

# Gulf Fishery News

A publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Fall 2020-Winter 2021  
Volume 42, Number 3

## What's Inside?

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Highlights from 2020	1
Council Says Farewell to Roy Crabtree	3
Final Edition of Gulf Fishery News	4
Upcoming Meetings	5

## Connect with Us!



Gulf of Mexico  
Fishery Management  
Council

*Protecting our marine  
resources*

4107 W. Spruce Street  
Suite 200  
Tampa, Florida 33607  
Phone: 813.348.1630  
Fax: 813.348.1711

[www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)

## Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Highlights from 2020

As 2020 comes to an end, we have an opportunity to look back on the year behind us and look forward to the year ahead. 2020 was a year filled with new challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way most of us conduct our daily business, and the Council was no exception. We spent most of this year tackling changes to the federal recreational data collection program and incorporation of state recreational data collection programs into management and while attempting to understand the implications of these changes on the health of the fish stocks themselves. The Council took final action on a few regulatory documents and made recommendations on an Executive Order, while seeing a number of new rules published and become implemented into law this year. Keep reading for a perspective on what we accomplished in 2020 and where we're headed in 2021.

COVID-19 was the obviously one of the biggest issues faced by everyone this year. Fishermen across the coast were impacted differently. Initially, the Council asked stakeholders to share how the pandemic had impacted them. We heard that the commercial seafood market was interrupted as restaurants closed; recreational fishermen were also affected when charter businesses were unable to operate, and access to boat ramps was limited. The Council monitored landings throughout the year and tried to anticipate if fishing seasons could be extended or commercial quota needed to be rolled over into next year. To date, as the fishery seems to have stabilized, the Council hasn't made any recommendations on how to mitigate impacts on the industry. Council meetings have transitioned to a completely virtual format for since mid-March. We're all anxious to return to in-person meetings; however, it's hard to predict when that will become a safe and feasible option. We are continuing to look at creative ways to engage stakeholders with a virtual meeting format.



Photo: Emily Muehlstein

Arguably, the largest fishery management challenge faced by the Council this year is the transition to using recreational landings from the updated federal recreational data collection system and incorporating data from the new state-based recreational data collection systems. The Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (FES) improved some of the previous system's sampling protocols which resulted in new landings information that has to be accounted for back in time. Additionally, all of the Gulf States have developed their own recreational data collection programs, and landings data from those programs will likely be incorporated in future stock assessments and quota monitoring. Essentially, we're transitioning to a new data currency to ensure that we're using the same units to monitor landings as we do to set catch limits. In some cases, the new landings estimates may change our understanding of the stock size and our estimates of the amount of fish that are harvested. As each new stock assessment is completed, estimates of stock abundance and projections of how much can be harvested are updated.

...continued on next page



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Highlights from 2020 cont.



Photo: Emily Muehlstein

For the Council, this means that we need to transition our catch limits to the new data currency, so they align with stock assessment and quota monitoring units.

The Council is currently in the process of doing that for red grouper, lane snapper, cobia, vermilion snapper, king mackerel, and red snapper. We expect to finalize management recommendations on a majority of the aforementioned species in 2021 and will continue to work on data currency changes as new stock assessments are completed.

The Council took Final Action on one document this year that recommended prohibiting all fishing year-round in both Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine Protected Areas and prohibiting the possession of any Gulf reef fish species

year-round, except for vessels with a vessel monitoring system (VMS) and a valid commercial reef fish permit that are in transit, with all fishing gear stowed. The increased regulations in the Marine Protected Areas were made to ensure that current protections to gag spawning aggregations are working by making regulations that are more enforceable.

A number of new regulations were implemented into law this year:

- For-Hire historical captain permits were converted to standard for-hire permits.
- The allowable amount of commercial shrimp trawl fishing in certain areas of federal waters was increased.
- The red snapper buffer between the annual catch limit and annual catch target for the for-hire component of the fishery was reduced.
- The Gulf States were given authority to manage fishing season, bag limit, and minimum size limit for the private recreational component of the red snapper fishery.
- The commercial amberjack trip limit was reduced to 1,000 pounds with a reduction to 250 pounds when 75% of the quota is landed.
- The cobia minimum size limit increased from 33 to 36 inches fork length.
- 13 new habitat areas of particular concern were created with fishing regulations, 8 new areas without fishing regulations were established, and regulations in 3 existing areas were modified.
- Status determination criteria were established for gray snapper and the annual catch limits for gray snapper were reduced by small amount in 2020 and beyond. The annual catch target was removed for gray snapper.

Next year, we expect two rules to be implemented. First, the Council has recommended modifying for-hire multiday trip limits by allowing anglers on federal for-hire fishing trips that last longer than 30 hours to possess two daily bag or vessel limits at any time during those trips. Next, new electronic for-hire reporting requirements will take effect on January 5th. Captains in the Gulf will be required to make a trip declaration (hail-out) every time their vessel leaves the dock and they must complete a fishing report for each fishing trip before offloading fish. Also, position reporting requirements are expected to go into effect sometime later in 2021. You can find detailed information about the electronic reporting requirements on our website at

<https://gulfcouncil.org/southeast-for-hire-electronic-reporting-program/> and on the NOAA Fisheries website at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/southeast-electronic-reporting-technologies>.



Photo: Angela Collins

# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Highlights from 2020 cont.



Photo: Emily Muehlstein

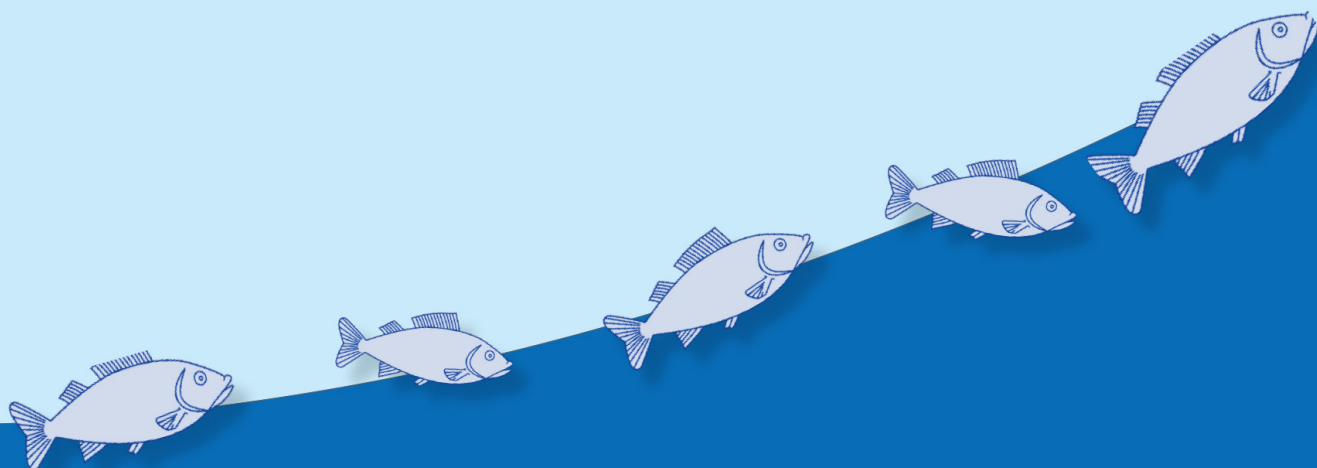
As 2020 was a year of challenges, many of us are eager for the turn of the year. Personally, and professionally, we hope to learn from our experiences during this past year which have, if nothing else, taught us some new tricks and helped us prioritize what is important, and what we might want to let go of once we return to “business as usual.” We do know the Council is going to continue to work as hard as we can to provide make management decisions that benefit our fishermen and our fisheries. Thank you for all your hard work this year, on and off the water.

## Council Says Farewell to Dr. Roy Crabtree

As many of you know, several colleagues retired from NMFS service this year. The Council recognized Dr. Roy Crabtree at the November/December 2020 Council Meeting for his years of service on the Council as the NMFS representative. Dr. Crabtree joined the Council as a voting member in 2003 and will be retiring at the end of this year. He earned his B.S. in Biology from Furman University in South Carolina. He went on to complete his Masters in Marine Science from the University of South Carolina and finally, earned his Ph.D. in Marine Science from the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

He began his fisheries career as a self-employed fishing guide in the Florida Keys and Everglades National Park. From there he worked his way to senior research scientist at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Florida Marine Research Institute, and the director of the Commission's Division of Marine Fisheries. He has served as the regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office since January 2003. Throughout his academic and professional career, Dr. Crabtree authored or coauthored 36 scientific publications and contributed an unquantifiable amount to fisheries management in the Southeast United States.

In his years as the NMFS representative on the Council, Crabtree proved to be a fair, considerate, and thoughtful leader. His ability to weigh all sides of an argument benefited fisheries management in the Gulf for years. Council members and staff will miss his composure and level-headed determination, as well as his wry humor and his gigantic heart. We wish Dr. Crabtree the best in his future endeavors!





# Final Edition of Gulf Fishery News

As the year ends, so will our publishing of *Gulf Fishery News*. This Fall 2020 edition of our quarterly newsletter will be our last. As we begin this new year, we have made the decision to transition away from creating a traditional newsletter and instead focus our efforts on publishing more frequent individual articles via our blog, [Gulf Currents](https://www.gulfcouncil.org/blog). This will allow for more timely, relevant, and easily digested content to be shared. We look forward to bringing you more in-depth coverage of topics that you care about. As always, meeting information, regulations changes, and important announcements will be available on our website at [www.gulfcouncil.org](https://www.gulfcouncil.org), on our [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/gulfcouncil), and via email, by signing up for Council news at <https://tinyurl.com/yc75e4ht>.



## Get Gulf Council News and Updates Delivered to your Inbox!

Stay up to date on the latest fishery management news and topics of interest - sign up for our News and Updates mailing list and get the latest news and information delivered right to your inbox. Visit [www.gulfcouncil.org](https://www.gulfcouncil.org) and click the Council News sign-up button at the bottom of the page.

## Visit Gulf Council Blogspot!

Check out our feature articles on our blog, *Gulf Currents*. You can access the blog on our [website](https://www.gulfcouncil.org/blog) by clicking the Blog button at the bottom of the page.

Council News Signup

Blog

# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Carrie Simmons Executive Director  
John Froeschke Deputy Director

## Appointed Voting Members

Thomas Frazer **Chair**  
Gainesville, FL  
352-392-9230

Dale Diaz **Vice Chair**  
Biloxi, MS  
228-861-3190

John Sanchez  
Homestead, FL  
786-255-1880

Troy Williamson  
Corpus Christi, TX  
361-739-5546

Greg Stunz  
Corpus Christi, TX  
361-825-3254

Phil Dyskow  
Marco Island, FL  
239-821-7698

Susan Boggs  
Orange Beach, AL  
251-747-4169

Leann Bosarge  
Pascagoula, MS  
228-762-0888

Bob Shipp  
Fairhope, AL  
251-454-7481

Jonathan "JD" Dugas  
Grand Isle, LA  
337-254-0508

Ed Swindell  
Hammond, LA  
985-345-4614

## State/Federal Voting Members

Robin Riechers  
Lance Robinson, Designee  
Austin, TX  
512-389-4636

Joe Spraggins  
Biloxi, MS  
228-523-4170

Jessica McCawley  
Martha GUYAS, Designee  
Tallahassee, FL  
850-617-9635

Patrick Banks  
Chris Schieble, Designee  
Baton Rouge, LA  
225-765-2370

Scott Bannon  
Kevin Anson, Designee  
Dauphin Island, AL  
251-968-7576

Roy Crabtree  
Sue Gerhart, Designee  
NMFS SERO  
727-824-5301

## Non-voting Members

Glenn Constant  
Designee for Leo Miranda  
USF&WS  
225-578-4243

LT Nicholas Giancola  
Designee for RADM Paul Thomas  
USCG District 8  
504-671-2058

Deidre Warner-Kramer  
Designee for David Hogan  
OES/OMC  
202-647-2337

Dave Donaldson  
GSMFC  
228-875-5912

# Upcoming Meetings

## Standing, Reef Fish, Mackerel, Socioeconomic, and Ecosystem SSC

**When:** January 5-7, 2021

**Time:** 9:00 am- 5:00 pm EST  
(Jan 5), 9:00 am- 4:30 pm EST  
(Jan 6), 9:00 am- 12:30 pm EST  
(Jan 7)

**Where:** Via webinar  
[Register for the webinar](#)

## January 2021 Council Meeting

**When:** January 25-28, 2021,

**Time:** 9:00 am-5:00 pm EST (Jan 25-27), 9:00 am-4:00 pm EST (Jan 28)

**Where:** Via webinar  
(No need to pre-register)  
Join the meeting at:  
<https://gulfcouncil.adobeconnect.com/council/>



Photo: Angela Collins



Photo: Emily Muehlstein



The Gulf Council would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments, or concerns you would like to see covered in our Blog, *Gulf Currents*. Anyone interested in submitting information and/or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, is encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Emily Muehlstein, Public Information Officer, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 4107 W. Spruce Street, Suite 200, Tampa, FL 33607. Materials can also be sent via fax to 813-348-1711, or by e-mail to [emily.muehlstein@gulfcouncil.org](mailto:emily.muehlstein@gulfcouncil.org).

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Council is responsible for the development and modification of fishery management plans (FMPs) that are designed to manage fishery resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico from state boundaries to the 200-mile limit.

*Gulf Fishery News* is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Any material in this newsletter may be reprinted or reproduced; however, please credit the Council when reprinting articles from this newsletter.

