

Gulf Fishery News

A publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



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Council Awards 2016 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council awarded the 2016 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award to Marine Patrol Officer Roy Lipscomb with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), Office of Marine Patrol. Officer Lipscomb was presented the prestigious award by Council Chair Leann Bosarge.



L to R: Officer Roy Lipscomb, Council Chair, Leann Bosarge, Executive Director, Doug Gregory. Photo: Emily Muehlstein

The Council's Officer of the Year award acknowledges service above and beyond duty requirements and recognizes distinguished service, professionalism, and dedication to enforcing federal fishing regulations in the Gulf of Mexico. Nominees may be submitted from each of the five Gulf State Law Enforcement agencies, the U.S. Coast Guard, and NOAA Fisheries' Office for Law Enforcement.

Officer Lipscomb spent his first 11 years with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources as a fisheries technician while also serving as an unpaid Marine Patrol Reserve Officer. He transitioned to his position as a full-time enforcement officer in 2014 and has distinguished himself as a highly-productive, self-motivated law enforcement officer.

In 2016, Officer Lipscomb processed numerous fisheries violation referrals to NOAA. He led an investigation that seized illegally modified Turtle Excluder Devices from a federally permitted shrimping vessel and later caught the same vessel again for the same offense. He also cited a shrimper for possession of over two dozen illegal shark fins and discovered what was presumed to be a Goliath Grouper head during an inspection of a licensed seafood dealer.

In addition to his excellent service as a Marine Patrol Officer, Roy Lipscomb serves as a Sergeant First Class in the United States Army National Guard where he was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a dedicated to serving his community and protecting the marine resources of the State of Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico.

"Without officers like Roy Lipscomb, the department would not be able to achieve its dedicated mission to Enhance, Protect, and Conserve" said Keith Davis, Chief of Law Enforcement for MDMR.



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Did you know?

The Gulf Council encourages and accepts public testimony at every stage of the fishery management plan process. Comment opportunities go beyond scoping meetings and public hearings. The Council also takes open public comment during each Council meeting and accepts written and online comments throughout the process. Written comments can be emailed to: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org or mailed to:

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, Florida 33607

Questions?
Call Emily Muehlstein at
813-348-1630 ext. 238

October 2017 Council Meeting Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Biloxi, Mississippi, October 2-5, 2017. The Council welcomed new member Phil Dyskow (FL) and returning member Dr. Bob Shipp (AL) to the Council. In addition, Dr. Greg Stunz (TX) was sworn in for an additional 3-year term. The Council re-elected Leann Bosarge as Council Chair and Johnny Green as Council Vice-Chair for the upcoming year. The following is a brief summary of the Council's actions:

Stock Assessment Schedule

The Council discussed the South East Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) schedule, and concerns it has with the process. The Council directed staff to research stock assessment procedures that could serve as an alternative to the current stock assessment process conducted through SEDAR.

Spiny Lobster

The Council reviewed a draft Options Paper for Spiny Lobster Amendment 13 which considers making federal regulations for commercial spiny lobster bully netting consistent with regulations recently adopted by the State of Florida. This would allow Florida to directly submit proposed spiny lobster regulations to National Marine Fisheries Service without requiring Council action. The Council elected to add actions to the document to maintain consistency with Florida regulations that would consider adding a bag limit for commercial divers and bully netters; requiring degradable panels in commercial spiny lobster traps; and defining artificial habitats. The Council will revisit an updated draft of the document at a future meeting.

Coral and Habitat

The Council was presented with a Public Hearing Draft of Coral Amendment 9 which considers creating protections for 15 areas in the Gulf that are known to have an abundance of corals and/or coral diversity that makes them unique. The Council chose to move Actions that would incorporate octocorals into the Fishery Management Unit and establish management benchmarks to the 'considered but rejected' portion of the document. The Council selected to designate 23 new areas as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern; 15 of these areas were recommended to have associated fishing regulations. One of the 15 areas recommended to have regulations is an expanded area of Pulley Ridge; the preferred alternative for Pulley Ridge would have bottom tending gear regulations, but would allow bottom-longlining in the expanded area. The Council also selected a preferred alternative that would prohibit dredging in all existing HAPCs that have fishing regulations. The Council plans to host a public hearing webinar and in-person hearings in the following locations before taking final action on this document:

- Brownsville, Texas
- Palacios, Texas
- Clear Lake, Texas
- D'Iberville/Biloxi, Mississippi
- Grand Isle, Louisiana
- Mobile, Alabama
- Madeira Beach, Florida
- Key West, Florida



Photo: NMFS

Sea Turtle Release Gear and Protocol

The Council reviewed Amendment 49, which considers modifying the Sea Turtle Release Gear and Protocol for the Reef Fish Fishery. The Council expects to review a public hearing draft and select preferred alternatives at the January meeting. Since extensive outreach efforts have already been conducted on this issue, public hearings would be held via webinar and online in the spring of next year.

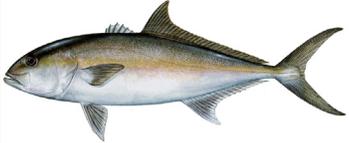
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October Council Meeting continued...

Descending Devices and Venting Tools

The Council looked at an options paper that considers ways to encourage or require venting tools or descending devices on vessels catching reef fish to reduce the mortality of fish that are released, while allowing anglers the flexibility to decide if and when it's appropriate to use them. Rather than create a regulation, the Council decided to develop a policy statement supporting the use of descending devices or venting tools as needed on board vessels possessing reef fish. Additionally, the Council will develop an outreach program with the Council's Outreach & Education Technical Committee to promote their proper use.



Greater Amberjack Fishing Year and Recreational Season

In August, the Council revised the rebuilding plan for greater amberjack after learning that the stock continues to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. The Council opted to close the 2018 recreational season at the beginning of the year while it worked to set a recreational season that best balances conservation and stakeholder use of the resource. At this meeting, the Council took final action on a Framework Amendment that modifies the recreational fishing year to begin on August 1 and run through July 31 of the following year. The Council also selected a fixed recreational closed season January 1- April 30, June 1- July 31, and November 1- December 31. Meaning, the recreational amberjack fishing season will be open August- October and again in May if there is quota remaining. The Amendment will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

Federal Charter For-Hire Management

After hearing a summary of the Ad-Hoc Red Snapper Charter For-Hire Advisory Panel meeting, the Council reviewed draft Amendment 41 which considers allocation based management approaches for federally permitted charter vessels. The Council's current preferred alternative would establish a Permit Fishing Quota program that provides participants with shares and annual allocation. For the adaptive management process, the Council selected preferred alternatives that would establish cycles of increasing length and that would use progressively decreasing percentages for reclaiming shares. The Council selected a preferred alternative that would redistribute reclaimed shares by category proportionally among all participants that harvested species in that category. The Council also supported preferred alternatives that would not allow the transfer of shares, but would allow the transfer of allocation. The Council decided to remove an action that considers harvest tags and to add actions that consider quota adjustments and cost recovery for the maintenance of an allocation based management program. The Council expects to see an updated draft of this document at the January meeting.

Management for Headboat Survey Vessels

The Council heard a summary of the Ad-Hoc Reef Fish Headboat Advisory Panel meeting and examined a draft of Amendment 42, which considers reef fish management approaches for headboat survey vessels. The Council selected preferred alternatives that would require program participants to have a Landings History Vessel (LHV) endorsement. The endorsement would be required for participants to hold shares or allocation, both of which could be transferred. The Council also supported a preferred alternative that would create a share cap that would not allow a single person to hold more shares than the maximum percentage issued to the recipient of the largest shares during initial apportionment. The Council chose preferred alternatives that would apportion initial shares based on the year with the highest landings by vessel for each species during the most recent five years (2011-2015) and distribute those shares proportionally. The Council added alternatives that would consider allowing allocation to be transferred by surrendering it to a NMFS allocation bank for redistribution via lottery or action, and include options for redistribution of withheld annual allocation if the effective date of a final rule implementing a quota reduction has not occurred by a specific date. The Council will review another draft of this document at the January meeting.

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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Doug Gregory Carrie Simmons
Executive Director Deputy Director

Appointed Voting Members

Leann Bosarge Chair Pascagoula, MS 228-762-0888	John Greene Vice Chair Daphne, AL 251-747-2872	John Sanchez Homestead, FL 786-255-1880
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Doug Boyd San Antonio, TX 830-230-5032	Greg Stuntz Corpus Christi, TX 361-825-3254	Bob Shipp Fairhope, AL 334-300-6625
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Dale Diaz Biloxi, MS 228-523-4082	Thomas Frazer Gainesville, FL 352-392-9230	Ed Swindell Hammond, LA 985-345-4614
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Camp Matens Baton Rouge, LA 225-769-9080	Phil Dyskow Marco Island, FL 239-821-7698
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State/Federal Voting Members

Robin Riechers 512-389-4636 Lance Robinson, Designee Austin, TX 281-534-0101	Nick Wiley 850-487-3796 Martha Guyas, Designee Tallahassee, FL 850-487-0554	Roy Crabtree 727-824-5301 Susan Gerhart, Designee NMFS, SERO 727-824-5305
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Patrick Banks 225-765-2416 Myron Fischer, Designee Baton Rouge, LA 985-632-4525	Chris Blankenship 251-861-2882 Kevin Anson, Designee Dauphin Island, AL 251-968-7576	Jaime Miller 228-523-4170 Joe Jewell & Paul Mickle, Designees Biloxi, MS 228-523-4104
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Non-voting Members

Glenn Constant Designee for Cynthia Dohner USF&WS 225-578-4243	LCDR Stacy McNeer Designee for RADM David Callahan USCG District 8 504-671-2101	Dave Donaldson GSMFC 228-875-5912
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Deidre Warner-Kramer
Designee for
David Hogan
OES/OMC
202-647-2335

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October Council Meeting continued...

State Management for Recreational Red Snapper

The Council reviewed a series of draft amendments that would enable the Gulf States to establish management programs for the recreational harvest of red snapper out to 200 nautical miles. The Council added an alternative for "full delegation" to the Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi amendments, which was already included in the Florida and Texas amendments. Staff sent letters to the five Gulf States requesting clarification as to what each state would like to see for "full delegation". Each state's response letter will be included in the briefing book for discussion at the January meeting. The Council will also receive recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee on the allocation alternative that would use estimates of red snapper biomass off each state and the number of recreational trips.



Photo: David Payne

Council Elects Chair and Vice-Chair, New Members Inducted



LeAnn Bosarge



Johnny Green

In October, the Council re-elected Leann Bosarge, of Mississippi, as Council Chair. She has served on the Council since 2014 and this is her second term as Chair. "I am honored to be your [Chair] again, I truly am. This experience as [Chair], I'm positive will be one of the bookends of my life," said Ms. Bosarge.

The Council also re-elected Captain John "Johnny" Green, of Alabama, as Vice-Chair. He has served on the Council since 2009, and has also served as Chair of the Artificial Reef, Marine Reserve, Habitat Protection, Ad Hoc Restoration, and Reef Fish Committees. "It's an honor [for] this boat captain to sit at this table and have the faith that you guys have in me is very humbling," said Mr. Green.



L to R: Phil Dyskow, Bob Shipp, Greg Stunz, and Andy Strelcheck.

In addition to the elections, Andy Strelcheck, Deputy Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, conducted the induction ceremony for newly appointed members, Dr. Bob Shipp, of Alabama, and Mr. Phil Dyskow, of Florida, and reappointed member Dr. Greg Stunz, of Texas.



NOAA Deep-Sea Coral Research Expedition in the Southeast

In August 2017, NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science led the 18-day [Southeast Deep Coral Initiative \(SEDCI\): Exploring Deep-Sea Coral Ecosystems off the Southeast U.S. expedition](#) aboard NOAA Ship Nancy Foster. The



Team photo for the expedition, from left to right – Peter Etnoyer, Daniel Wagner, Jesse Doren, Paul Sanacore, Tracy Sorgenfrei, Kris Ingram, Stacey Harter, Jonathan Gallant, Erik Hodges, Katharine Coykendall, Heather Coleman, John Gray, Sandra Brooke, Morgan Kilgour, and Matt Poti.

Photo courtesy of Ralf Meyer, Green Fire Productions.

goals of the expedition included mapping, surveying, and sampling deep-sea coral ecosystems in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic Bight. Supported by [NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program](#), the research expedition focused on management habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs) identified by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

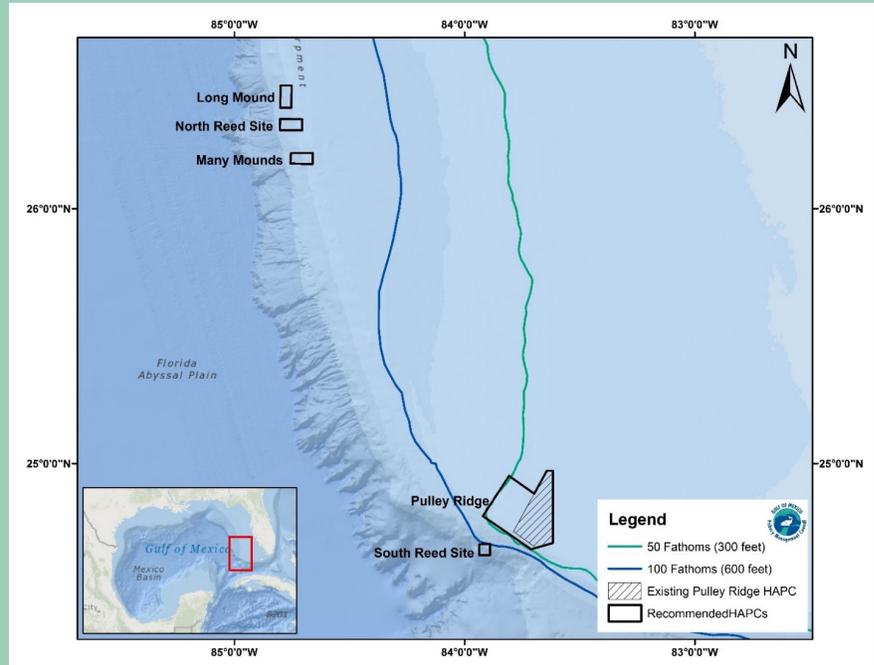


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Coral Research Expedition continued...

Fishery Biologist, Dr. Morgan Kilgour, staff member at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, participated in the first leg of the SEDCI Research Expedition and contributed to the mission of managing deep-sea coral ecosystems. Dr. Kilgour authored the blogpost "The Management Importance of Surveying Deep-sea Coral Ecosystems on the West Florida Shelf" as background information for the expedition website, as well as a short blog about squat lobsters.

According to Dr. Kilgour, the process of identifying new HAPCs in the Gulf of Mexico began in 2014, with a series of meetings and workshops that brought together fishermen, scientists, and managers in order to identify and prioritize areas that should be considered for HAPC designation. By incorporating diverse stakeholders in these discussions, including fishermen, the Council was able to determine boundaries of these proposed HAPCs that would best protect vulnerable coral communities, while also minimizing impacts on the fishing community. Several of these proposed HAPCs occur on the limestone ledges off the west Florida Shelf, and were the focus of the 2017 South-east Deep Coral Initiative expedition.



Orange Lophelia pertusa located at Many Mounds on the West Florida slope.

The primary objectives of the SEDCI expedition were to map new areas, conduct visual surveys, and collect biological samples. The goal was to provide new information about the proposed HAPCs that are under consideration for protection. These goals and objectives were accomplished.

The expedition made 13 successful dives over 10 days, spending 51.5 hours of underwater dive time. A new site, "Wall in the North", was added to the previously targeted sites of Long Mound, North Reed Site, Many Mounds, Okeanos Ridge, and Pulley Ridge. New high-resolution seafloor maps were generated and many types of samples were collected. Samples included, water, specimens, rocks, and images. A key outcome of the surveys was that more coral was found in more places than expected.



Deep-sea coral and a squat lobster on the West Florida Shelf

This research expedition is the first dedicated effort by the DSCRTP in the Gulf of Mexico. The data gathered were directly used by the Gulf Council in its Coral Amendment 9 document and will be highlighted on the Council's Coral Portal (portal.gulfcouncil.org). Not only was the mission successful in terms of biological sampling, but it was also successful in enhancing communication between scientists and managers.



In the News

Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program (BREP) - 2017 Awards

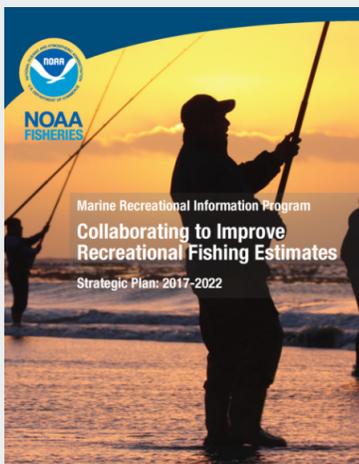
NOAA Fisheries has awarded more than \$2.3 million to partners around the country to support innovative bycatch reduction research projects through its Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. Bycatch of various species—fish, marine mammals, or turtles—can have significant biological, economic, and social impacts. Preventing and reducing bycatch is a shared goal of fisheries managers, the fishing industry, and the environmental community. Award recipients from the Gulf region include:

- University of Mississippi - Application of a new bycatch reduction device for use in the U.S. shrimp industry.
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission - Evaluation of alternative fishing technology and strategies to increase yield in the Florida spiny lobster fishery.

Read more about the BREP and all reward recipients at

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/publications/feature_stories/2017/brep-2017-awards.html

Source: NOAA Fisheries, Fish News, August 30, 2017



Marine Recreational Information Program Strategic Plan

The Marine Recreational Information Program developed a five-year Strategic Plan to assist with the improvement of saltwater recreational fishing catch and effort estimates. The plan defines MRIP's vision, direction, and metrics for success; including an outline of goals and a timeline for completion.

Internal and external partners—including the Regional Fishery Management Councils and Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions—worked with NOAA Fisheries staff to develop the MRIP Strategic Plan. Stakeholder feedback on the draft plan, submitted during the 90-day public comment period, was incorporated into the final version.

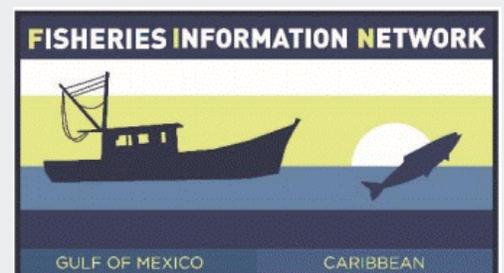
[Click here to view or download the 2017-2022 MRIP Strategic Plan.](#)

Source: NOAA Fisheries, MRIP Newscast, October 4, 2017

GulfFIN Releases MRIP Regional Implementation Plan

The [Gulf Fisheries Information Network \(GulfFIN\)](#) recently completed its [MRIP Regional Implementation Plan](#), outlining regionally determined priorities for improving recreational fishing catch and effort data.

[GulfFIN](#) is an organization managed by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission that works collaboratively with state, regional, and federal partners to improve data collected from recreational fisheries. These partners include NOAA Fisheries Regional Office and Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries Headquarters, the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commission, representatives from each of the Gulf States, and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The GulfFIN Regional Implementation Plan is closely aligned with MRIP's five-year Strategic Plan.



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GulfFIN Releases MRIP Regional Implementation Plan continued...

Prioritized activities

GulfFIN's plan includes a suite of activities that will be prioritized based on available funding. Top priorities directly relate to the primary strategic goal of increasing the quality and amount of data used in stock assessments and fisheries management. They include:

- Full funding for general surveys (Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, Fishing Effort Survey, For Hire Survey) at base sampling levels;
- MRIP-certified specialized catch and release surveys;
- Improved timeliness of recreational catch and harvest estimates;
- Redesigned biological sampling program integrated with recreational catch sampling and expanded to include the Atlantic Coast of Florida;
- For-hire electronic logbook implementation and validation;
- Improved recreational fishery release data; and
- Improved spatial resolution and technical guidance for post-stratification of MRIP estimates.

Learn more about the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Fisheries Information Network, and the MRIP Regional Implementation Plan at <http://www.gsmfc.org/fin.php>

Source: NOAA Fisheries, MRIP Newscast, August 17, 2017



NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program

The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program was established in 2000 by the Coral Reef Conservation Act to protect, conserve, and restore the nation's coral reefs by maintaining healthy ecosystem function. The program focuses on impacts from the top three recognized global threats to coral reefs:

- Climate change (including ocean acidification)
- Land-based sources of pollution
- Unsustainable fishing practices

The CRCP works collaboratively with other governmental entities and community groups that are committed to strengthening the effectiveness of existing marine protected areas (MPAs), as well supporting the establishment of new MPAs, reserves, and networks where determined to be locally appropriate.

The Council's current coral efforts are in alignment with the CRCP's goals and objectives regarding fishing and coral habitats. Deep-water coral habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs) are designated to protect coral habitats from adverse effects caused by fishing. The Council has recently introduced Coral Amendment 9 with a focus on 15 areas in the Gulf that warrant specific coral protection and to make recommendations for these areas to be designated as HAPCs.

Learn more about the CRCP and approaches to issues that impact coral reef ecosystems at <https://coralreef.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html>

NOAA CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM



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Coral Documentary on Netflix

The documentary "Chasing Coral" tells the story of a three-year effort to capture the loss of the world's coral reefs.

Directed by Jeff Orlowski and produced by Larissa Rhodes, as an Exposure Labs production, it was filmed over three years with 500+ hours underwater. It includes footage from over 30 countries and was made with the support of over 500 people around the world.



Photo: SeaGrant

The film focuses on the process called coral bleaching. When ocean water becomes too warm, corals become stressed and expel the algae living in their tissue causing the coral to turn completely white.

Coral bleaching is happening more often as climate change raises the temperature of oceans, which have absorbed more than 90 percent of the heat created by man-made greenhouse gas emissions. View a preview and learn about taking action at <http://www.chasingcoral.com>



Submitting Public Comment

Use the online public comment forms available for each proposed Amendment as listed on the "[Amendments Under Development](#)" page of our website.

For general fishery comments, not related to a specific Amendment, use the "[Submit General Fishery Comments](#)" button at the bottom of the "Amendments Under Development" website page.

Online, oral, and/or written communications provided to the Council, its members, or its staff that relate to matters within the Council's purview are public in nature. These communications will be made available to the public in their entirety and will be maintained by the Council as part of the permanent record. **Note that all comments will be posted on the Council's website for viewing by Council members and the public.**



To help ensure that Council members have sufficient time to consider written testimony for a specific Council meeting, please submit your comments at least seven business days prior to the start of the Council meeting.

Materials submitted to Council members or staff for distribution prior to or during a Council meeting will be treated as all other comment forms and will be posted to the web site. Further, knowingly and willfully submitting false information to the Council is a violation of Federal Law.



Under the Sea



Photos: G. P. Schmahl, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary



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Upcoming Meetings

[SEDAR 51 Assessment V](#) - November 15, 2017
Webinar - 1:00-3:00 pm

[SSC Meeting](#) - January 9-11, 2018
Tampa, Florida

[Council Meeting](#) - January 29 - February 1, 2018
New Orleans, Louisiana



2017-2018 Council - 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 the Gulf Fishery News. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials, 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, 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Materials can also be sent via fax to 813-348-1711, or by e-mail to 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.

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