

Alabama
LEC/LETC State Report – Fall 2023
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Agency Overview

From January 1, 2023, through September 30, 2023, AMRD enforcement officers conducted 749 commercial fishermen intercepts, 13,628 recreational fishermen intercepts, 1050 seafood dealer and processor inspections, 8,835 hours of patrol (combined vessel patrol and shore patrol) and boarded 4,749 vessels. These numbers reflect our state time efforts and not data from our JEA patrols.

Our state oyster season is currently underway, and officers are spending lots of time patrolling the oyster reef and working the oyster management station to ensure catch limits are abided by and all oyster sacks are tagged and accounted for.

Our state season for the recreational harvest of red snapper is still open from Friday through Monday of each week. We will remain open until our state quota is met. We utilize Snapper Check to monitor our landings. This has been a very successful program since implemented and we have recently started requiring that anglers report their landings of greater amberjack and gray triggerfish as well.

AMRD Enforcement continues to work with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) as part of a Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) enforcing fisheries regulations in Alabama and the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. NMFS has set several priorities for enforcing and managing the various fisheries in these two zones. These priorities target patrols to the different types of fisheries management criteria in offshore and near-shore fisheries. The areas targeted by NMFS are Turtle Excluder Device (T.E.D.) gear enforcement; the recreational gulf reef fish fishery; the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery that targets: red snapper, grouper, and tilefish; IUU; and marine mammal protection patrols.

Grants/Projects

The Enforcement Section continues to work under a grant to monitor and protect marine mammals and turtles. One of the grant's objectives is to monitor turtle crawls and nesting areas to help prevent nest damage caused by the public. The funding also provides for materials that target the public and educate them on the potential harm they can unknowingly cause to turtle nests, and turtle hatching runs. Funding also provides educational material outlining the dangers caused by marine mammal interactions with people and how current laws related to these interactions are crucial to protecting marine mammals and marine turtles. The two portable camera units purchased with this grant have allowed AMRD to monitor turtle nesting areas 24 hours a day, with live video feeds. When deployed, the cameras can track turtle movements and human interactions and monitor known nesting sites.

We are currently utilizing a Port Security Grant that is allowing us to purchase replacement computers for all enforcement personnel. These computers are used in everyday operations as well as allowing officers to monitor our 28 strategically placed remote cameras throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties. In the past we have used this grant to purchase remote monitoring equipment and have deployed them throughout our jurisdiction at remote sites such as boat ramps and high traffic boating areas. These cameras have been very helpful in monitoring boating/fishing activity as well as assisting in search and rescue operations.

Enforcement Issues

We are currently looking to hire two new enforcement officers that would get us to full staff. Over the last few years recruiting and retention has been an issue. I think this has been a struggle for law enforcement across the board.

JEAs

Our JEA contract runs from August 24 -August 23 each year. Our total funding for the 2022-2023 JEA was \$537,239.10. We use this money to purchase equipment that is utilized in federal fisheries enforcement as well as overtime for enforcement personnel.

JEA Patrols	344 total patrols
Vessel Hours Offshore	230
Vessel Hours Near shore	361
Dockside Hours	1,562
Commercial Fishermen Inspected	791
Recreational Fishermen Inspected	1,685
Public Outreach Hours	315
Dealers Inspected	128
Vessels Boarded	670
Commercial Vessels	344
Recreational Vessels	193
Charter Vessels	133
Total Violations	30

Regulatory Changes/Pending Legislation

Currently, there are no pending regulatory changes.

Outreach/Community Education

Officers Participated in many outreach events throughout the year where they handed out educational materials and answered questions from the public.

Public Outreach Events:

Governor’s Inaugural Parade; Family Fun Day @ Gulf State Park; Fort Morgan Oyster Fest; Mobile Boat Show; Orange Beach Boat Show; Boat Show on the Bay; Kids Fishing Academy @ Mobile Big Game Club; Earth Day @ Gulf Shores High School; Earth Day @ Gulf State Park; Delta Woods & Water Expo; Wheels at Work learning Day @ Chickasaw City Schools; Kids Gulf Discovery Day @ Bellingrath Gardens; Gulf council Meeting; ESFF Triple Tail Classic; Hope on a Boat Kids Fishing tournament @ Weeks Bay; Bird Fest @ 5 Rivers

IUU Concerns/Cases

N/A