

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Policy

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Policy:

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) defines submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) as rooted vascular plants that, except for some flowering structures, live and grow below the water surface. Realizing the ecological importance of SAV to the ecosystem, and as Essential Fish Habitat for or impacting the fishery resources that the Council manages or that are within the Council's jurisdiction, it is the policy of the Council to:

Protect, restore, create, and otherwise improve SAV habitat in the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent estuaries and achieve a net gain in SAV distribution and abundance within these regions.

This policy shall be supported by the following objectives.

1. Conserve existing SAV beds and prevent further loss due to degradation of water quality, physical damage to the plants, or disruption to the local sedimentary environment.
2. Strongly endorse and support actions affecting water and habitat quality that will result in restoration of SAV.
3. Endorse and support propagation and transplant efforts to restore and expand the acreage of SAV necessary to support fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico.
4. Promote planning and education efforts that incorporate SAV as an integral part of the coastal ecosystem and link the habitat with the fishery resource.
5. Work within state and federal regulatory processes to decrease or eliminate impacts to SAV.
6. Promote SAV research and monitoring.