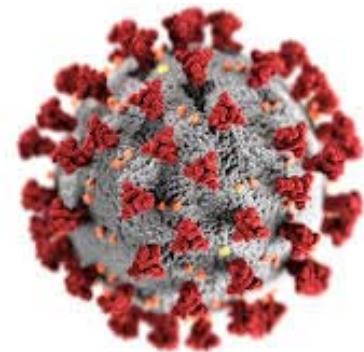
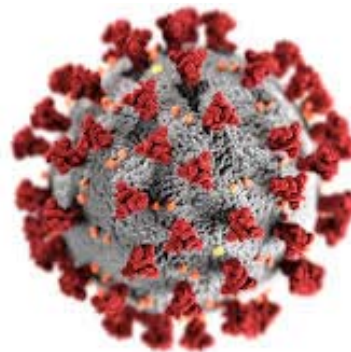
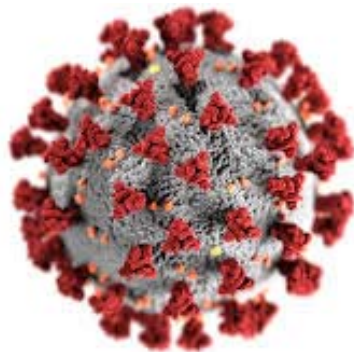




Summary of Comments:

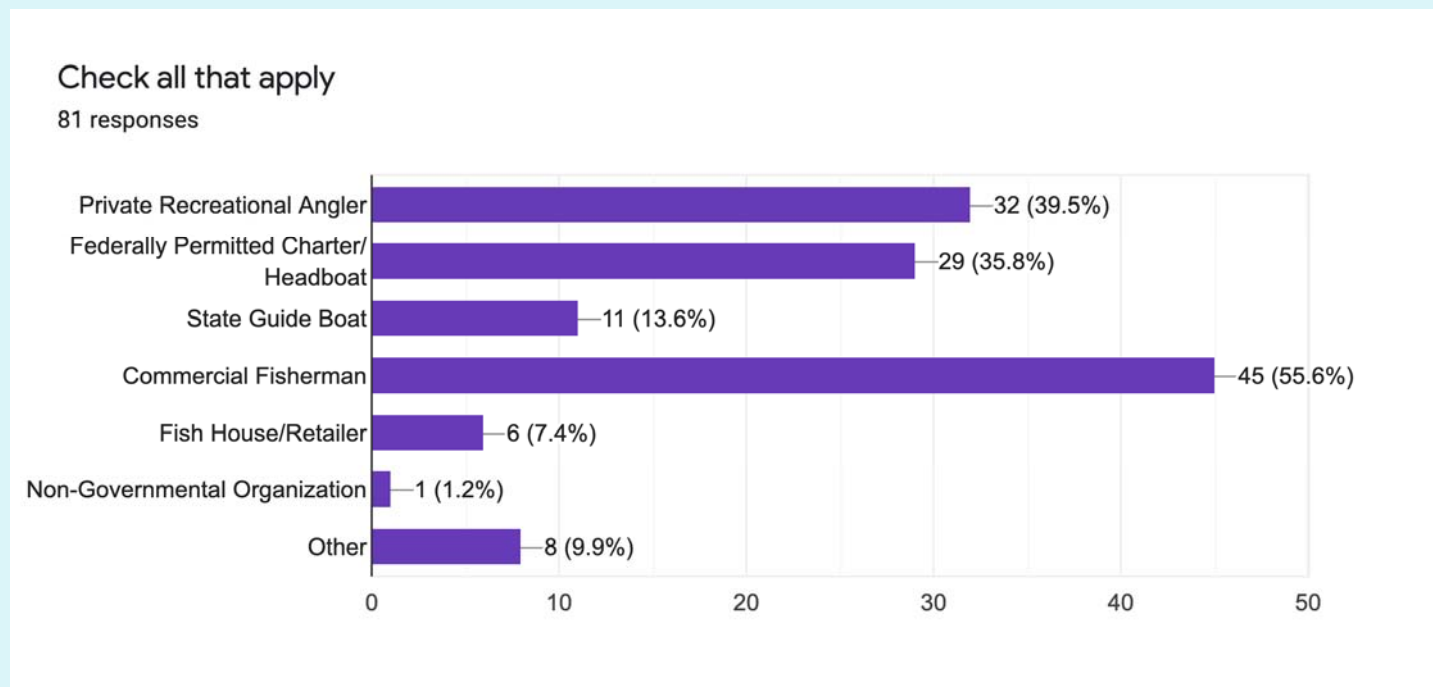
COVID-19: Impacts on Fisheries and Management



Participation

Online comment form was advertised through press release, social media, and on the Council website.

- 81 responses were received between May 22, 2020 and June 9, 2020.



Questions

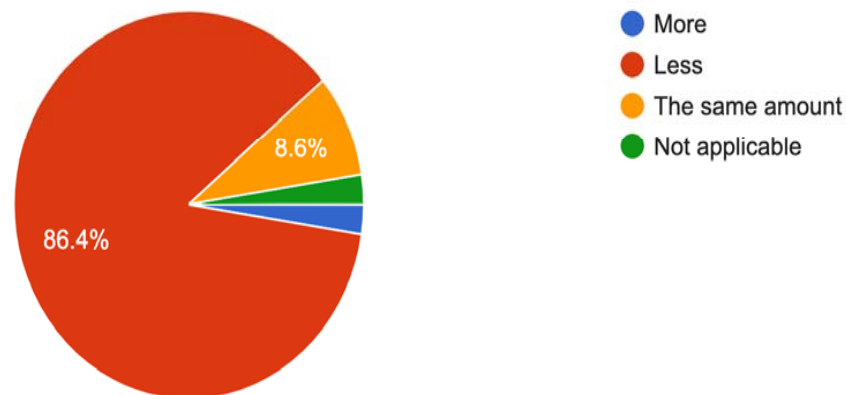
- How do you participate in fisheries in the Gulf?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your fishing and/or business?
- As a result of COVID-19 are you fishing more, less, or the same amount as usual?
- What short-term or long-term regulation changes might be helpful to mitigate impacts from the pandemic on your fishing and/or business?



How has COVID-19 Impacted Fishing Effort?

A majority of respondents indicated that they were fishing less than usual.

As a result of COVID-19, are you fishing more, less, or the same amount as usual?
81 responses



How has COVID-19 impacted fishing and/or business?

Private Recreational Anglers

- Boat ramps were closed for weeks.
 - Tournaments were cancelled.
 - Less fishermen were on each vessel.
 - Kayak access was completely lost when beaches closed
 - Fishing club members who rely on charters were unable to book trips. Also, cost of charters increased per person with social distancing requirements.
-
- Fishing has not been impacted because it's one of the remaining activities that is allowed.



How has COVID-19 impacted fishing and/or business?

Charter Vessels

- Business shut down for two months.
- Business slowly returning with social distancing rules in place.
- No tourism.
- 45-90% lost revenue reported.
- 18-45 trips cancelled.
- Businesses closing indefinitely.
- Deckhands unemployed.



How has COVID-19 impacted fishing and/or business?

Commercial Fishing / Fish Houses

- Demand for seafood nonexistent since restaurants closed.
- Price of fish dropped while lease prices remained high.
 - Ex-vessel price on leased red snapper = \$1.10 per pound
 - Ex-vessel price on leased grouper = \$2.00 per pound
- Fish markets stopped buying.
- Fishermen stopped leasing quota.
- Smaller fish orders for trips.
- No deckhands available.
- No buyers purchasing shrimp.
- 40% drop in shrimp price.
- Packing plants shut down.
- No access to foreign workers because of boarder closures.
- Market flooded with cheap imports.
- Wholesale price is low but retail price remains high.
- Major to complete loss of revenues reported.



How has COVID-19 impacted fishing and/or business?

Other

- Advertisement revenues are down for media businesses.
- Boat club businesses unable to operate.



Suggested Regulation Changes

Season Changes

- Modify closure dates to offset reduced catches.
- Extend seasons without exceeding ACLs.
- Don't close any season completely, reduce bag limits instead.
 - Red grouper
- Re-open triggerfish season.
 - Extend the season
 - Wait to open it until red snapper season is open
- Don't modify seasons because risk of overfishing - consequences of that will last years.
- Don't change anything.



Suggested Regulation Changes

IFQ Regulations

- Allow commercial fishermen to sell directly to individuals without IFQ.
- Allow unused quota to carryover to next year.
- Ensure that allocation rolls over.
- Find a way to give non-IFQ owners shares or access to affordable allocation.
- Reallocate to boats that actually fish.
- Don't let non-fishermen own IFQ.



Suggested Regulation Changes

Commercial Regulations

- Speed up the permit renewal process.
- Suspend the shrimp observer program to reduce social distancing burden on boats.
- Limit imports of foreign seafood.
- Do away with requirement to have US Citizen Captain on board.
- Shut down fish farm proposals that will drive market price down.
- Finance TEDs and other regulatory expenses.



Suggested Regulation Changes

Assistance Programs

- Ensure there are financial assistance programs in place.
- Begin a public promotion program to bring clients back.
- Start an educational/marketing campaign to inform anglers how to minimize COVID exposure while still going charter fishing.
- Reduce license and permit fees.
- Allocate disaster relief funds to fishing communities not to government agencies.



Suggested Regulation Changes

Management Changes

- Mandatory catch reporting for private vessels.
- Sector allocation for all 5 reef fish species.
- Expand the IFQ program to include more species.



Questions?

