



# Public Hearing Guide

02/2017



## Shrimp Amendment 17B - Yield, Threshold Number of Permits and Transit Provisions



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## What is a public hearing?

A public hearing gives you an opportunity to comment on a fishery management plan or amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) is developing. Public hearings are conducted later in the amendment development process, after the Council has begun selecting preferred alternatives for proposed actions, but before taking final action. Suggestions, issues, and concerns expressed during the public hearings will be presented to the Council for review and consideration before final action is taken. Focusing your comments on the pros and cons of specific alternatives in each action provides the most useful guidance to the Council. If you are unable to attend a public hearing in person, you are encouraged to submit your comments online. For online comment forms, video presentations, and full amendment documents, visit our website at [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org) and click the thermometer icon at the center of the homepage.

## How does a public hearing affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the public hearing process are reported to the full Council prior to final action. Your input is considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures to address the issue(s) at hand.





## [Introduction to Shrimp Amendment 17B](#)

The number of federal shrimp permits in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) has been declining since the initiation of the permit moratorium in 2007. The Council recently extended the shrimp permit moratorium for an additional 10 years (through October 2026), and there is concern that the number of permits will continue to decline indefinitely.

The Council would like to define the ideal minimum number of shrimp permits in the fishery (Action 3) and determine what action to take if the number of permits dips below a specified threshold (Action 4). In selecting an ideal minimum number of permits, the Council would like to ensure that optimum yield is achieved which would balance bycatch thresholds and profitability among permit holders (Action 2).

In order to begin defining an appropriate number of permits, the Council must first consider the current definition of two important values: optimum yield (OY) (Action 2) and maximum sustainable yield (MSY) (Action 1). Currently, OY is set equal to MSY and both values are currently defined separately for each species. Since, many shrimpers target more than one species of shrimp, and the effort from the whole shrimp fishery is used in determining bycatch thresholds, the Council is considering setting both MSY and OY as aggregate values.

Finally, there are some areas in the Gulf where non-federally permitted shrimpers would like to transit through federal waters without having to have a federal commercial shrimp permit. The Council is considering allowing transit through federal waters when vessels have shrimping gear and shrimp on board (Action 5).



## Definitions

**Maximum sustainable yield** – the greatest harvest level that can be achieved without harming the sustainability of the stock.

**Optimum yield** – is the level of harvest that will ensure sustainability of a stock while providing the greatest overall benefit to the nation with respect to the economy, food production, and recreational opportunities.

**Valid or renewable permits** – for federal commercial shrimp permits, a valid permit is one that has not expired. A renewable permit is one that has expired and is not valid for fishing, but can be renewed within one year from its expiration date. The number of valid and renewable permits is the number of permits that can be monitored.

**Active vessel** – an active vessel is a vessel that had at least one pound of shrimp landings per year. The number of active vessels in the offshore fishery will include vessels without a federal permit.

**Predicted active vessels** – an estimate using observed effort and the average effort per active permitted vessel between 2003 and 2014.

## Action 1: Aggregate Maximum Sustainable Yield for the Gulf Shrimp Fishery

Maximum sustainable yield is the greatest harvest level that can be achieved without harming the sustainability of the stock; MSY does not take the economic and social components of the fishery into account. Currently, each species in the shrimp fishery (brown, white, pink, and royal red shrimp) have individual MSYs. However, an aggregate MSY for management of the shrimp fishery in federal waters that includes all species of shrimp can be used. In an effort to define an optimal number of shrimp permits in the fishery, the Council must first consider setting an aggregate MSY. Once the aggregate MSY is set, the Council can consider setting an aggregate OY.

**Alternative 1.** No Action. Do not establish an aggregate MSY for the federal commercial Gulf shrimp fishery.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish an aggregate MSY using the method developed by the Shrimp Effort Working Group (SEWG). For the federal commercial Gulf shrimp fishery, aggregate MSY = 112,531,374 lbs of tails.

## Action 2: Aggregate Optimum Yield for the Gulf Shrimp Fishery

Optimum yield (OY) is the level of harvest that will ensure sustainability of the stock while providing the greatest overall benefit to the nation with respect to the economy, food production, and recreational opportunities. OY is currently set equal to MSY and each shrimp species has its own species-specific optimum yield. The Council is considering using an aggregate OY that takes ecological, social and economic factors into account for use in defining a minimum number of shrimp permits.

**Alternative 1.** No Action. Do not establish an aggregate OY for the federal commercial Gulf shrimp fishery.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** For the federal shrimp fishery, aggregate OY = 85,761,596 lbs of tails which is aggregate MSY reduced for certain ecological, social, and economic factors.



### Action 3: Minimum Number of Gulf Shrimp Vessel Permits

The shrimp permit moratorium was initially put into place with the understanding that at some point, the number of federally permitted vessels would decline to a level where the fishery was again profitable for the remaining participants. The Council is considering setting a minimum threshold number of permits in the Gulf shrimp fishery to ensure that the number of permits does not decrease indefinitely. This threshold number would be based on the level of effort and number of active vessels that would align with the management goals of: achieving optimum yield, remaining below target effort level for juvenile red snapper bycatch and sea turtle bycatch, maintaining the highest catch per unit effort, or balancing high catch per unit effort with landings.

**Alternative 1.** No Action. Do not set a threshold number of Gulf shrimp vessel permits.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Set a minimum threshold number of valid or renewable Gulf shrimp vessel permits at 1072. This number is based on the predicted number of active permitted vessels (those with landings from offshore waters) needed to attain aggregate OY in the offshore fishery. Aggregate OY accounts for relatively high CPUE and landings while reducing the risk of exceeding sea turtle and juvenile red snapper bycatch thresholds or limits.

**Alternative 3.** Set a minimum threshold number of valid or renewable Gulf shrimp vessel permits at 935. This number is based on the predicted number of active permitted vessels (those with landings from offshore waters) during 2011 when effort was highest during the moratorium in the area monitored for red snapper juvenile mortality but without reaching the bycatch reduction threshold and triggering closures.

**Alternative 4.** Set a minimum threshold number of valid or renewable Gulf shrimp vessel permits at 880. This number is based on the predicted number of active permitted vessels (those with landings from offshore waters) during 2008 when CPUE in the offshore fishery was highest during the moratorium.

**Alternative 5.** Set a minimum threshold number of valid or renewable Gulf shrimp vessel permits at a number based on the predicted number of active permitted vessels (those with landings from offshore waters) in a year with relatively high CPUE in the offshore fishery without substantially reduced landings, and with effort that is close to the effort needed to achieve OY.

**Option 5a.** 2007 (1,131 permits)

**Option 5b.** 2012 (988 permits)



Photo credit: Tony Reisinger

#### Action 4: Response When Threshold Number of Shrimp Moratorium Permits is Reached

In the previous action (Action 3), the Council considers setting a threshold number of federal shrimp permits that represents the smallest number of permits the Council currently believes can support the Gulf shrimp fishery. If the threshold is reached, the Council may want to respond by opening up new permits for new entrants or some other management metric. In this action, the Council is considering what action to take if the threshold number of permits is reached.



**Alternative 1.** No action. No action will be triggered when the threshold number of valid or renewable shrimp moratorium permits is reached.

**Alternative 2.** If the number of valid or renewable shrimp moratorium permits reaches the threshold set in Action 3, any permits that are not renewed within one year of the expiration date on the permit will go into a Gulf Shrimp Vessel Permit Reserve Pool.

**Alternative 3.** If the number of valid or renewable shrimp moratorium permits reaches the threshold set in Action 3, the Council will form a review panel to review the threshold and determine if action is needed.

**Preferred Alternative 4.** When the number of valid or renewable shrimp moratorium permits reaches 1,175, the Council will form a review panel to review the details of a permit pool and other options. If the number of permits reaches the threshold set in Action 3, any permits that are not renewed within one year of the expiration date on the permit will go into a Gulf Shrimp Vessel Permit Reserve Pool. The panel would consist of Shrimp AP members, Science and Statistical Committee (SSC) members, NMFS and Council staff.



## Action 5: Transit Provisions for Shrimp Vessels Without a Federal Permit

There are areas in the Gulf where state-permitted vessels without federal shrimp permits would like to transit from state waters through federal waters. Currently, if vessels do not possess a federal commercial shrimp permit, they cannot legally transit through federal waters with shrimp and shrimping gear onboard. The Council is considering allowing transit as long as these vessels are not actively fishing.

**Alternative 1.** No Action. For a person aboard a vessel to fish for shrimp or possess shrimp in Gulf federal waters, a federal vessel permit for Gulf shrimp must have been issued to the vessel and must be on board.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** A vessel possessing shrimp may transit Gulf federal waters without a federal vessel permit if fishing gear is appropriately stowed. Transit means non-stop progression through the area; fishing gear appropriately stowed means trawl doors and nets must be out of the water and the bag straps must be removed from the net.

**Alternative 3.** A vessel possessing shrimp may transit Gulf federal waters without a federal vessel permit if fishing gear is appropriately stowed. Transit means non-stop progression through the area; fishing gear appropriately stowed means a trawl net shall remain on deck, but trawl doors (if present) must be disconnected from the trawl gear and must be secured.



Photo credit: Tony Reisinger

## Send us your comments

The Council would like to hear your input on this proposed amendment before taking final action.

We are hosting the following public hearing workshops beginning at 6 p.m.:

<b>Tuesday, February 21, 2017</b>	<b>Thursday, February 23, 2017</b>
Marriott Beachside 3841 North Roosevelt Boulevard Key West, FL 33040	Courtyard by Marriott 601 American Legion Drive Madeira Beach, FL 33708
Courtyard by Marriott 3955 North Expressway Brownsville, TX 78520	Hilton Galveston Island 5400 Seawall Boulevard Galveston Island, TX 77551
<b>Wednesday, February 22, 2017</b>	<b>Monday, March 6, 2017</b>
Port of Palacios 1602 Main Street Palacios, TX 77465	Courtyard by Marriott 142 Library Drive Houma, LA 70360
<b>Tuesday, March 7, 2017</b>	<b>Thursday, March 9, 2017</b>
Courtyard by Marriott 1600 East Beach Boulevard Gulfport, MS 39501	Hilton Garden Inn 1101 North US Highway 231 Panama City, FL 32405
<b>Wednesday, March 8, 2017</b>	<b>Tuesday, March 21, 2017</b>
Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza 64 South Water Street Mobile, AL 36602	Shrimp 17B Public Hearing Webinar <a href="https://attendeegotowebinar.com/">https://attendeegotowebinar.com/</a>

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. Submit your comments online by visiting: <http://tinyurl.com/ShrimpComment>



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