent loss of life and property at sea.

The implementation of the commercial fishing industry vessel regulations published in 1991, have reduced fishing vessel casualties and subsequent loss of life throughout the fishing fleet. However, 11 lives lost off the mid-Atlantic coast last December and January confirms that commercial fishing ranks among the most hazardous occupations in the United States. Each year approximately 80 people die nationally while conducting commercial fishing operations.

During Operation Safe Catch, Coast Guard at-sea boarding teams and dockside examiners within Coast Guard Atlantic Area, the Gulf and East Coast of the United States and the Great Lakes region, will ensure compliance by checking critical items on commercial fishing vessels. These items will include immersion suits, survival craft, survival craft stowage, distress signals, emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs), fire extinguishers, high-water alarms, water tight integrity, damages or broken hoses and vessel overloading.

Since there are approximately 33,000 commercial fishing vessels on the Gulf Coast, Coast Guard examiners will concentrate on "high risk" vessels. These are vessels that are in poor condition with inadequate safety equipment; have a history of repeated search and rescue intervention; or engage in higher risk fishery operations such as one-person fishing vessels operated far from shore.

For more information, interviews, images, and requests to accompany a Coast Guard boarding team during a safety boarding, contact the nearest Coast Guard Group or Marine Safety Office.

MARINE RESERVES AT RILEY’S HUMP AND TORTUGAS NORTH AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE COUNCIL IN REEF FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The National Ocean Service Sanctuary Program is proposing implementing a marine reserve in the Dry Tortugas - located at the southwestern most tip of the Florida Keys. The proposed marine reserve to be considered by the Council includes the Tortugas South and a portion of Tortugas North that extends beyond the boundary of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and state waters into the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (see map). The area is approximately 60 square nautical miles. The Tortugas North area extends slightly into EEZ waters within the Council’s jurisdiction.

These two proposed marine sanctuaries are based on two years of work by the Tortugas 2000 Working Group. The Council moved to proceed with a Reef Fish Management Plan amendment to implement a marine reserve in the Riley’s Hump area and the small area in the Tortugas North reserve that is under the Council’s jurisdiction.

The Council amendment could regulate fishing (including spear fishing), and anchoring by fishing vessels, but could not regulate anchoring by other vessels, including cargo vessels that have occasionally anchored on Riley’s Hump during storms.

The amendment will present the following alternatives at public hearings with Alternative 1 preferred:

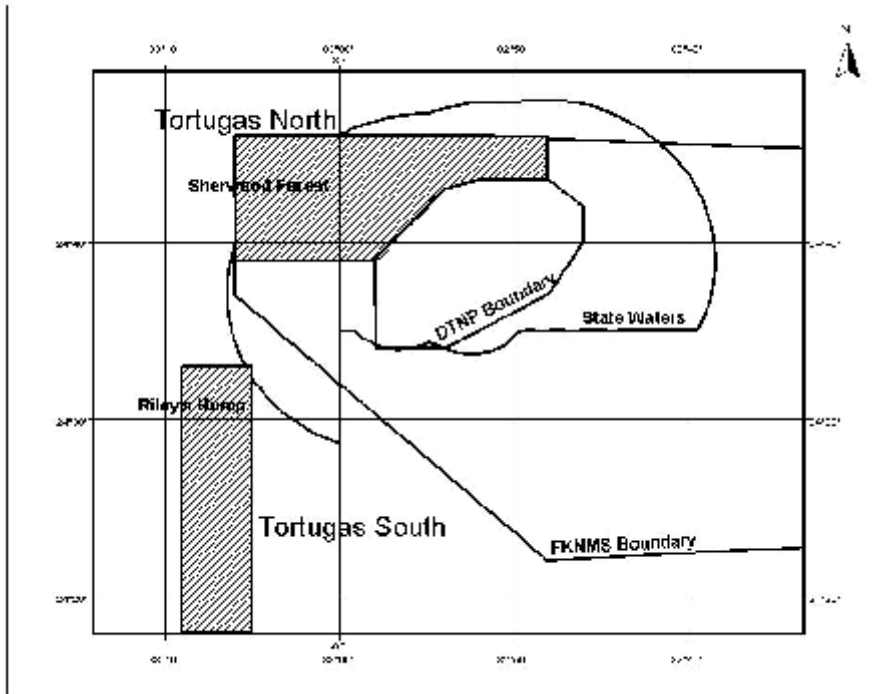
Alternative 1 - implementing a marine reserve for the Riley’s Hump area that could:

- be the size proposed by Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary or smaller.
- be closed to all fishing or to bottom fishing only.
- prohibit anchoring by fishing vessels.
- be implemented for 4 or 5 years, during which it will be scientifically evaluated before making it a permanent closure.

Alternative 2 - retaining Riley’s Hump as a protected mutton snapper spawning aggregation site, but prohibit fishing during:

- May through June (status quo).
- May through July.
- May through August.

Times and locations of the public hearings will be announced through news releases, the Council’s web page (<http://www.gulfcouncil.org/>), and this newsletter.



NMFS ADDS TO ALLOWABLE GEAR TYPE LIST

In the last issue of Gulf Fishery News, the NMFS list of fisheries and allowable gear for the Gulf of Mexico EEZ was presented in a table. The following allowable gear types have been added to the list: Hand harvest to the recreational Spiny Lobster and Stone Crab fisheries, spear to the non-FMP Mullet and Groundfish fisheries, cast net to the commercial and recreational non-FMP Mullet fisheries, tong to the non-FMP Oyster fishery, and hook-and-line and hand harvest to the non-FMP recreational fishery. In addition, “hand harvest only” was changed to “hand harvest” for the Coral Reef fishery and a non-FMP Blue Crab fishery was added to the list.

RED GROUPER AND RED DRUM MANAGEMENT CONTINUES AT STATUS QUO PENDING OUTCOMES OF REVISED NMFS STOCK ASSESSMENTS

The Council's Standing and Special Reef Fish Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) met on October 27, 1999 to review, among other issues, the NMFS/Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) 1999 red grouper stock assessment and the Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel (RFSAP) report. The SSC failed to find that the data and analyses of the RFSAP report were adequate and sufficient for choosing a rebuilding schedule for red grouper. Specific issues raised by the SSC were about historical data sets used in the stock assessment, estimates of red grouper growth, discrepancies in current landings data, differences in catch-per-unit-effort trends between commercial and recreational data, and questions about the assessment model. Because the SSC did not find the red grouper data and analyses adequate, the Council was unable to set a TAC or recovery schedule for red grouper. Therefore, the commercial quota for shallow water groupers (including red grouper) remains 9.2 million pounds. The Council also asked NMFS to provide the needed information to the RFSAP to address the concerns raised by the SSC. The Council will reconsider the red grouper assessment as soon as that information can be provided.

The Red Drum Stock Assessment Panel (RDSAP) met from October 4 - 6 to evaluate NMFS's red drum stock assessment. Because the NMFS stock assessment biologist was not able to meet with the RDSAP due to other commitments, the RDSAP was only able to identify areas in the assessment that needed further analysis. Areas the RDSAP was interested in investigating were further partitioning seasons and growth in the assessment model, running the assessment model with and without shrimp bycatch, and examining age-specific selectivities. Because the assessment model used by NMFS for red drum is so computer intensive, a report by the RDSAP could not be completed in time for review by the SSC and Red Drum Advisory Panel. The RDSAP could only recommend that it reconvene with NMFS biologists in a workshop format to examine data inputs used in the

NMFS assessment model. Therefore, at its November meeting, the Council approved the RDSAP recommendations.

COUNCIL APPOINTS AD HOC CHARTERBOAT ADVISORY PANEL TO EVALUATE PROPOSED CHARTER VESSEL/HEADBOAT PERMIT MORATORIUM

The Council is considering implementation of a temporary moratorium on the issuance of charter vessel/headboat permits for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic fisheries in the Gulf EEZ. The purpose of the amendment is to moderate short-term future increases in fishing effort and attempt to stabilize fishing mortality. A moratorium, if adopted, should provide a basis for the development of a more comprehensive effort limitation program for this segment of the recreational fishery. It will be a prudent first step in the development and evaluation of more comprehensive effort limitation programs that could provide better long-term control of fishing effort.

To evaluate the proposed moratorium, the Council has appointed an Ad Hoc Charterboat Advisory Panel. Panel members were selected for their interest in this issue and by state they represent. Panel members are as follows:

Bob Zales (chr)	-	Florida
Bobbi Walker(v. chr)	-	Alabama
Charles Carter	-	Texas
Allen Kahoe	-	Louisiana
Gus Loyal	-	Florida
Mike Nugent	-	Texas
Clara Pease	-	Florida
Richard Rice	-	Louisiana
Mike Thierry	-	Alabama
Bill Wickers	-	Florida
Jim Twiggs	-	Mississippi
Charlie Walker	-	Florida
Don Walker	-	Alabama
John Williams	-	Texas

The Panel will meet January 4, 2000 in New Orleans, Louisiana. The SSC will review the amendment on January 12, 2000 also in New Orleans, Louisiana.

ART, SCIENCE TO MERGE IN "IMAGING THE GULF" EXHIBITION AND COMPETITION

Art and science will merge at the Gulf Coast Exploreum in Mobile, Alabama, March 25-May 6, 2000 when a major exhibition, "Imaging the Gulf," will showcase university student artwork depicting the value of the Gulf of Mexico. Three thousand dollars in prize money is being offered for best of show and a logo category.

The exhibition is being held in conjunction with the Fourth Gulf of Mexico Symposium at the adjacent Convention Center. The April 9-12 symposium, "The Gulf of Mexico - a Resource for the New Millennium" will feature E. O. Wilson of Harvard, the Pulitzer-prize winning scientist who popularized the concept of biodiversity.

"Imaging the Gulf" is sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Program, headquartered at Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, in association with the Gulf Coast Exploreum and with assistance from the Mobile Museum of Art. The Gulf of Mexico Program is a partnership of private groups, businesses and government agencies dedicated to preserving the Gulf of Mexico.

University graduate and undergraduate students from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas are encouraged to enter up to five works each in the juried contest. Their task, said Gaye Farris, U.S. Geological Survey, Lafayette, Louisiana, chair of the art contest, "is to interpret some part of the Gulf of Mexico Program's message that the Gulf is economically valuable, aesthetically beautiful, environmentally important and culturally rich, and that we have only one Gulf of Mexico and need to be one unified community in protecting it."

Works in any medium may be submitted. They must have been completed within the past two years and must be entirely original in concept. Works for the exhibition will be selected through the submission of slides of the artwork; **slides are due Feb. 11, 2000**. Entry forms for the exhibition have been distributed to art departments in Gulf state universities and are available on the Web at <http://www.gmpo.gov>. For more information about the contest or exhibition, contact Turnage at 205-872-5397, or e-mail Gaye.Farris@usgs.gov.

NORTH ATLANTIC SWORDFISH REBUILDING PROGRAM ADOPTED

The United States successfully negotiated a commitment to rebuild North Atlantic swordfish within 10 years at the 16th regular meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The 27-member organization oversees the conservation and management of Atlantic tunas and tuna-like fishes, including North Atlantic swordfish. Swordfish were scientifically reassessed this year.

The hard-won program is thanks to the strong support of Canada, and was made possible by significant sacrifices by U.S. swordfishers. The United States also sponsored a resolution calling on the scientific body of ICCAT to report in two years on research regarding the use of time-area closures and/or gear modifications to reduce the catch of undersized swordfish.

The United States also joined with Canada in securing an ICCAT agreement on significant steps in the area of compliance by both member and non-member parties. For the first time ever, trade sanctions were adopted against an ICCAT member country (Equatorial Guinea) due to non-compliance with ICCAT's conservation program for bluefin tuna. In addition, ICCAT adopted a trade embargo on swordfish against two non-member countries, Honduras and Belize, for fishing in a manner that diminishes the effectiveness of ICCAT swordfish measures. A number of countries face penalties for their 1998 quota overages. Despite these accomplishments, the United States was disappointed that previous calculations for establishing Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna quotas had been adjusted, negating some of the conservation achievements made last year.

In measures addressing bigeye, albacore, and yellowfin fisheries, the closure for fish aggregation devices fishing in the Gulf of Guinea was extended for one year in an effort to reduce the harvest of small fish. Rebuilding scenarios were requested for northern albacore, which was estimated to be overfished in this year's stock assessment. In addition, the U.S. allocation of southern albacore was revised to reflect the bycatch nature of this fishery.

AGENDA FOR JANUARY MEETING

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Tuesday, January 18, 2000

Shrimp Management Committee

- Texas Closure
 - NMFS Presentation
 - AP Recommendations
 - Committee Recommendations
- Options Paper for Amendment 10 (Scoping Document)
 - Staff Presentation
 - Committee Recommendations
- Summary of NMFS Shrimp Enforcement Workshop

Ad Hoc Sustainable Fisheries Committee

- Hogarth Letter on Partial Disapproval of SFA Amendment
- Draft Response to Hogarth Letter

Data Collection Committee

- Charter Vessel Pilot Study
 - GSMFC Presentation
 - Committee Recommendations

Wednesday, January 19, 2000

Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Committees

- Draft Amendment for Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium
 - Public Hearing Minutes/Summaries
 - Public Letters
 - AP Recommendations
 - SEP Recommendations
 - SSC Recommendations
 - GSMFC Comments
 - Committee Action

Habitat Protection Committee

- Fenholloway River Pollution Discharge
 - NMFS Presentation
 - Committee Recommendations
- NMFS EFH Workshop Summary
- Boca Grande Phosphate Dock

Mackerel Management Committee

- Draft Dolphin/Wahoo FMP
 - AP Recommendations
 - SSC Recommendations
 - Committee Action (including completion of selection of alternatives)
- February Joint Committee Session
- Public Hearing Locations

COUNCIL SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 20, 2000

- I. Call to Order and Introductions
- II. Adoption of Agenda
- III. Approval of Minutes
- IV. Public Testimony
 - a. Texas Closure
 - b. Draft Amendment for Charter Vessel/Headboat Permit Moratorium
- V. Report of Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel Committees

Friday, January 21, 2000

- VI. Committee Reports
 - a. Shrimp Management
 - b. Mackerel Management
 - c. Sustainable Fisheries
 - d. Data Collection
 - e. Habitat Protection
- VII. SAFMC Liaison Report
- VIII. Enforcement Reports
- IX. Directors' Reports
- X. Other Business

Although non-emergency issues not contained in the agenda may come before the Council for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), those issues may not be the subject of formal Council action during this meeting. Council action will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in this notice and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under section 305 (c) of the MSFCMA, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take final action to address the emergency.

COUNCIL SETS POLICY ON EXTERNAL STOCK ASSESSMENTS AND ANALYSES OF NMFS ASSESSMENTS

The Council welcomes outside scientific assessments or analyses of assessments. However, unless there is a justifiable reason not to do so, the Council will refer them for scientific review by the appropriate stock assessment panel (SAP) and subsequent review by the SSC before the Council acts on such analyses or assessments. This change in procedure will allow for an analyst employed by an association to meet with the SAP and present his/her findings at the same meeting the SAP reviews the NMFS assessment. To provide time for associations to review stock assessments, NMFS has agreed to complete their assessments one month prior to the SAP meeting.

The Council is presently incorporating the above policy into its Administrative Handbook. The proposed language reads as follows:

“In the event that any association or organization has a scientist or scientific group comment on or analyze a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) stock assessment for which the Council may use as a basis for setting total allowable catch (TAC) (and associated management measures) and the association or organization would like the Council’s management committee to review their analysis and comments when they review the NMFS stock assessment and the stock assessment panel (SAP) report; that association or organization must provide their analysis to the Council at least 14 days prior to the SAP meeting. If for any reason that is not possible, the association or organization should immediately advise the Council Executive Director, who will confer with the Council Chairman on whether to accept the analysis or delay acceptance to a later date when such reviews by the SAP and subsequently the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) are possible. This policy in no way is intended to constrain any person testifying before the Council from presenting information on NMFS stock assessments either by written testimony or oral testimony under the time constraints of such testimony. This policy is conditional upon the NMFS stock assessments being available one month in advance of the SAP meeting, and thereby

available to the association or organization for review and comment.”

If you have questions or comments about this policy, please contact the Council (addresses and phone numbers on page 12) .

COUNCIL INTERESTED IN HEARING YOUR VIEWS

The Council is always interested in hearing your views. Comments can be made through public hearings, letters, and e-mails. When providing comments on fisheries issues, the Council requests that you include your name, city and state, and your relevant background and interest (commercial fisherman, recreational fisherman, conservationist). If you are commenting on behalf of an organization, please include your organization's name and number of members. For groups that encourage their members to send common comments to the Council, the Council requests that these groups use a petition format with supporting member names and addresses attached. In the past, the Council has received multiple comments with the same wording (>600) from different individuals of the same organization. While the Council does respect and encourage individuals and groups to comment, this type of response increases resource use (e.g. paper) by staff. Therefore, to help conserve resources, the Council encourages the petition format for identical group comments.

NEW FISHING REGULATION BROCHURES AVAILABLE

Up-to-date brochures of the commercial and recreational fishing regulations for the Gulf of Mexico federal waters are available from the Gulf Council offices. The brochures include size limits, trip limits, and quotas for coastal migratory pelagic species, reef fish, shellfish, highly migratory species, coral and coral reefs, and red drum. In addition, information on permits, allowable gear, and other items of interest are included in the brochures. Contact the Gulf Council office for details (Council addresses and phone number given on page 12).

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Ad Hoc Charterboat Advisory Panel - January 4, 2000 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dolphin/wahoo Advisory Panel - January 5, 2000 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Shrimp Advisory Panel - January 6, 2000 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Scientific and Statistical Committee - January 12, 2000 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council meeting - January 18-21, 2000 in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

Shrimp Amendment 10 workshops

February 2, 2000 in Palacios, Texas

February 3, 2000 in Port Isabel, Texas

February 7, 2000 in Key West, Florida

February 8, 2000 in Ft. Myers, Florida

February 9, 2000 in Madeira Beach, Florida

February 10, 2000 in Apalachicola, Florida

For further information on meeting agendas and meeting locations, contact the Council office (see page 12 for addresses and phone numbers).

ENFORCEMENT REPORTS

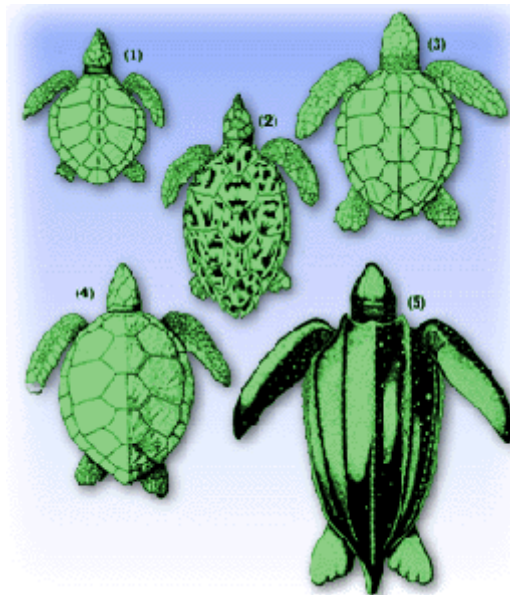
Florida Fisherman Pays \$800 Penalty for Taking a Dead Green Sea Turtle

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently assessed a recreational fisherman with an \$800 civil penalty for illegally taking a sea turtle. The penalty was assessed against Thomas Schaub of Dover, Florida for taking a green sea turtle on August 19, 1999.

During a trip on that day, Schaub sighted the floating dead sea turtle and pulled it from the water intending to keep its shell as a memento. Although the turtle was dead when Schaub took it from the water off of Marathon, Florida, doing so still constituted a violation of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Schaub has paid the \$800 penalty.

All six species of sea turtles found in United States' waters are protected under the Endangered Species Act. These species are the green, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, and olive ridley sea turtles. The Endangered Species Act defines a "take" as harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding,

killing, trapping, capturing, collecting or attempting to engage in any such conduct. The Act prohibits the taking of endangered and threatened sea turtles and any part, product, egg, offspring, or the dead body or parts.



1. Kemp's ridley
2. Hawksbill
3. Loggerhead
4. Green
5. Leatherback

If a person finds a dead, sick, or injured sea turtle, they should report it to wildlife enforcement agents. They should also be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. What is the exact location of the animal?
2. Is the turtle alive or dead?
3. What is the approximate size of the turtle?
4. Is the turtle marked with spray paint? (This indicates that the turtle has been documented)
5. What is the location of the closest access point to the turtle?

The NMFS urges citizens to report fishery violations during weekly business hours of 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. eastern time to its Southeast Region Law Enforcement Division at (727) 570-5344, or after hours and weekends to its National Enforcement Hotline at (800) 853-1964.

SETTLEMENTS BETWEEN APRIL 1, 1999 AND SEPTEMBER 30, 1999

CASE NUMBER	RESPONDENT NAME	AREA	LE UNIT	CASE DESCRIPTION	FINAL AMOUNT	FORFEITED AMOUNT	PERMIT SANCTION
SE970290FM	RICHARD HEIN THANH VO THANH HEIN VO	GOM	USCG	POSSESS RED SNAPPER DURING CLOSURE	\$12,000	\$2,115.30	
SE980029FM	FINLEY L. WILLIFORD, JR.	GOM	USCG	POSSESS SHARK DURING CLOSURE	\$12,000	\$4,134.90	PERMANENT BAN FROM FEDERAL FISHING
SE980193MM	CHANTI HANCE	GOM	FMP	1)TAKE, HARASS, FEED DOLPHIN 2)TAKE, HARASS, FEED DOLPHIN 3)TAKE, HARASS, FEED DOLPHIN 4)TAKE, HARASS, FEED DOLPHIN 5)TAKE, HARASS, FEED DOLPHIN	1)\$100 2)\$100 3)\$100 4)\$100 5)\$100		
SE980345FM	CHARTER BOAT RITA KAY INC. HUBERT E. GODWIN	GOM	FMP	1)POSSESS RED SNAPPER DURING CLOSURE 2)ENGAGE IN FISHING WITHOUT VALID PERMIT	1)\$500 2)\$250		
SE980393FM	FRANCIS KEITH GRABLE	GOM	USCG	POSSESS RED SNAPPER DURING CLOSURE	\$575		
SE990070ES	THAN VIET DO	GOM	NMFS	1)TAKING OF SEA TURTLE 2)TEDS VIOLATION	\$1,000 \$1,000	\$6,122.55	
SE990111FM	TERRENCE G. ABRAMS GREGG ABRAMS SEAFOOD	GOM	NMFS	OPPOSE, INTIMIDATE, INTERFERE WITH NMFS DATA COLLECTOR	\$22,000		
SE950936MS	DERAL G. HOLMAN DONALD HOLMAN	FLOWER GARDENS NMS	USCG	1) ANCHORING VESSEL WHERE MOORING BUOY AVAILABLE 2) INJURING CORAL WITHIN NMS	\$1,500		
SE960370FM	CUONG H. TRAN NGOC TUAN TRAN	GOM	LA	2 COUNTS OFFLOAD SHARK FINS AND CARCASSES EXCEPT AS SPECIFIED 1 COUNT FAIL TO DISPLAY VALID SHARK PERMIT	\$3,000	\$1,733.80	30 DAYS
SE960371FM	STEVEN VINH LE	GOM	LA	PURCHASE SHARK FINS DISPROPORTIONATE TO CARCASS	\$3,000	30 DAYS	
SE970042LA	NORMAN E. MCCARTY JR.	GOM	USCG	POSSESS 442 LBS OF RED SNAPPER FROM MEXICAN WATERS	\$2,000	\$729.30	30 DAYS
SE970262FM	A.C. WILLIAMS SEAFOOD INC. ALLEN C. WILLIAMS JR. A.C. WILLIAMS	GOM	NMFS	53 COUNTS OF FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH RESTRICTIONS DURING CLOSURE, VESSEL TRIP LIMITS 62 COUNTS OF FALSIFYING	\$800,000	\$3,694.75	
SE980175FM	RONALD J. DEPERISIS	GOM	USCG	USE RED GROUPER FOR BAIT	\$1,500		
SE980204ES	GUSTAV BAHRUTH	GOM	USCG	TED VIOLATION	\$3,000	\$4,620.95	
SE981017MS	TRUSTEN P. DRAKE LAURISA	FKNMS	FMP	OPERATE A VESSEL SO AS TO STRIKE OR DAMAGE	\$1,000		
SE981019MS	RODGER K. BARBER	FKNMS	FMP	OPERATE A VESSEL SO AS TO	\$3,500		
SE990141ES	MARIAN J. CHAPMAN	GOM	NMFS	1) TED VIOLATION 2) TAKE OF ENDANGERED SPECIES	\$1,000		
SE990914MS	LARRY L. FOWLER	FKNMS	FMP	OPERATE A VESSEL SO AS TO STRIKE OR DAMAGE	\$1,600		

GULF FISHERY NEWS WANTS YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS

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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.