

## **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Coastal Wetland Management Policy**

### Coastal Wetland Management Policy:

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) defines coastal wetlands as forested and nonforested habitats, mangroves, and all marsh islands (including portions of barrier islands) that are exposed to tidal activity. Included in forested wetlands are hardwood hammocks, mangrove swamps, spoil banks, cypress-tupelo gum swamps, and bottomland hardwoods. Nonforested wetlands include fresh, brackish, and salt marshes. These areas directly contribute to the high biological productivity of coastal waters by input of detritus and nutrients, by providing nursery and feeding areas for shellfish and finfish, and by serving as habitat for many birds and other animals. Realizing the ecological importance of coastal wetlands in the estuaries of the Gulf of Mexico, 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:

Promote the conservation, maintenance, and restoration of healthy coastal wetlands to sustain and enhance a diversity of marine resources.

This policy shall be supported by the following objectives.

1. Coastal wetland management should be directed towards sustaining the diversity and productivity of indigenous marine resources utilizing the area.
2. Coastal wetland management should promote the long-term health and productivity of wetland habitats for the marine species utilizing the area.
3. Coastal wetlands should generally not be impounded, although it is recognized that this may be necessary at times to control adverse impacts resulting from natural or human-induced hydrologic changes.
4. Coastal wetland management should strive to balance the benefits to all forms of indigenous marine resources and plant communities currently utilizing the area.
5. Permitting or management plans for wetland activities should include sufficient detail to determine potential effects on marine fisheries. It should also include provisions for monitoring and/or mitigation to ensure the objectives of the plan are being met, and that non-target resources are not unacceptably impacted.
6. Coastal wetland management activities should provide adequate ingress and egress for marine species.
7. Coastal wetland management activities should allow adequate nutrient and sediment exchange as well as other important physical and chemical interactions with adjacent areas.
8. The Council supports the necessary planning and implementation to ensure adequate freshwater inflows to sustain coastal wetlands.