



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

*Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico*

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## DRAFT

September XX, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
 United States Senate  
 555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wicker:

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) is responsible for managing the nation's marine fishery resources and works closely with both commercial and recreational fishermen and related industries. This letter is in regard to the adverse socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) commercial fishing and seafood industries. Early on in the pandemic, locally and state-imposed restrictions on business operations resulted in numerous disruptions to seafood product supply chains, reduced prices due to low or no market demand for seafood, and overall sizeable reductions in revenues for commercial fishermen landing fishery species in the Gulf. Small businesses throughout the Gulf region, including many in the restaurant industry, struggled to remain open and, in some cases, closed completely. The depressed demand for seafood products by restaurants, in turn, led seafood dealers to drastically reduce or temporarily suspend orders from commercial fishermen. In response to the reductions in orders from dealers, commercial fishermen needed to adjust and restructure their operations. These adjustments continue today and include decreases in the number of commercial fishing trips taken, as well as reductions in the quantity of fish harvested per trip and the number of crew members taken out on a given fishing trip. This sequence of events has had a profound and adverse impact on employees and their earnings across the broad suite of industries and individual businesses that make up the seafood supply chain. As you are undoubtedly aware, the domestic fishing industry in the Gulf serves as an important supplier of seafood products (or food supplies) to a diverse range of entities locally, regionally and nationally, and it is important to note that members of the Gulf fishing industry have often provided public testimony regarding their concern over imported seafood products and unfair market competition. Program funds that help ensure restaurants remain in operation will serve to lessen detrimental downward shifts in market demand for domestic seafood products provided by Gulf fishermen. In that sense, the RESTAURANTS Act of 2020 is a relevant piece of legislation.

The Council appreciates the opportunity to convey to you the socio-economic importance of maintaining a robust seafood supply chain in the Gulf region. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Council office.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas K. Frazer  
Council Chair

cc: Gulf Council  
Council Staff  
Fern Gibbons  
Victoria Lombardo  
Chris Pickens  
Alexis Rudd