

Build Relationships

Get to know someone on the Council, staff, science committees, or advisory panels who is involved with the fishery in which you are interested. Discuss the issues that concern and interest you. Build relationships with the people who have direct access to the management system. Contact information for Council, Staff, Committee, and Panel members is located on our website.

Attend Meetings

All regular Council meetings, science committee meetings, advisory panel meetings, public hearings, and scoping workshops are open to the public and most include opportunities for public comment. Visit www.gulfcouncil.org to find out the dates and location of upcoming meetings.

Provide Comment

The public are encouraged to share ideas and opinions at Council meetings, scoping workshops, and public hearings. Letters and emails should be submitted to the Council office no less than one week before the Council meeting. Written comments received by the Council office are posted on the Council website and summarized for full Council before a fishery decision is made.

Generally, letters are addressed to the Council. However, depending on the situation and the stage of the decision-making process, you may write letters to a specific Council member, the Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries Service, or others. Letters submitted directly to Council members are not posted on the Council website unless the correspondence is copied to the Council office.

Public comment letters can be submitted to gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org or mailed to:

Gulf Council – Public Comment
2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607



Comments may be submitted online via <http://tinyurl.com>.

Tips for Providing Written Comment

Some suggestions for writing an effective comment letter:

- **Keep it short and simple** - A one-page letter is best. If your letter is too long you run the risk of key points being overlooked.
- **Stick to the subject** - If you are writing about a specific issue or grouping of issues, stay on topic. If you have multiple topics to discuss, it's best to write separate letters.
- **Identify yourself** - Are you a marine scientist, recreational fisherman, commercial fisherman? If you are representing a group, give the name of the group and the size of its membership.
- **State your opinion** - State the reasons for your opinion. Be explicit and directly refer to the actions and alternatives being considered.

Serve

Interested citizens may serve on panels or committees. If you are interested in serving, talk to Council members, the Executive Director, and the key staff person for the fishery in which you are interested. A list of panels and committees and appointment announcements can be found at www.gulfcouncil.org.



Contact Us:

2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607
Phone: 888-833-1844
E-mail: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

Visit us on the Web at www.gulfcouncil.org



Getting Involved in the Council Process



Getting involved in the Council Process gives you a voice in decisions made to ensure the health of fish populations and marine ecosystems

Why Get Involved?

Different people have different reasons for getting involved in the fisheries management process. Many groups are concerned about fisheries, including commercial fishermen, fishing families, recreational anglers, environmentalists, consumers, scientists, the tourism industry, and local communities. Whatever background or motivations, these groups share a common desire to ensure the health of fish populations and the marine ecosystems they depend on.

Whether you are a member of the commercial fishing community, if your business serves recreational anglers, or if you are simply concerned about the marine environment, the best reason to get involved is because the process affects your livelihood, leisure time, and future dinner plate.



Will I Make a Difference?

Your influence on Council decisions is relative to the amount of energy you put into being involved. Involvement can range from writing a letter to serving on an advisory panel. No matter what level of involvement you choose, your views will have more weight and influence if you learn about the context of the decisions being made, the timeline for the decision making process, and the best ways to communicate with the Council.

Ways to Get Involved in the Process

Many members of the fishing community and the public don't have the time or resources to attend Council meetings. Fortunately, there are other ways to be included in the process without leaving home. The Council solicits comments on developing fishery issues by hosting public hearings or scoping workshops in coastal cities across the Gulf region; hosting online webinars; gathering online comments on our website "thermometer page"; and encouraging written comments via email.

Learn the Facts

The first step to getting involved in the Council process is to become educated about it. Learn how the Council system operates; learn the background of the issues in which you are interested. Learn the terminology used to describe fisheries biology and management. Remember, knowledge is power. The more you know will allow you to make more informed, relevant, and effective contributions to fisheries management decisions. Be sure to read [Navigating the Council Process](#) and stay up to date with the current issues on our "thermometer page."

Suggestions for Learning

- Explore our website at www.gulfcouncil.org
- Subscribe to our mailing list by emailing us at gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org with *Suscribe* in the subject line
- Contact the Council Office - gulfcouncil.org
- Read other resources about how fisheries management works:
 - **Understanding Fisheries Management (Wallace and Fletcher. Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium)**
 - **Fish or Cut Bait (McCay and Creed. New Jersey Marine Sciences Consortium)**
 - **A Guide to Fisheries Stock Assessment from Data to Recommendations (Cooper. Department of Natural Resources, University of New Hampshire)**
 - **Fishery Management in a Nutshell (Recreational Fisheries Information Network)**



Join a Group

There are many groups organized around different interests in the fishery. Join a group (or start one) that represents your interest. Joining a group will give you a greater voice, more motivation, and a larger pool of knowledge to draw from.