

**Law Enforcement Committee
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
March 30, 2015
Golden Nugget Casino Hotel
Biloxi Mississippi**

Staff reviewed the comments made by the LEAP on various issues.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico

Dave Donaldson noted that the GSMFC is in the process of drafting a letter to the Secretary of Commerce requesting additional funding for the Gulf States to combat IUU. LCDR Brand noted that the seized fish were considered unfit for human consumption, but the Coast Guard was working on a memorandum of understanding to allow the seized fish to be donated to non-profit sea turtle rehabilitation facilities and to researchers. A suggestion was made that biological data be collected on the seized fish. LCDR Brand responded that the fish are weighed to obtain an average weight, but the fish often come to the dock in the middle of the night. A question was asked whether the seized equipment could be utilized rather than destroyed. Seized equipment is currently not utilized.

LCDR Brand reviewed a portion of a report to Congress on “Improving International Fisheries Management” that was discussed by the LEAP and attached to the summary. In the current fiscal year, 22 seizures of Mexican lanchas have been made, and there have been a record number of sightings. In the report, Mexico has been included in a list of six countries that conduct IUU fishing in U.S. waters. Mexico has two years to address the problem or face possible sanctions.

Ideas for Action by GMFMC and GSMFC

Steven Atran related that he had suggested that the Council or Commission develop a smartphone app for reporting violations to a central source, which could then rely the report to the appropriate enforcement agency. Committee members agreed that this was a good idea. One suggestion was made to see if this could be incorporated into the existing Council fishing app.

Proposed Officer of the Year Program

Steven Atran related that, when presenting the proposed program to the LEAP/LEC, he thought that the review of applicants by the LEAP/LEC to select the top three might require a closed session. Since the GSMFC’s Law Enforcement Committee is not authorized to conduct closed sessions, the LEAP/LEC passed a motion recommending that the review be done as just a LEAP function. However, NOAA General Council has since advised that the review does not need to be a closed session.

The LEAP had recommended that there be a second award for team of the year. Committee members expressed concern that adding a team of the year award could add to logistics issues and costs.

Other Business

The LEAP/LEC meets as a half-day meeting, but is considering changing to a full day meeting because of the increasing amount of items to review. The next LEAP/LEC meeting is currently scheduled for the week of November 3 during the joint GSMFC/ASMFC meeting in St. Augustine, Florida. Because of the cost and logistics of the meeting on the east coast as part of a joint commission meeting, Council and Commission staff are considering whether to hold the joint LEAP/LEC meeting or defer the LEAP portion of the meeting until the next meeting in the spring 2016.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.