Commercial Fishing Regulations for Gulf of Mexico Federal Waters

For Species Managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

January 2019

GULF OF MEXICO Fishery Management Council

Photo: Kathy Hoak

Photo: Sea Grant

Photo: Emily Muehlstein

This publication was prepared for general informational purposes and has no legal force or effect. Fishing regulations are subject to change. Check for updates by visiting www.gulfcouncil.org or the **Fish Rules** regulations app.

Download the Fish Rules regulations app - available for both iPhone and Android.

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Apple App Store

Android

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Cover Photo: Karen Hoak

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Photo: Emily Muehlstein

About the

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The Council consists of 17 voting members: the Southeast Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, the directors of the five Gulf state marine resource management agencies, and 11 members who are nominated by the state governors and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. There are also four non-voting members representing the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of State, and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

When reviewing potential rule changes, the Council draws upon the services of knowledgeable people from other state and federal agencies, universities, and the public to balance competing interests and achieve the greatest overall benefit to the nation.

Scoping workshops and public hearings are held throughout the Gulf coast to collect your input. Public comment is considered by the Council before it takes final action on proposed rule changes. The Council also collects comments on proposed changes through virtual meetings and online comment forms. Public testimony is heard during each Council meeting. After the Council takes final acton, proposed rule changes are submitted to National Marine Fisheries Service for further review and approval before implementation by the Secretary of Commerce.

Commercial Fishing Regulations

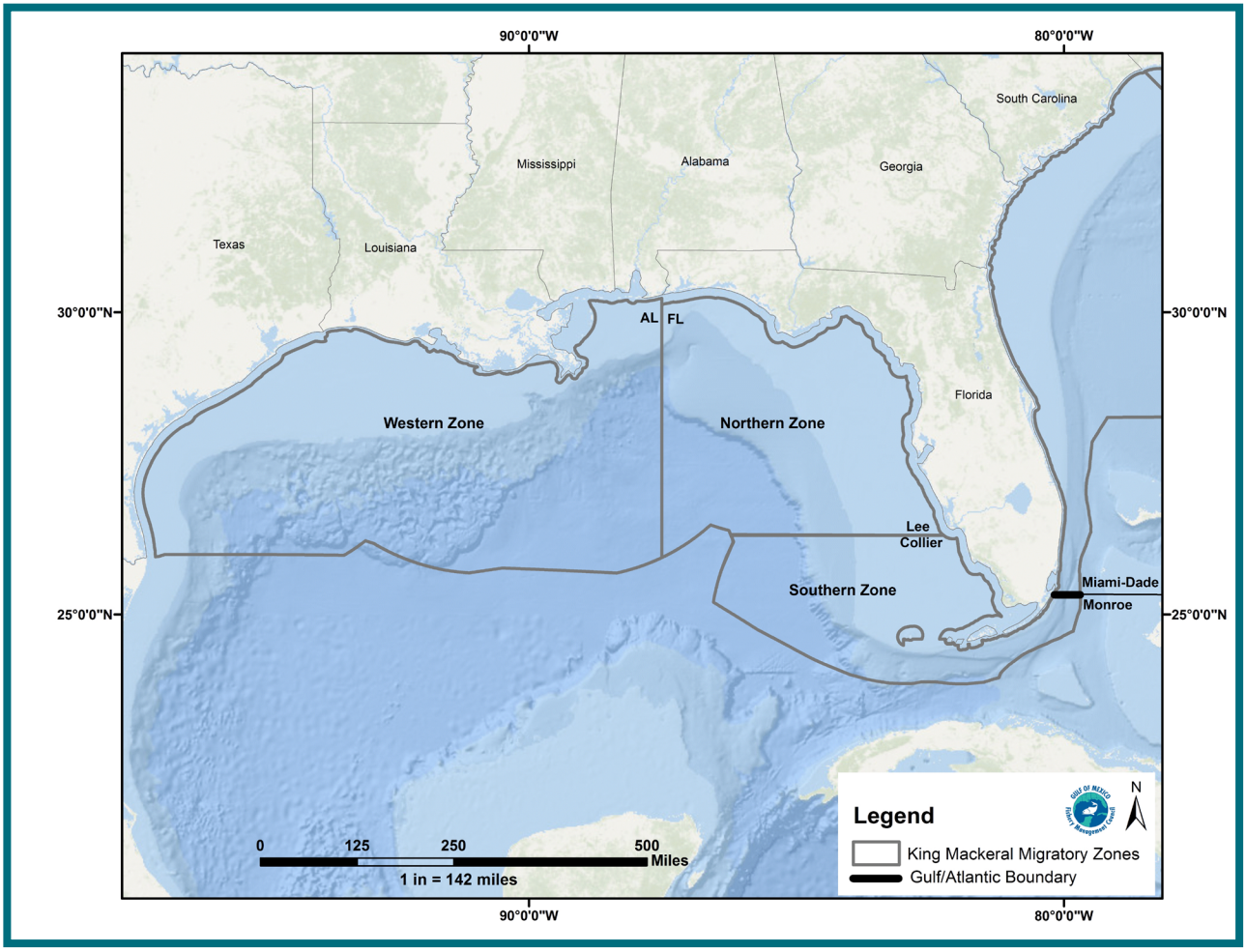
Coastal Migratory Pelagics

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Coastal Migratory Pelagics			
Cobia (ling)	Combined commercial and recreational quota is 1,500,000 pounds	33" fork length*	Daily possession limit of 2 per person
***Increase to 36" FL pending.**			
Spanish Mackerel	Combined commercial and recreational quota: 11.3 mp Fishing year begins April 1	12" fork length	None

Cobia Photo: NOAA

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
 King Mackerel	**Combined Gulf Group ACL:** 2,740,000 pounds mixed weight **Southern Zone:** <u>Gillnet</u> 575,400 pounds mixed weight Season opens at 6:00 a.m. the day after the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday, including the first weekend after the opening, and remains open on weekdays until the quota is projected to be met, or until June 30. <u>Hook and Line</u> 575,400 pounds mixed weight Season opens July 1 and remains open until the quota is projected to be met, or until June 30. **Northern Zone:** 493,200 pounds mixed weight Opens October 1 and remains open until the quota is projected to be met, or until September 30. **Western Zone:** 1,096,000 pounds mixed weight Opens July 1 and remains open until the quota is projected to be met, or until June 30. *Closed at 12:01 am on November 21, 2019.	24" fork length - Maximum of 5% by weight may be undersized	**Southern Zone:** <u>Gillnet</u> 45,000 pounds mixed weight <u>Hook and Line</u> 1,250 pounds mixed weight **Northern Zone:** 1,250 pounds mixed weight **Western Zone:** 3,000 pounds mixed weight

Note: Mixed weight is defined as the weight of the fish as they are landed in any condition, i.e., whole, gutted, or otherwise.



NOTE: The use of gillnets is permitted only in the Gulf southern zone. The gillnet fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in or from the Gulf EEZ is closed each year from July 1 until 6:00 a.m. on the day after the Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday. The gillnet fishery is also closed during all subsequent weekends and observed federal holidays, except for the first weekend following the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, which will remain open to the gillnet fishery proveded that a notification of closure has not been filed. Weekend closures are effective from 6:00 a.m. Saturday to 6:00 a.m. Monday. Holiday closures are effective from 6:00 a.m. on the observed federal holiday to 6:00 a.m. the following day.

Red snapper Photo: NOAA

Mutton snapper Photo: NOAA

Reef Fish

Snappers

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Snapper			
Red Snapper	6,312,613 pounds gutted weight*	13" total length	Red snapper is managed under an IFQ program. Anyone commercially fishing for red snapper must possess IFQ allocation and follow established protocols.
*Mid-year quota increase expected			
Gray Mangrove Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 2,420,000 pounds whole weight	12" total length	None
Mutton Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 139,392 pounds whole weight	18" total length	None

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Yellowtail Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 901,125 pounds whole weight - Fishing year begins August 1st	12" total length	None
Cubera Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 5,065 pounds whole weight	12" total length	None
Vermilion Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 3,110,000 pounds whole weight	10" total length	None
Lane Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 301,000 pounds whole weight - closed 12:01 am on December 13, 2019	8" total length	None

Lane snapper Photo: Kathy Hoak

Cubera snapper Photo: Kathy Hoak

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Queen Snapper	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 166,000 pounds whole weight	None	None
Blackfin Snapper		None	None
Wenchman		None	None
Silk Snapper		None	None

Queen snapper Photo: NOAA

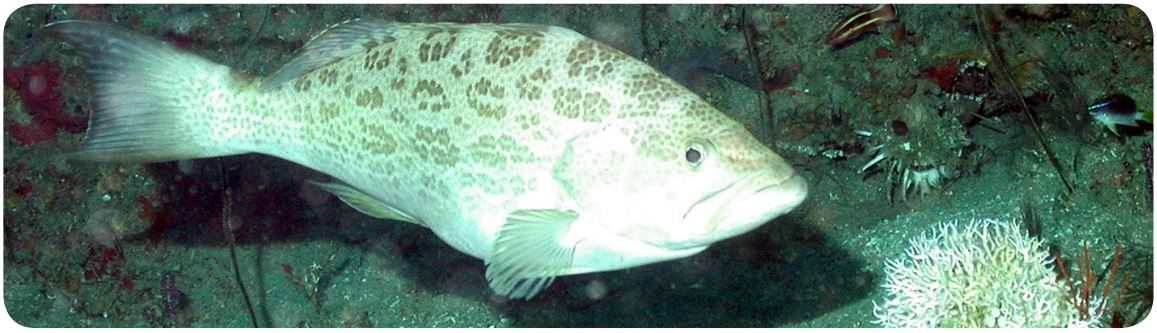
Groupers

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Grouper			
Shallow-water Groupers			
Gag	939,000 pounds gutted weight	24" total length	Grouper are managed under an IFQ program. Anyone commercially fishing for grouper or tilefish must possess IFQ allocation and follow established protocols.
Red	3,000,000 pounds gutted weight	18" total length	

Red Grouper

Photo: NOAA, Don DeMaria

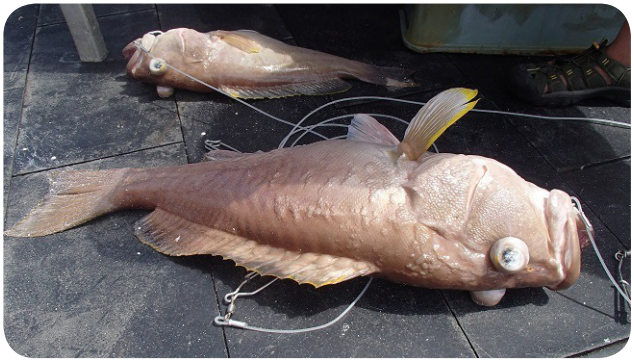
2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Black	Shallow-water grouper quota - 525,000 pounds gutted weight *For the purposes of the IFQ, DWG allocation may be used to land and sell scamp once an IFQ account holder's other SWG allocation has been landed and sold or transferred	24" total length	Grouper are managed under an IFQ program. Anyone commercially fishing for grouper or tilefish must possess IFQ allocation and follow established protocols.
Yellowfin		20" total length	
Scamp*		16" total length	
Yellowmouth		None	



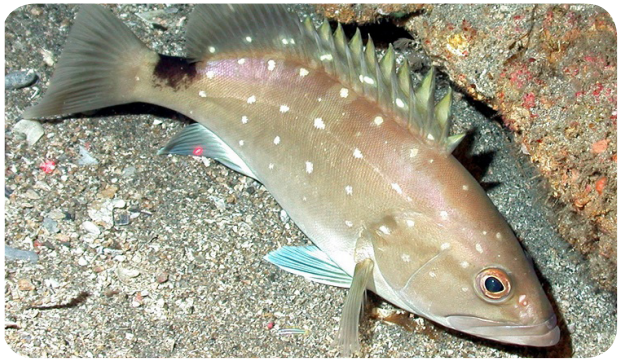
Scamp Grouper

Photo: NOAA-Andrew David

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Deep-water Groupers			
Yellowedge	DWG quota 1,024,000 pounds gutted weight *For purposes of the IFQ, these species are also included in the 525,000 pound gutted weight shallow-water grouper quota	None	Grouper are managed under an IFQ program. Anyone commercially fishing for grouper or tilefish must possess IFQ allocation and follow established protocols.
Snowy		None	
Speckled Hind*		None	
Warsaw*		None	



Yellowedge grouper Photo: NOAA-Teacher at Sea



Snowy grouper Photo: NOAA

Other Reef Fish

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Other Reef Fish			
Tilefish (Golden)	Overall tilefish quota: 582,000 pounds gutted weight	None	Tilefish is managed under an IFQ program. Anyone commercially fishing for tilefish must possess IFQ allocation and follow established protocols.
Blueline Tilefish		None	
Goldface Tilefish		None	

Blueline Tilefish Photo: NOAA-Teacher at Sea

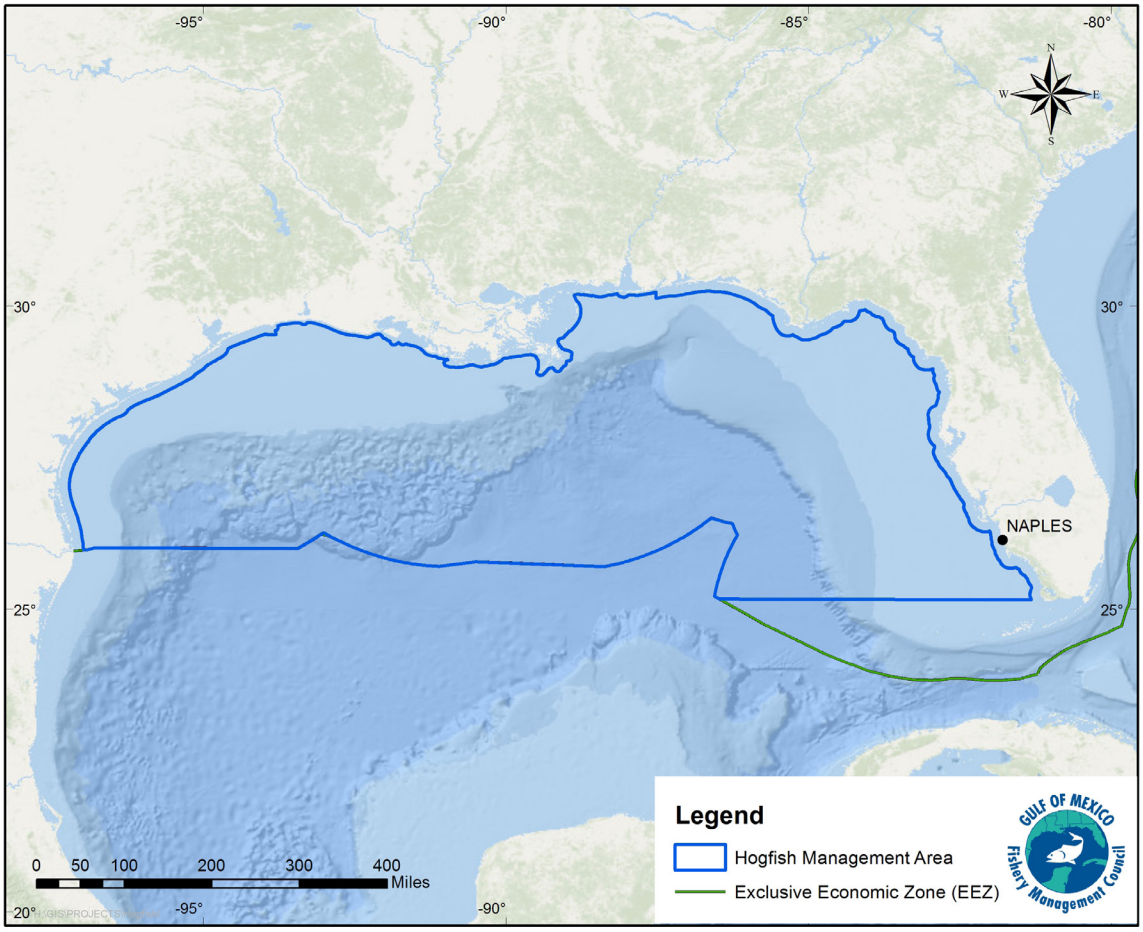
Tilefish (Golden) Photo: NOAA, Andrew David

Harvest and possession of the following species is <u>prohibited</u>:

- **Goliath Grouper**
- **Nassau Grouper**
- **Red Drum**

2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Hogfish*	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 129,500 pounds whole weight	14" fork length	None

* Regulations specific to Gulf of Mexico hogfish management zone. Florida Keys hogfish managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council



2019 Commercial Fishing Season Regulations			
Species	Quota/Closed Seasons	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit
Gray Triggerfish	60,900 pounds whole weight Closed June 1 through July 31 *Closed 12:01 am EST on Nov 26, 2019. Reopens 12:01 am EST Jan 1, 2020.	14" fork length	16 fish
Greater Amberjack	349,766 pounds whole weight Closed March - May	36" fork length	1,500 pounds gutted weight 1,560 pounds whole weight
Lesser Amberjack	Combined commercial and recreational ACL of 312,000 pounds whole weight	14" - 22" fork length slot limit	None
Banded Rudderfish		14" - 22" fork length slot limit	None
Almaco Jack		None	None

Greater Amberjack Photo: FGBNMS

Gray Triggerfish Photo: NOAA

Almaco Jack Photo: FGBNMS

Coral and Shellfish

Corals and Coral Reefs

Species	Notes
Allowable Octocorals	Octocorals (soft corals) were removed from the Coral and Coral Reefs Fishery Management Plan and are now managed by Florida FWC in state and federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. See Florida Fish Wildlife & Conservation Commission regulations.
Live Rock	Harvest or possession of wild live rock is prohibited. Harvest and possession of aquacultured live rock requires a permit.
Other Marine Life Organisms	Marine life organisms from the EEZ harvested or possessed by Florida residents or landed in Florida are subject to Florida's Marine Life Rule. Contact Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission for more information 850-488-4676.

Shellfish

Species	Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quotas/Closed Seasons
Spiny Lobster	Carapace more than 3" or tail more than 5-1/2". Divers must measure in water. See page 20.	250 per day/vessel for spiny lobsters harvested by bully net or diving*	Closed April 1 through August 5
*Harvesting by **bully net** in or from all federal waters off Florida. Harvesting by **diving** in or from federal waters only off Broward, Dade, Monroe, Collier, and Lee Counties, Florida			
Shrimp	None, but white shrimp taken in the EEZ and transported to Louisiana must comply with minimum size limit of that state.	None	Royal red shrimp is exempt. Royal red annual catch limit - 337,000 lbs. tail weight. Royal red season opens January 1 and closes when the quota is reached or projected to be reached.

Scalloped Hammerhead Shark Photo: NOAA

Atlantic Yellowfin Tuna Photo: NOAA

Billfish, Blue Marlin Photo: NOAA

Billfish: Swordfish Photo: NOAA-MREP

Highly Migratory Species	
Tunas	For Highly Migratory Species Compliance Guide Visit: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/atlantic-highly-migratory-species/atlantic-highly-migratory-species-fishery-compliance-guides Contact the HMS Division of NOAA Fisheries for more information: 301-427-8503
Billfish	
Swordfish	
Sharks	

Commercial Permit Requirements

Applications for permits may be obtained from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue S., St. Petersburg, Florida 33701, or by calling 877-376-4877. Tuna, swordfish, and shark permits may be obtained by calling 888-872-8862 or 978-281-9260.	
Permit	Required for:
Spiny lobster federal vessel permit or Florida commercial harvester license and certificates	Florida commercial harvester license and certificates required for harvest or possession in excess of the bag limits in the EEZ off Florida or to land or sell in Florida. Federal vessel permit required for harvest or possession in excess of the bag limits in the EEZ other than off Florida or sale other than Florida. May retain up to 50 spiny lobsters under the minimum size limit, and one per trap.
Spiny lobster tail separation permit	Possession of a separated spiny lobster tail in or from the EEZ aboard a vessel. Also requires a spiny lobster federal vessel permit or Florida state license and certificates. Fishermen with tailing permits must land spiny lobster all whole or all tailed.
Shrimp	Permit required for all vessels that intend to fish for shrimp in EEZ waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Permit moratorium in effect. Endorsement required for royal red shrimp. Shrimp trawlers must have a bycatch reduction device (BRD) and an approved turtle excluder device (TED) installed in each net that is rigged for fishing. State-licensed shrimpers may transit from state waters through federal waters to return to state waters and port without a federal permit when gear is appropriately stowed.
Mackerel vessel permit	Harvest of king or Spanish mackerel under quota and in excess of the bag limits. Issuance of new king mackerel permits is under moratorium, but existing permits are transferable. There is no moratorium on Spanish mackerel permits, but these permits are not transferable.
King mackerel gillnet endorsement	Harvest of king mackerel in the Florida west coast subzone using a gillnet. Also requires a mackerel vessel permit. Permit moratorium, area restrictions, and restrictions on permit transfer are in effect.
Reef Fish	Permit required for vessels commercially harvesting reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico. All reef fish permitted vessels landing federally managed reef-fish must land at approved locations and hail-in at least 3 hours, but no more than 24 hours before landing.

Commercial Permit Requirements continued

Permit	Required for:
Aquacultured live rock permit	Possession or harvest of cultivated live rock. Florida state permits are also required to land live rock in Florida. Wild live rock possession/harvest prohibited.
Allowable octocoral permit	Octocorals (soft corals) were removed from the Coral and Coral Reefs Fishery Management Plan and are now managed by Florida FWC in state and federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. See Florida Fish Wildlife & Conservation Commission regulations.
Dealer permits	A dealer to receive Gulf reef fish harvested from federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. A Gulf IFQ dealer endorsement is also required.

Fish landing Photo: Kathy Hoak

Shrimp Net Photo: Emily Muehlstein

Commercial boat at Sunset Photo: NOAA

Additional Rules

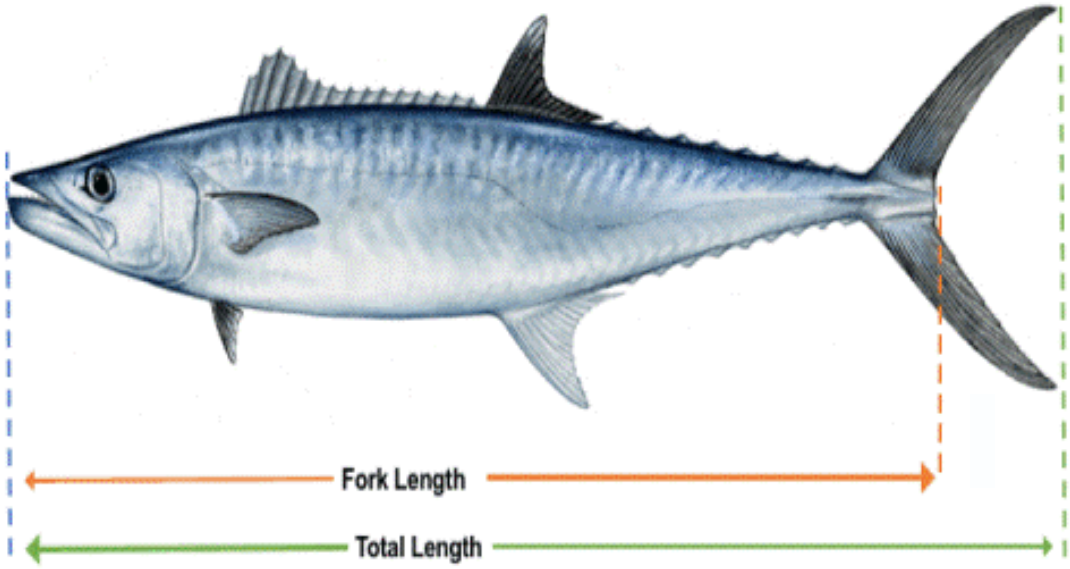
Vessel Monitoring Systems are required onboard all vessels with federal commercial permits for Gulf reef fish, including charter vessels/headboats that also have a commercial reef fish permit.
Entangling nets may not be used for directed harvest of reef fish.
Reef Fish taken under recreational bag limit may not be sold.
Commercial vessels are prohibited from retaining reef fish caught under the recreational size and bag/possession limit when commercial quantities of Gulf reef fish are on board.
Reef fish as bait is prohibited.
Reef fish gear is limited to no more than 3 hooks in a special management zone off Alabama. Nonconforming gear is restricted to bag limits, or for reef fish without a bag limit, to 5% by weight of all fish onboard.
Vessels with shrimp trawls or entangling net gear onboard may not exceed the recreational reef fish bag limits.
Stressed areas for reef fish begin at the shoreward boundary of federal waters and generally follow the 10 fathom contour from the Dry Tortugas to Sanibel Island; the 20 fathom contour to Tarpon Springs; the 10 fathom contour to Cape San Blas; the 25 fathom contour to south of Mobile Bay; the 13 fathom contour to Ship Island, Mississippi; the 10 fathom contour off Louisiana; and the 30 fathom contour off Texas. In designated "stressed areas" use of roller trawls and power heads for taking reef fish is prohibited.
All fish except for bait and oceanic migratory species taken from federal waters must have heads and fins intact through landing. Up to 1.5 pounds of legal finfish exempt from this rule for personal consumption at sea provided the vessel is equipped to cook such finfish.
A state may regulate vessels that are registered in that state and that are fishing in federal waters for species for which there are no federal fishery management plans or applicable federal regulations.
Vessels participating in the reef fish fishery must possess dehooking devices and use non-stainless steel circle hooks when using natural baits. Circle hooks are not required when commercial fishing for yellowtail snapper, south of a line extending due west from 25° 09' N latitude of the west coast of Monroe county, Florida.
Operators of vessels with Gulf of Mexico reef fish commercial or charter vessel/headboat permits must comply with guidelines for proper care and release of incidentally caught smalltooth sawfish and sea turtles and possess onboard specific gear to ensure proper release of such species.
There is no limit on the total number of hooks kept onboard bottom longline vessels, however, the number of hooks rigged for fishing is limited to 750.

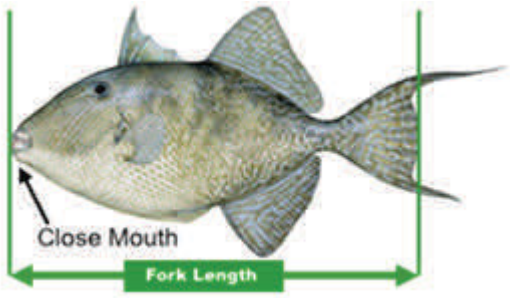
Measurement Guidelines

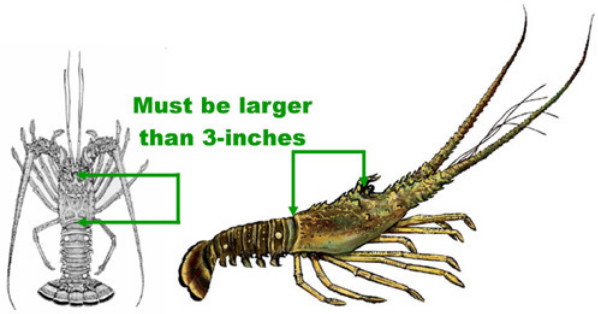
Fork length: the straight-line distance from the tip of the head (snout) to the rear center edge of the tail (caudal fin).

Total length: the straight-line distance from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail (caudal fin), excluding any caudal filament, while the fish is lying on its side. The mouth of the fish may be closed and/or the tail may be squeezed together to give the greatest overall measurement.

Carapace length: The carapace is measured beginning at the forward edge between the rostral horns, excluding any soft tissue, and proceeding along the middle to the rear edge of the carapace.





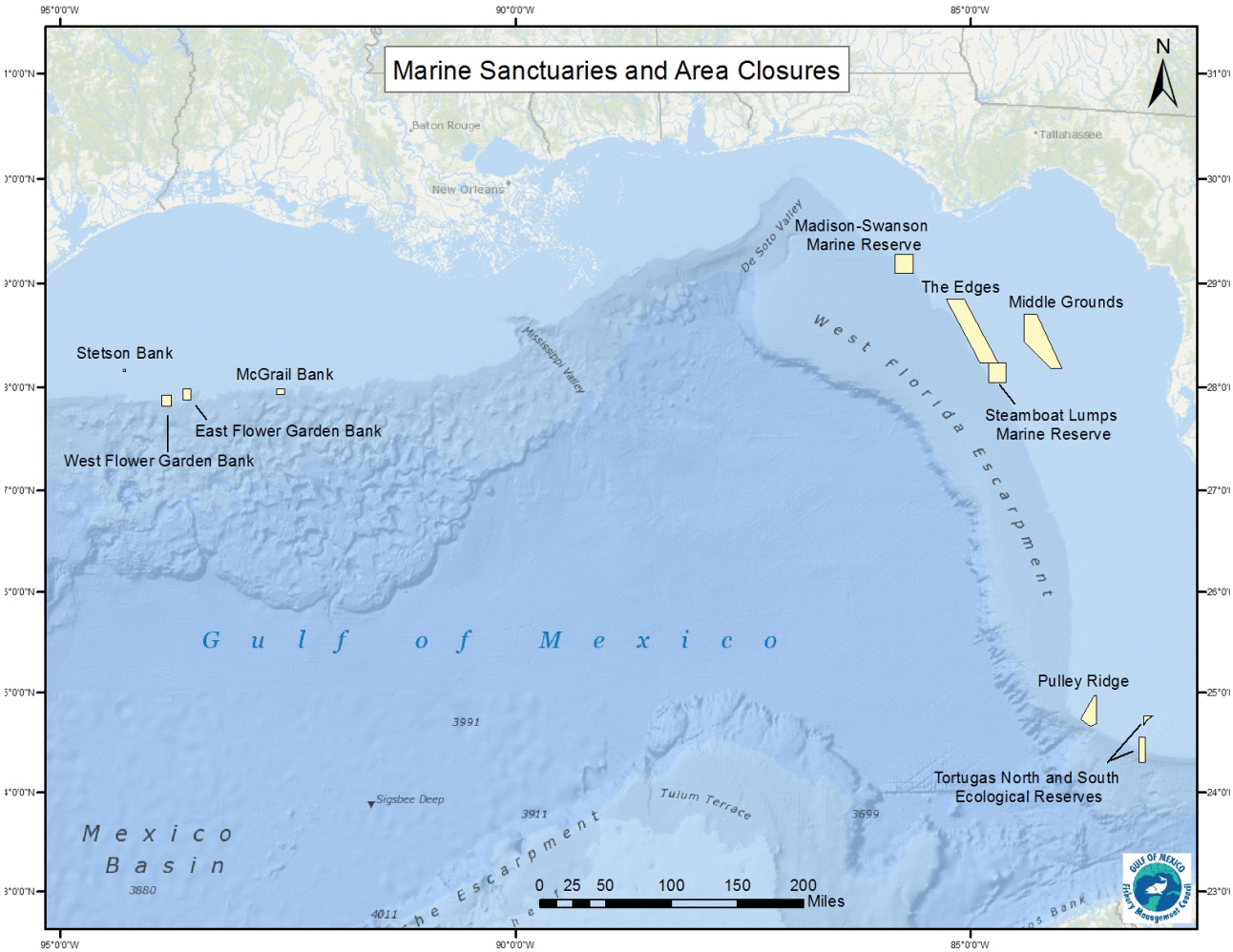


Marine Sanctuaries and Area Closures

Detailed maps, coordinates, and regulations associated with each area can be found on pages 19-32.

For seasonal shrimp closures visit: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/fisheries/gom/GOM_index.html

Note: All coordinates have been converted to degrees, minutes, seconds.



Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

Below is a summary of regulated activity within the FGBNMS. For the full text, contact the Sanctuary office at 409-621-5151 or visit www.flowergarden.noaa.gov.

Fishing and Related Activities
The following activities are generally prohibited:

- Injuring, catching, harvesting, collecting or feeding, or attempting to injure, catch, harvest, collect or feed, any fish within the sanctuary by use of any gear, device, equipment or means (e.g. spear guns, nets) except by use of conventional hook and line gear.
- Possessing (except while passing through the sanctuary without interruption) any fishing gear, device, equipment, or means except conventional hook and line gear.
- Possessing or using explosives or releasing electrical charges within the sanctuary.

Conventional hook and line gear means any fishing apparatus operated aboard a vessel and composed of a single line terminated by a combination of sinkers and hooks or lures and spooled upon a reel that may be hand or electrically operated, hand-held or mounted.

Anchoring and Mooring
The following activities are prohibited:

- Anchoring any vessel within the Sanctuary.
- Mooring a vessel over 100 feet in registered length on a Sanctuary mooring buoy.

Discharges
Discharging or depositing any material or other matter within the Sanctuary is prohibited, with the following exceptions:

- Fish, fish parts, chumming materials or bait used in or resulting from fishing with conventional hook and line gear in the sanctuary.
- Clean effluent from an operable Type I or Type II marine sanitation devise (MSD).
- Clean water generated by routine vessel operations (e.g. engine exhaust, cooling water, deck wash down, and gray water), excluding oily wastes from bilge pumping.

Injury to or Possession of Sanctuary Resources
The following activities are generally prohibited:

- Injuring or removing, or attempting to injure or remove, any coral or other bottom formation, coralline algae or other plant, marine invertebrate (e.g., spiny lobster, queen conch, shell, sea urchin), brine-seep biota or carbonate rock.
- Possessing within the Sanctuary (regardless of where collected), any coral or other bottom formation, coralline algae or other plant, or fish (except for fish caught by use of conventional hook and line gear).
- Drilling into, dredging, or otherwise altering the seabed of the sanctuary; or constructing, placing, or abandoning any structure, material, or other matter on the seabed of the Sanctuary.

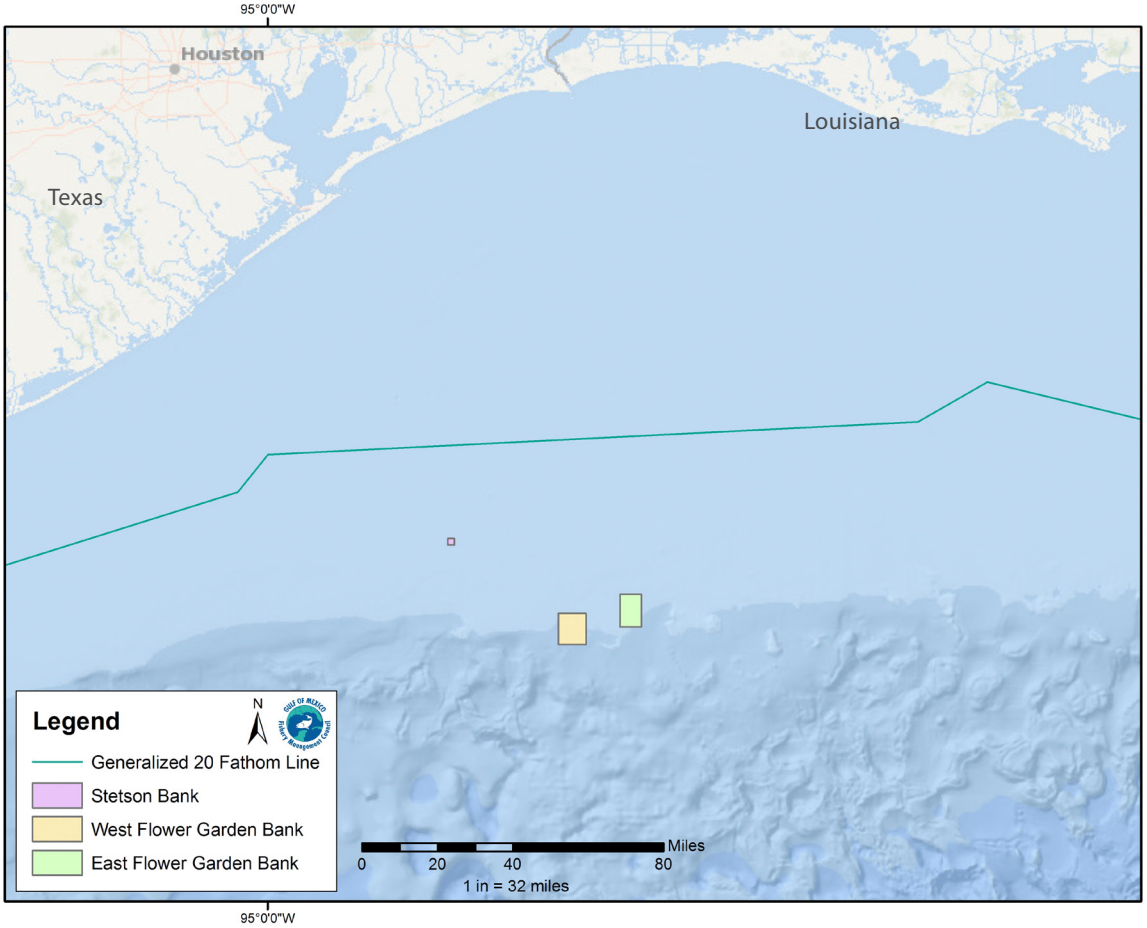
Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(j) West and East Flower Garden Banks HAPC. Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, dredge, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round.

(s) Stetson Bank HAPC. Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round.

Stetson, West and East Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary



Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

Stetson Bank		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	28°10’38.3” N	94°18’36.5” W
B	28°10’38.3” N	94°17’06.3” W
C	28°09’18.6” N	94°17’06.3” W
D	28°09’18.6” N	94°18’36.5” W
A	28°10’38.3” N	94°18’36.5” W

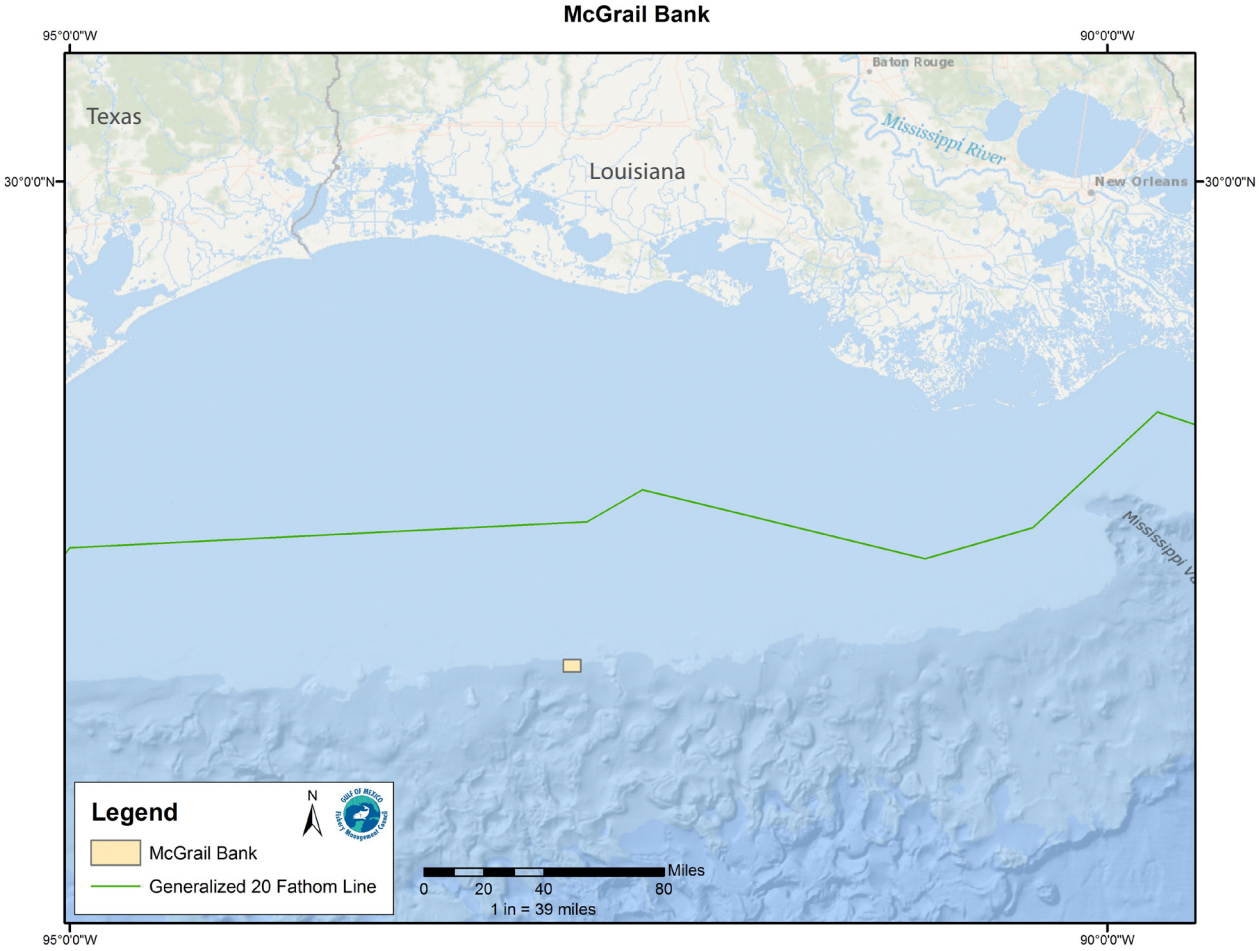
East Flower Garden Bank		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	27°59’14.4” N	93°38’58.2” W
B	27°59’14.4” N	93°34’03.5” W
C	27°52’36.5” N	93°34’03.5” W
D	27°52’36.5” N	93°38’58.2” W
A	27°59’14.4” N	93°38’58.2” W

West Flower Garden Bank		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	27°55’22.8” N	93°53’09.6” W
B	27°55’22.8” N	93°46’46.0” W
C	27°49’03.0” N	93°46’46.0” W
D	27°49’03.0” N	93°53’09.6” W
A	27°55’22.8” N	93°53’09.6” W

McGrail Bank

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(t) McGrail Bank HAPC. Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round.



McGrail Bank

Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round.

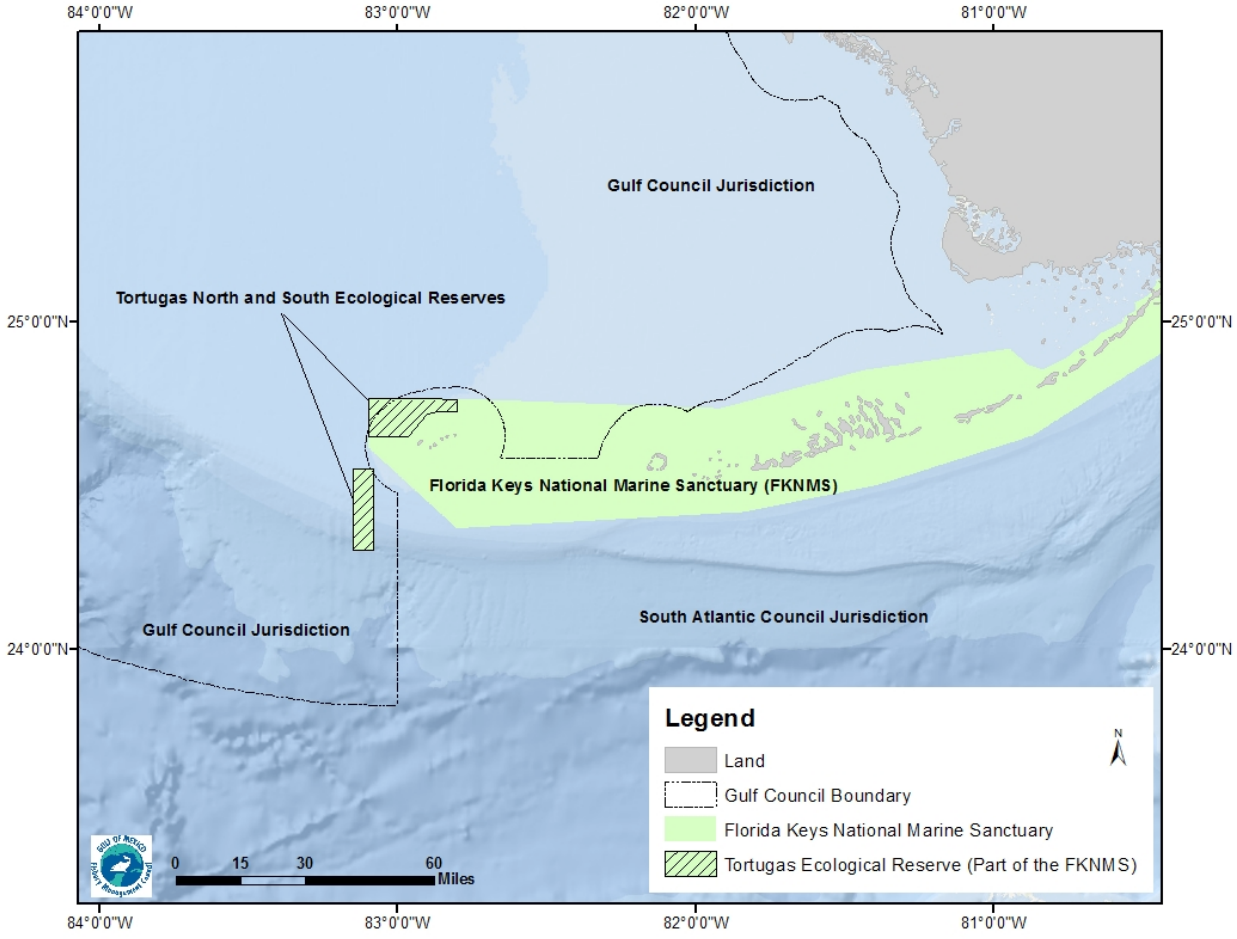
McGrail Bank		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	27°59′06.0″N	92°37′19.2″W
B	27°59′06.0″ N	92°32′17.4″W
C	27°55′55.5″ N	92°32′17.4″W
D	27°55′55.5″ N	92°37′19.2″W
A	27°59′06.0″ N	92°37′19.2″W

Reef biodiversity Photo: NOAA-OER

Coral Photo: Sea Grant

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Tortugas North and South Ecological Reserves



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

The following locations are closed to all fishing. Anchoring of fishing vessels is also not allowed. The boundaries of the areas are as follows:

EEZ Portion of the Tortugas North Ecological Reserve		
Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	24°40'00" N	83°06'00" W
B	24°46'00" N	83°06'00" W
C	24°46'00" N	83°00'00" W
A[1]	24°40'00" N	83°06'00" W

[1] on the seaward limit of Florida's waters

Tortugas South Ecological Reserve		
Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	24°33'00" N	83°09'00 W
B	24°33'00" N	83°05'00" W
C	24°18'00" N	83°05'00" W
D	24°18'00" N	83°09'00" W
A	24°33'00" N	83°09'00" W

Madison Swanson, Steamboat Lumps, and the Edges

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(k) Closure provisions applicable to the Madison and Swanson sites, Steamboat Lumps, and the Edges.

(2) Within the Madison and Swanson sites and Steamboat Lumps, possession of Gulf reef fish is prohibited, except for such possession aboard a vessel in transit with fishing gear stowed as specified in paragraph (k)(4) of this section.

(3) Within the Madison and Swanson sites and Steamboat Lumps during November through April, and within the Edges during January through April, all fishing is prohibited, and possession of any fish species is prohibited, except for such possession aboard a vessel in transit with fishing gear stowed as specified in paragraph (k)(4) of this section. The provisions of this paragraph, (k)(3), do not apply to highly migratory species.

(4) For the purpose of paragraph (k) of this section, transit means non-stop progression through the area; fishing gear appropriately stowed means -

(i) A longline may be left on the drum if all gangions and hooks are disconnected and stowed below deck. Hooks cannot be baited. All buoys must be disconnected from the gear; however, buoys may remain on deck.

(ii) A trawl net may remain on deck, but trawl doors must be disconnected from the trawl gear and must be secured.

(iii) A gillnet must be left on the drum. Any additional gillnets not attached to the drum must be stowed below deck.

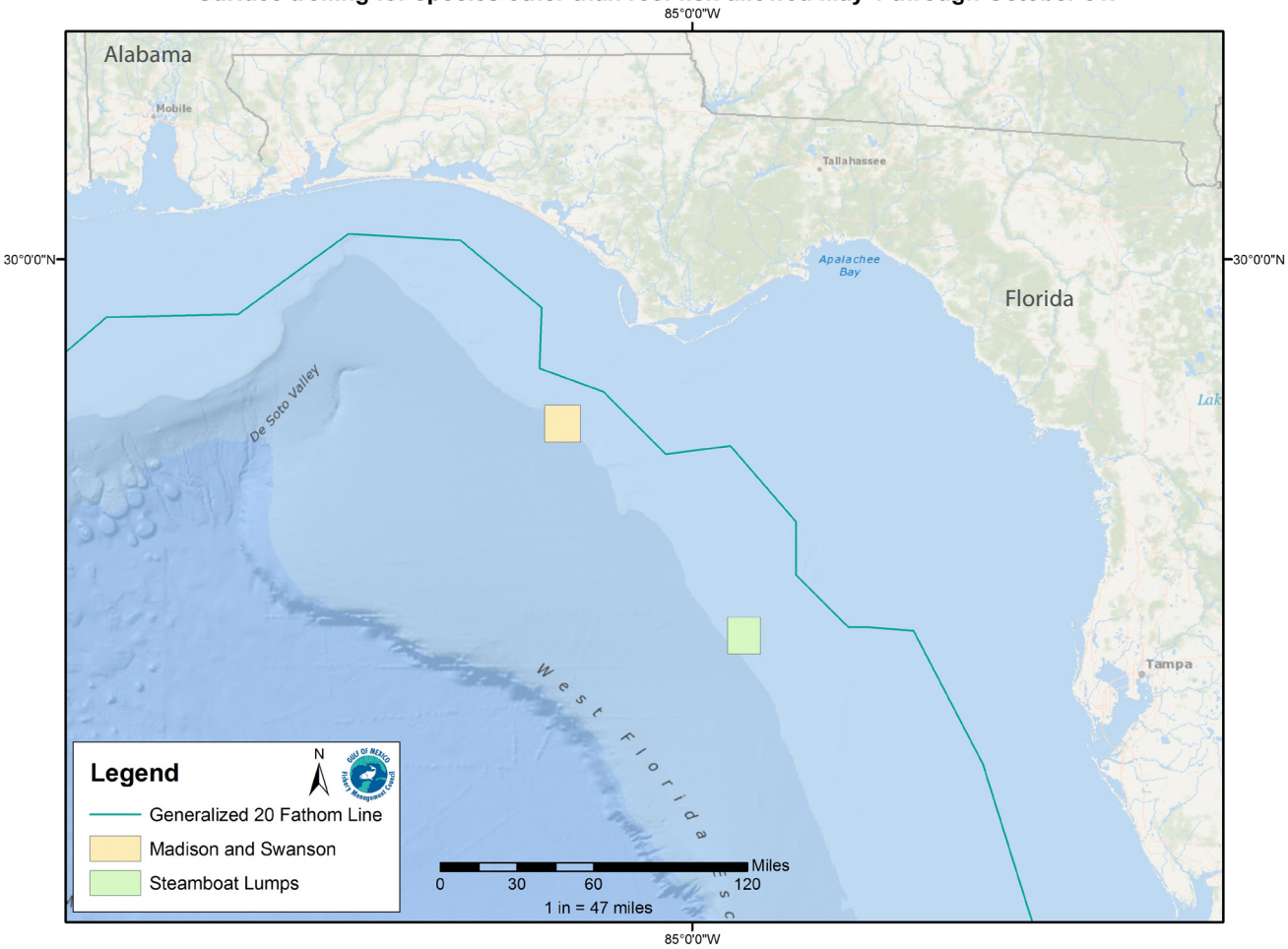
(iv) A rod and reel must be removed from the rod holder and stowed securely on or below deck. Terminal gear (i.e., hook, leader, sinker, flasher, or bait) must be disconnected and stowed separately from the rod and reel. Sinkers must be disconnected from the down rigger and stowed separately.

(5) Within the Madison and Swanson sites and Steamboat Lumps, during May through October, surface trolling is the only allowable fishing activity. For the purpose of this paragraph (k)(5), surface trolling is defined as fishing with lines trailing behind a vessel which is in constant motion at speeds in excess of four knots with a visible wake. Such trolling may not involve the use of down riggers, wire lines, planers, or similar devices.

(6) For the purpose of paragraph (k) of this section, fish means finfish, mollusks, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animal and plant life other than marine mammals and birds. Highly migratory species means tuna species, marlin (Tetrapturus spp. and Makaira spp.), oceanic sharks, sailfishes (Istiophorus spp.), and swordfish (Xiphias gladius).

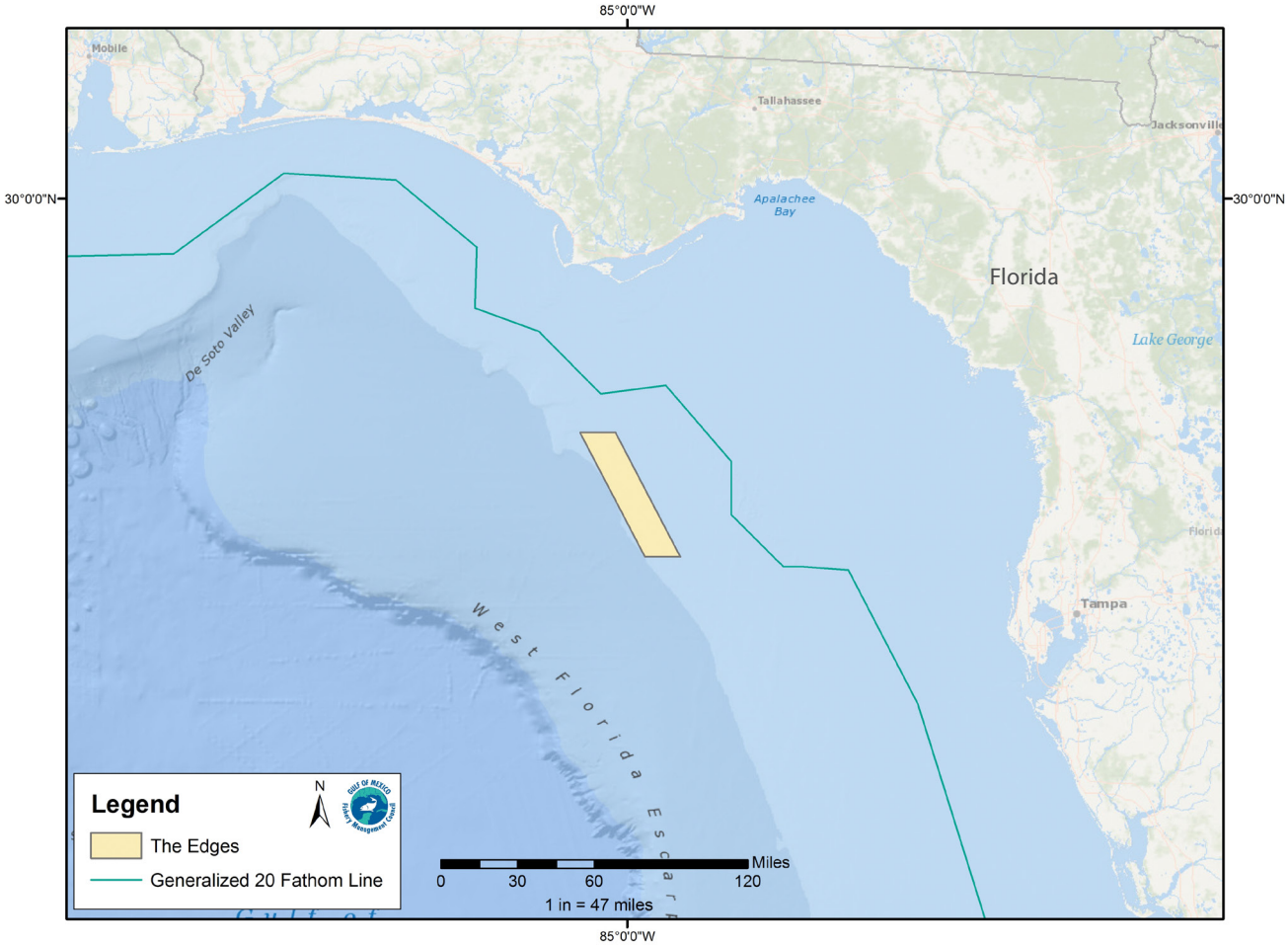
Madison Swanson and Steamboat Lumps

Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine Reserves closed year round to reef-fish fishing. Surface trolling for species other than reef fish allowed May 1 through October 31.



The Edges (40 fathom contour)

The Edges is closed to all fishing January 1 through April 30



Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Reserves are closed to reef-fish fishing year round. Surface trolling for species other than reef fish is allowed May 1 through October 31.

Madison-Swanson Marine Reserve		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	29°17' 00"N	85°50' 00"W
B	29°17' 00"N	85°38' 00"W
C	29°06' 00"N	85°38' 00"W
D	29°06' 00"N	85°50' 00"W
A	29°17'00" N	85°50' 00"W

Steamboat Lumps Marine Reserve		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	28°14' 00"N	84°48' 00"W
B	28°14' 00"N	84°37' 00"W
C	28°03' 00"N	84°37' 00"W
D	28°03'00" N	84°48' 00"W
A	28°14' 00"N	84°48' 00"W

The Edges (40 fathom contour) is closed January 1 through April 30 to all fishing. The Edges is a 390 nautical square mile region northwest of Steamboat Lumps.

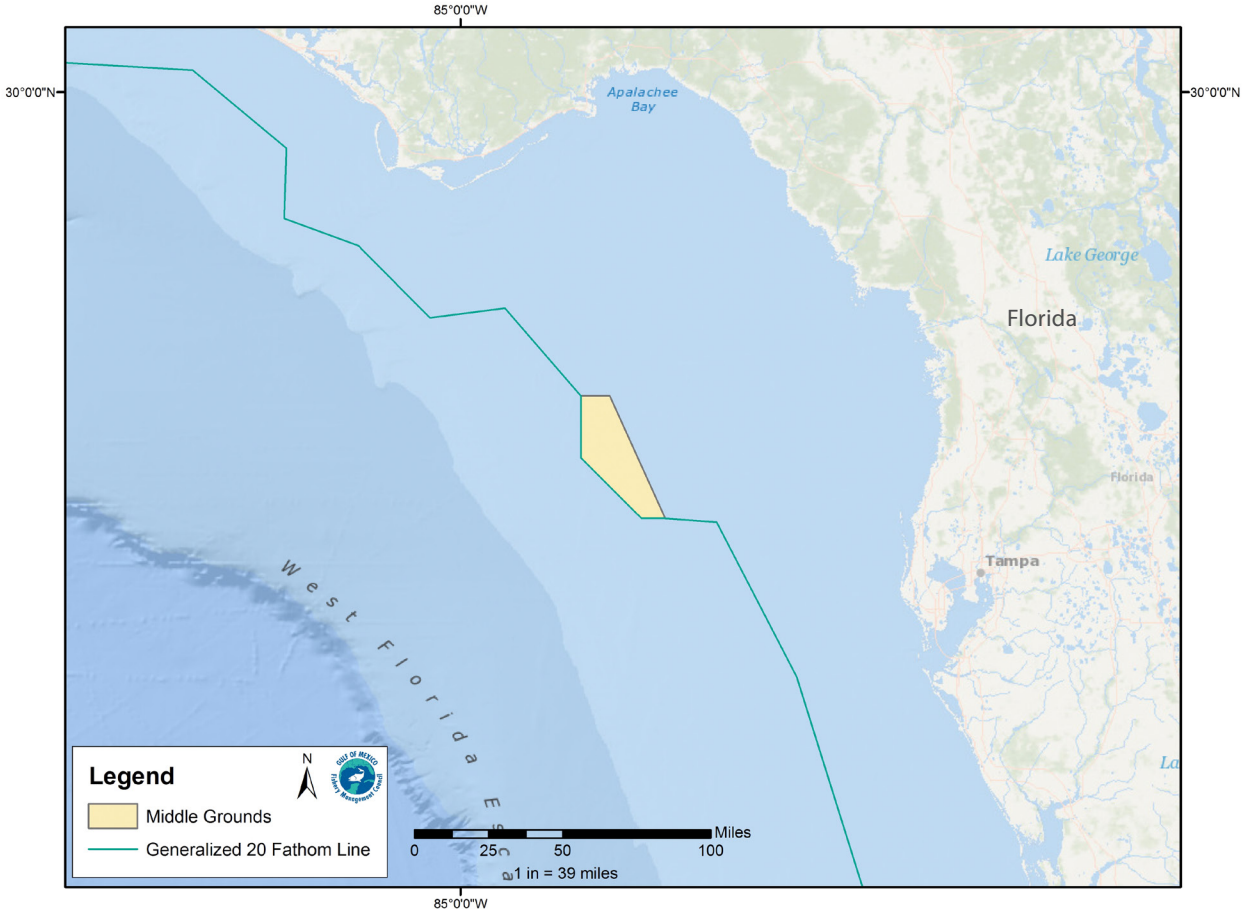
The Edges		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	28°51'00" N	85°16'00" W
B	28°51'00" N	85°04'00" W
C	28°14'00" N	84°42'00"W
D	28°14'00" N	84°54'00" W
A	28°51'00" N	85°16'00" W

The Middle Grounds

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(b) Florida middle grounds HAPC. Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot, or trap is prohibited year round.

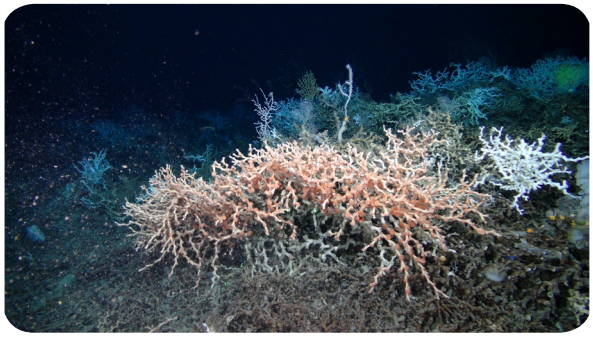
Middle Grounds: Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot, or trap is prohibited year-round



The Middle Grounds

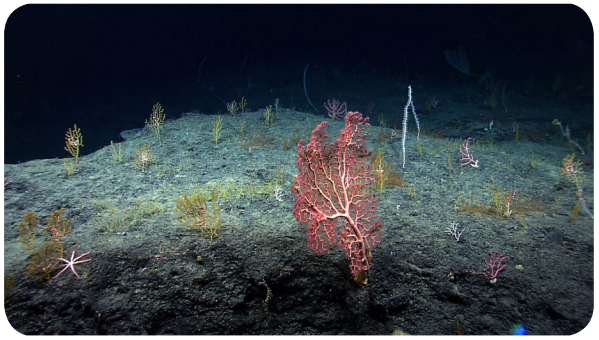
Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot, or trap is prohibited year-round.

Middle Grounds		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	28°42′30″N	84°24′48″W
B	28°42′30″N	84°16′18″W
C	28°11′00″N	84°00′00″W
D	28°11′00″N	84°07′00″W
E	28°26′36″N	84°24′48″W
A	28°42′30″N	84°24′48″W

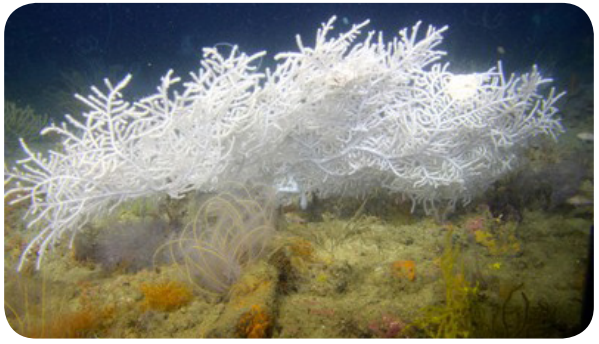


Orange Lophelia pertusa Photo: NOAA-SE Deep Coral Initiative 2017

Deep sea Bamboo coral Photo: NOAA-



Bubblegun and Bamboo coral Photo: NOAA



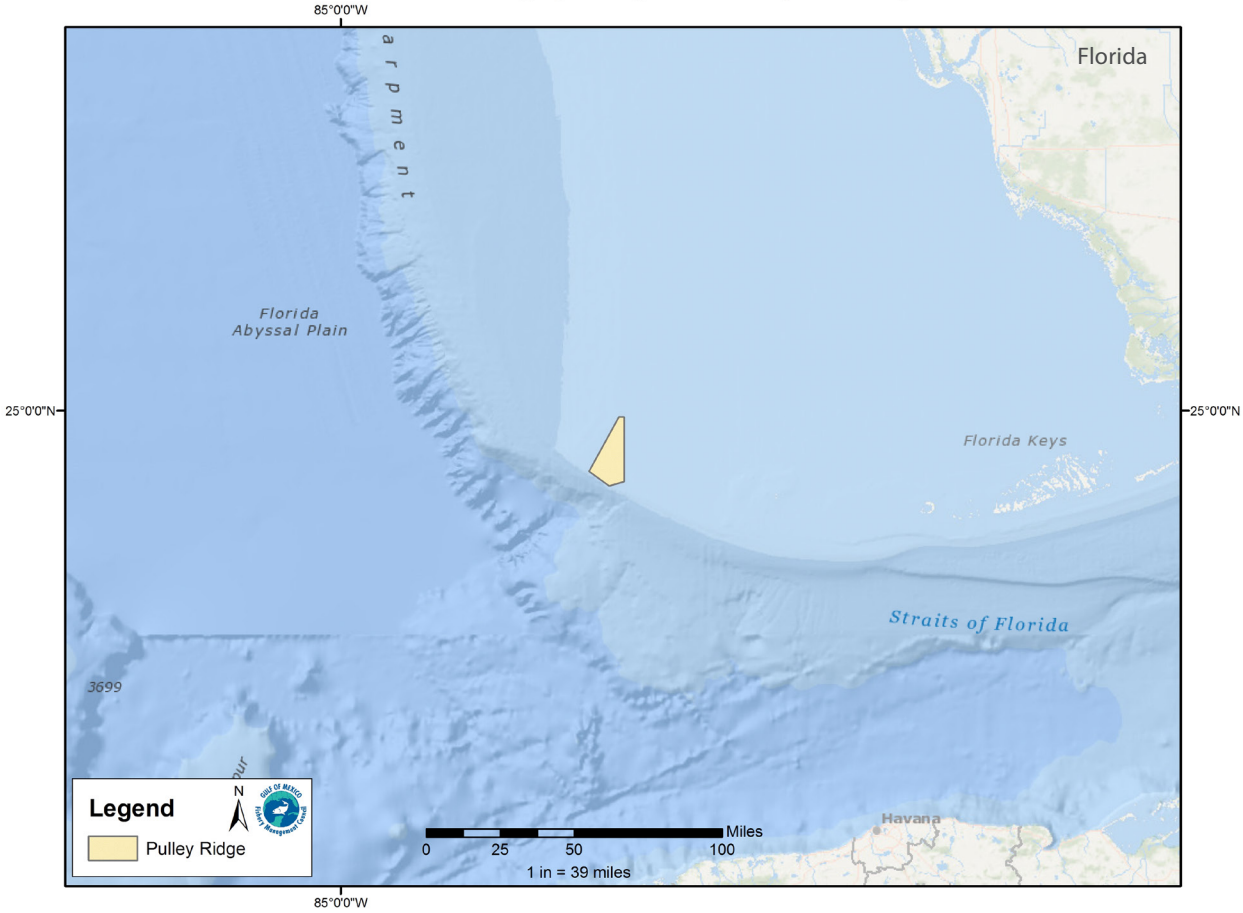
Hypnogorgia pendula Photo: NOAA

Pulley Ridge

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(r) Pulley Ridge HAPC. Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the HAPC.

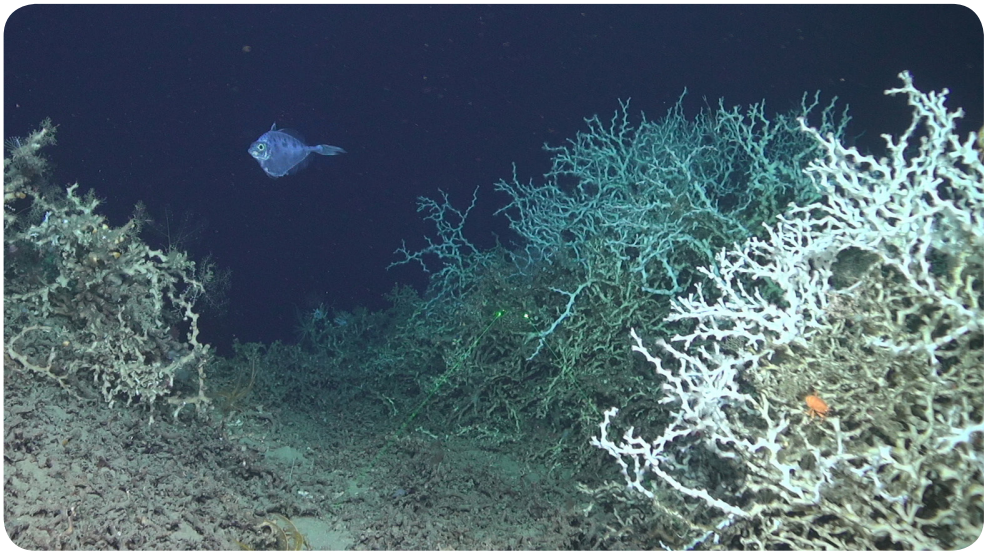
Pulley Ridge: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round



Pulley Ridge

Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the HAPC.

Pulley Ridge		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	24°58′18″ N	83°38′33″ W
B	24°58′18″ N	83°37′00″ W
C	24°41′11″ N	83°37′00″W
D	24°40′00″ N	83°41′22″ W
E	24°43′55″ N	83°47′15″ W
A	24°58′18″ N	83°38′33″ W



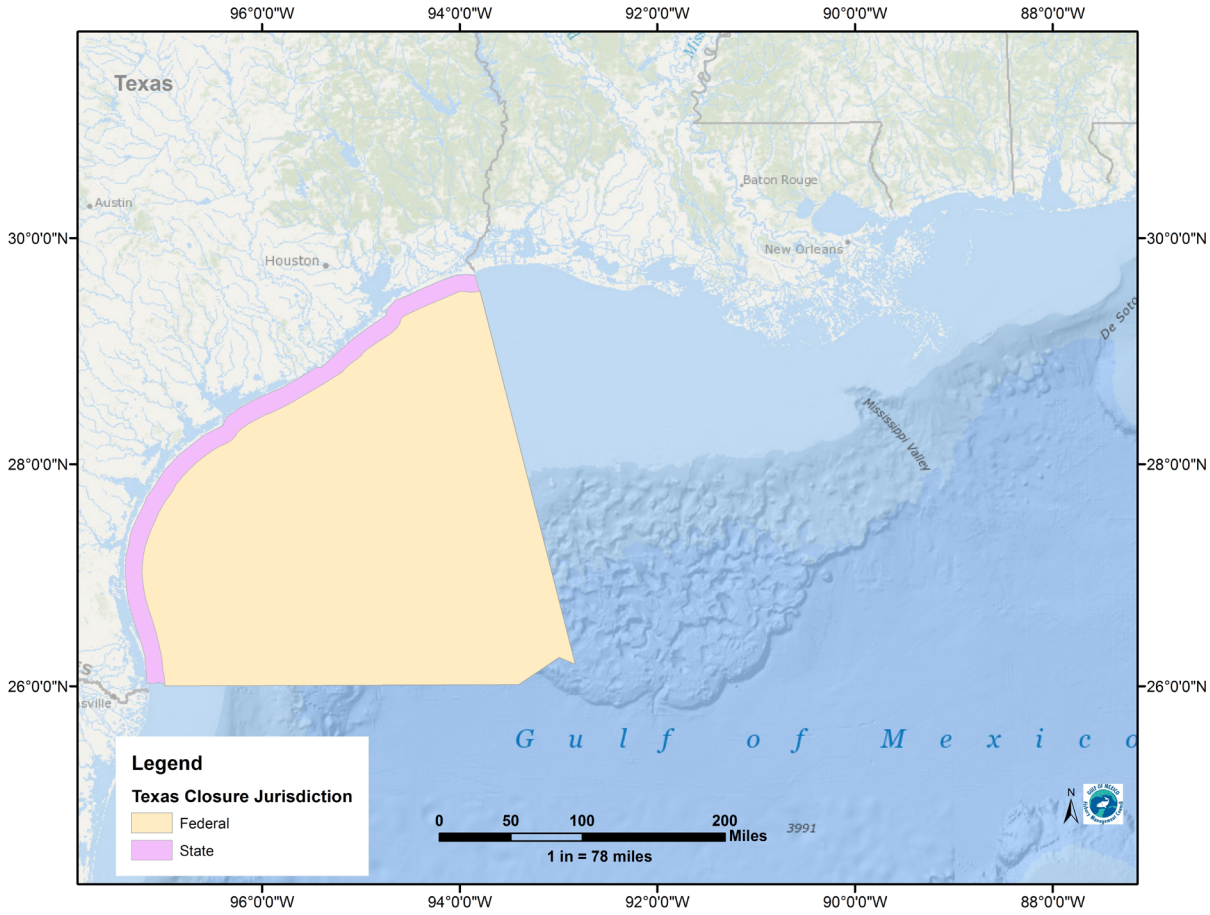
Tinselfish and Lophelia thickets Photo: NOAA SE Deep Coral Initiative 2017

Shrimp Closures

Texas Shrimp Closure

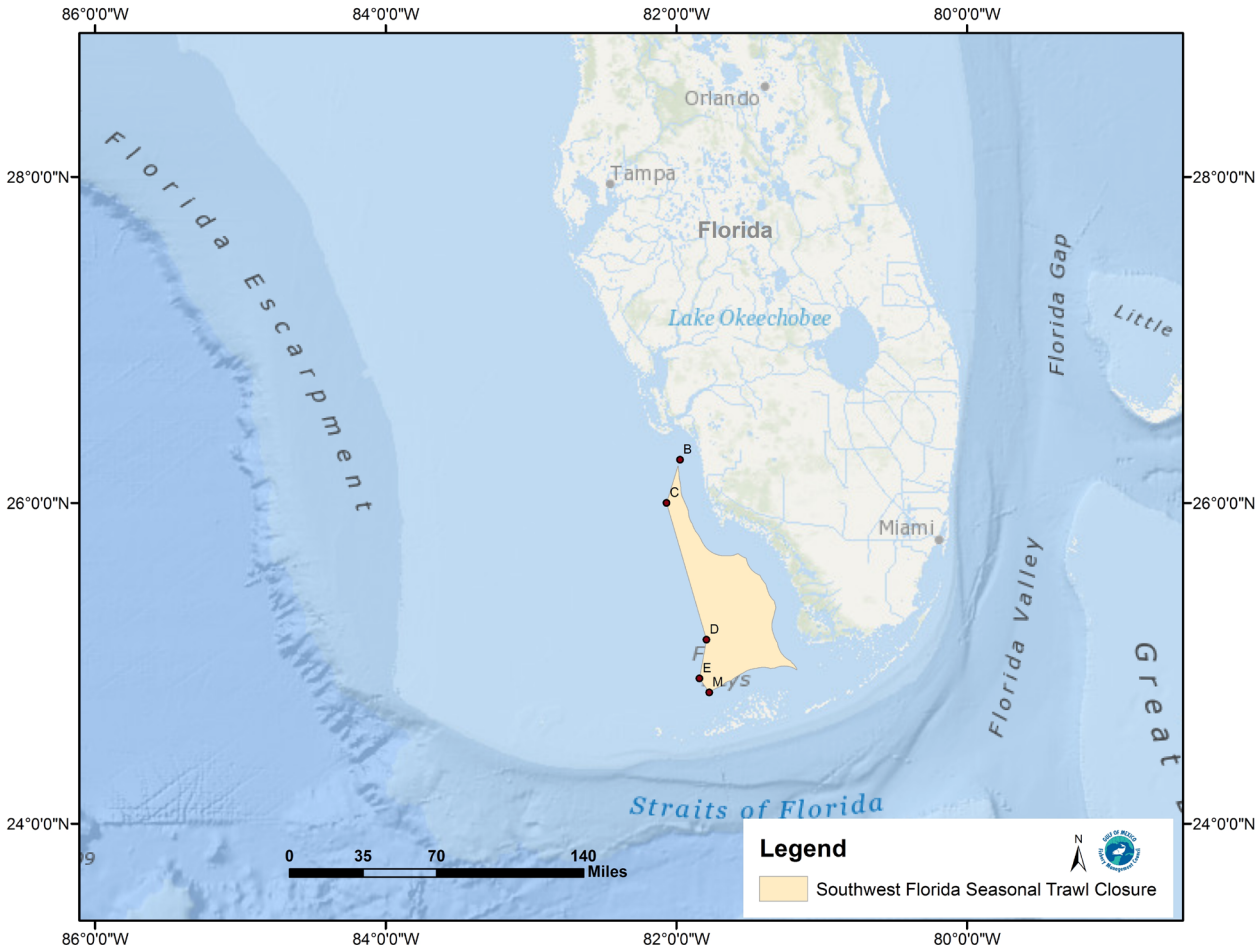
From 30 minutes after official sunset on May 15 to 30 minutes after official sunset on July 12, trawling, except trawling for royal red shrimp beyond 100-fathom depth contour, is prohibited in the Gulf EEZ off Texas.

Note: The Regional Administrator may adjust the closing and/or opening date of the Texas closure to provide an earlier, later, shorter, or longer closure, but the duration of the closure may not exceed 90 days or be less than 45 days.



Southwest Florida Seasonal Trawl Closure

From January 1 to 1 hour after official sunset on May 20, each year, trawling, including trawling for live bait, is prohibited.



Southwest Florida Seasonal Trawl Closure

Southwest Florida		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
B[1]	26°16'00"	81°58'30"
C	26°00'00"	82°04'00"
D	25°09'00"	81°47'36"
E	24°54'30"	81°50'30"
M[1]	24°49'18"	81°46'24"

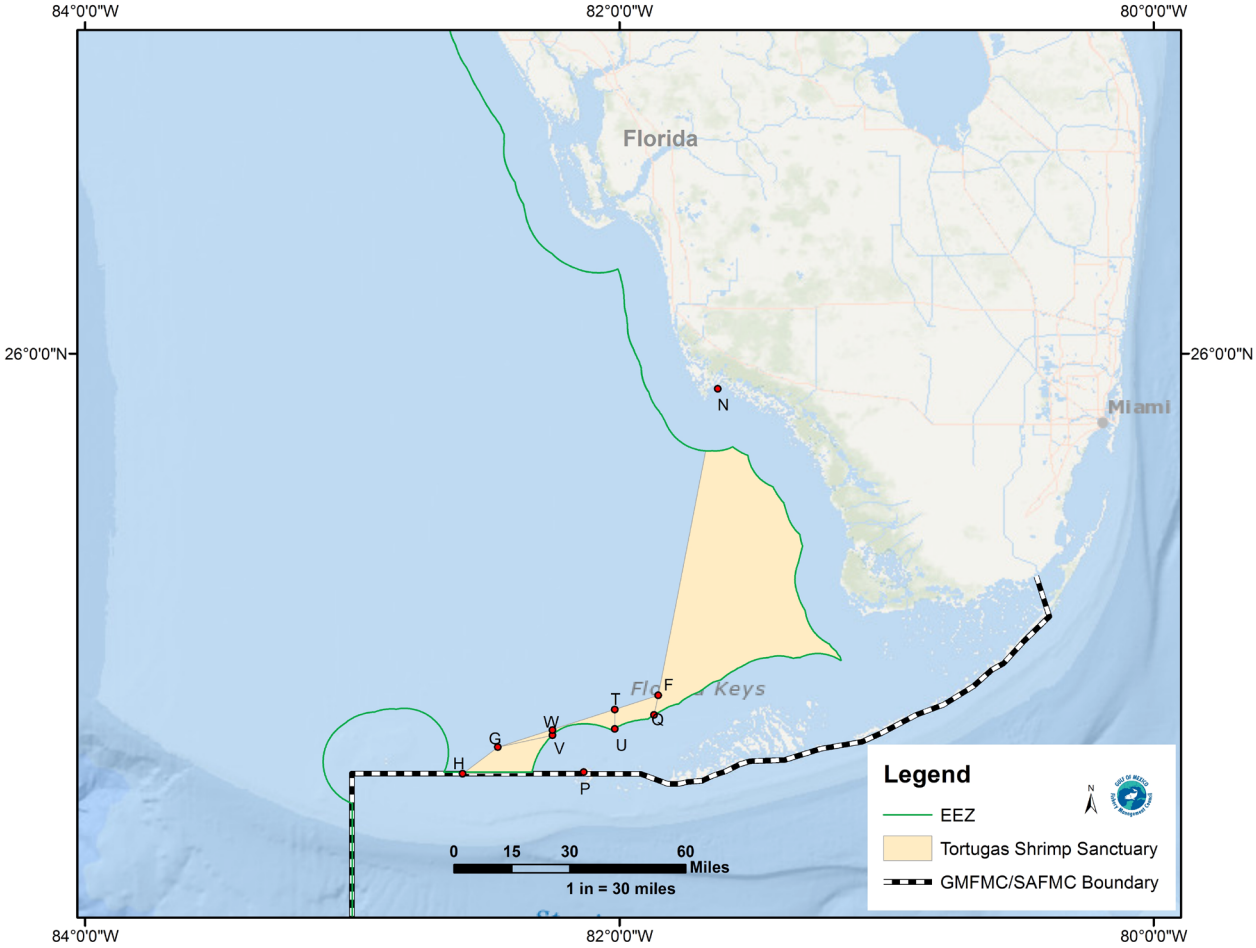
[1] on the seaward limit of Florida's waters

Shrimp boat Photo: Leann Bosarge

Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary Closure

Closed to trawling, except sub-areas open to trawling on the following dates:

TUVW - April 11 – September 30
WGV - April 11 – July 31
FQUT - May 26 – July 31



Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary Openings

Tortugas Shrimp Sanctuary Openings for Trawl Closures								
Open April 11 - Sept 30			Open April 11 - July 31			Open May 26 - July 31		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude	Position	North Latitude	West Longitude	Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
t	24°47'48"	82°01'00"	w	24°43'36"	82°15'00"	f	24°50'42"	81°51'18"
u	24°43'49.8"	82°01'00"	g	24°40.00'	82°26'39"	q	24°46'42"	81°52'12"
v	24°42'33"	82°15'00"	v	24°42'33"	82°15'00"	u	24°43'49.8"	82°01'00"
w	24°43'36"	82°15'00"	w	24°43'36"	82°15'00"	t	24°47'48"	82°01'00"
t	24°47'48"	82°01'00"				f	24°50'42"	81°51'18"

Shrimp bags tied Photo: Tony Reisinger

Stone Crab - Shrimp Closures

Zone closures created to separate shrimp trawling and stone crab trapping.

Zone I – Oct 5 – May 20 - trawling prohibited.

Zone II – Oct 5 – May 20 - trapping prohibited.

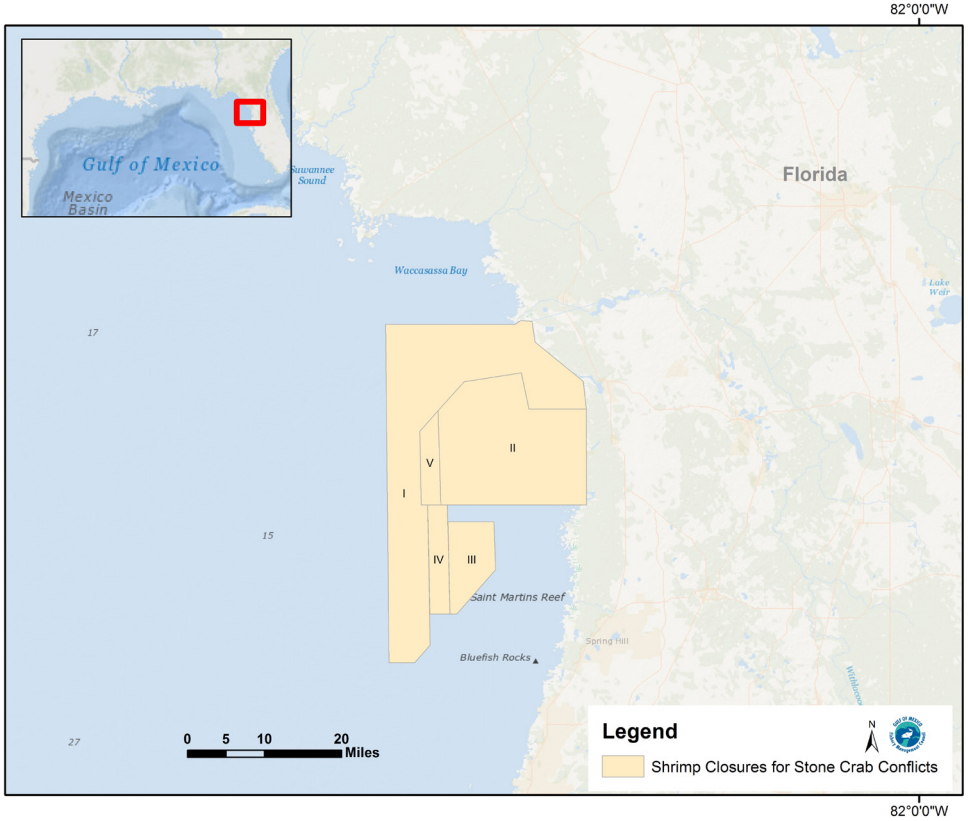
Zone III – Oct 5 – May 20 - trawling prohibited.

Zone IV – Dec 2 – Apr 1 - trawling prohibited.

Oct 5 - Dec 1 & Apr 2 - May 20 - trapping prohibited.

Zone V – Dec 1 – Mar 15 - trawling prohibited.

Oct 5 - Nov 30 & Mar 16 - May 20 - trapping prohibited.



Note: Stone Crab managed by FWC - no longer included in the federal manangement plan

Stone Crab - Shrimp Closure Separation Zones

Closed to trawling October 5 - May 20

Zone I		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
A	28°59'30"	82°45'36"
B	28°59'30"	83°00'10.2"
C	28°26'1.2"	82°59'46.8"
D	28°26'1.2"	82°56'54"
T	28°27'46.2"	82°55'09"
E	28°41'39"	82°55'25.5"
F	28°41'39"	82°56'09"
G	28°48'55.8"	82°56'19.2"
H	28°53'51"	82°51'19.2"
I[1]	28°54'43.2"	82°44'52.2"
J[2]	28°51'09"	82°44'00"
plus to the shoreline between points A and J		

Closed to stone crab trapping October 5 - May 20

Zone II		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
J[2]	28°51'09"	82°44'00"
I[1]	28°54'43.2"	82°44'52.2"
H	28°53'51"	82°51'19.2"
K	28°50'58.8"	82°54'16.2"
L	28°41'39"	82°53'55.8"
M[3]	28°41'39"	82°38'46.2"
Plus the shoreline between points J and M		

Closed to trawling October 5 - May 20

Zone III		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
P	28°40'00"	82°53'7.8"
Q	28°40'00"	82°47'58.2"
R	28°35'13.8"	82°47'46.8"
U	28°30'51"	82°52'09"
S	28°30'51"	82°52'55.2"
P	28°40'00"	82°53'7.8"

Shrimp off-loading Photo: Emily Muehlstein

Shrimp Net Inspection Photo: Emily Muehlstein

Closed to stone crab trapping October 5 - December 1 & April 2 - May 20
Closed to trawling December 2 - April 1

Zone IV		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
E	28°41'39"	82°55'25.2"
N	28°41'39"	82°53'12"
S	28°30'51"	82°52'55.2"
O	28°30'51"	82°55'10.2"
E	28°41'39"	82°55'25.2"

Closed to stone crab trapping October 5 - November 30 & March 16 - May 20
Closed to trawling December 1 - March 15

Zone V		
Position	North Latitude	West Longitude
F	28°41'39"	82°56'09"
G	28°48'55.8"	82°56'19.2"
K	28°50'58.8"	82°54'16.2"
L	28°41'39"	82°53'55.8"
F	28°41'39"	82°56'09"

Stone Crab harvest Photo: FL Sea Grant

Stone Crab trapping Photo: LA Sea Grant

Bottom Longline Closures

50 CFR: Wildlife and Fisheries - PART 622 FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC
§622.34 - Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

(q) Prohibitions applicable to bottom longline fishing for Gulf reef fish.

(1) From June through August each year, bottom longlining for Gulf reef fish is prohibited in the portion of the Gulf EEZ east of 85°30' W. longitude

(2) Within the prohibited area and time period specified in paragraph (q)(1) of this section, a vessel with bottom longline gear on board may not possess Gulf reef fish unless the bottom longline gear is appropriately stowed, and a vessel that is using bottom longline gear to fish for species other than Gulf reef fish may not possess Gulf reef fish. For the purposes of paragraph (q) of this section, appropriately stowed means that a longline may be left on the drum if all gangions and hooks are disconnected and stowed below deck; hooks cannot be baited; and all buoys must be disconnected from the gear but may remain on deck.

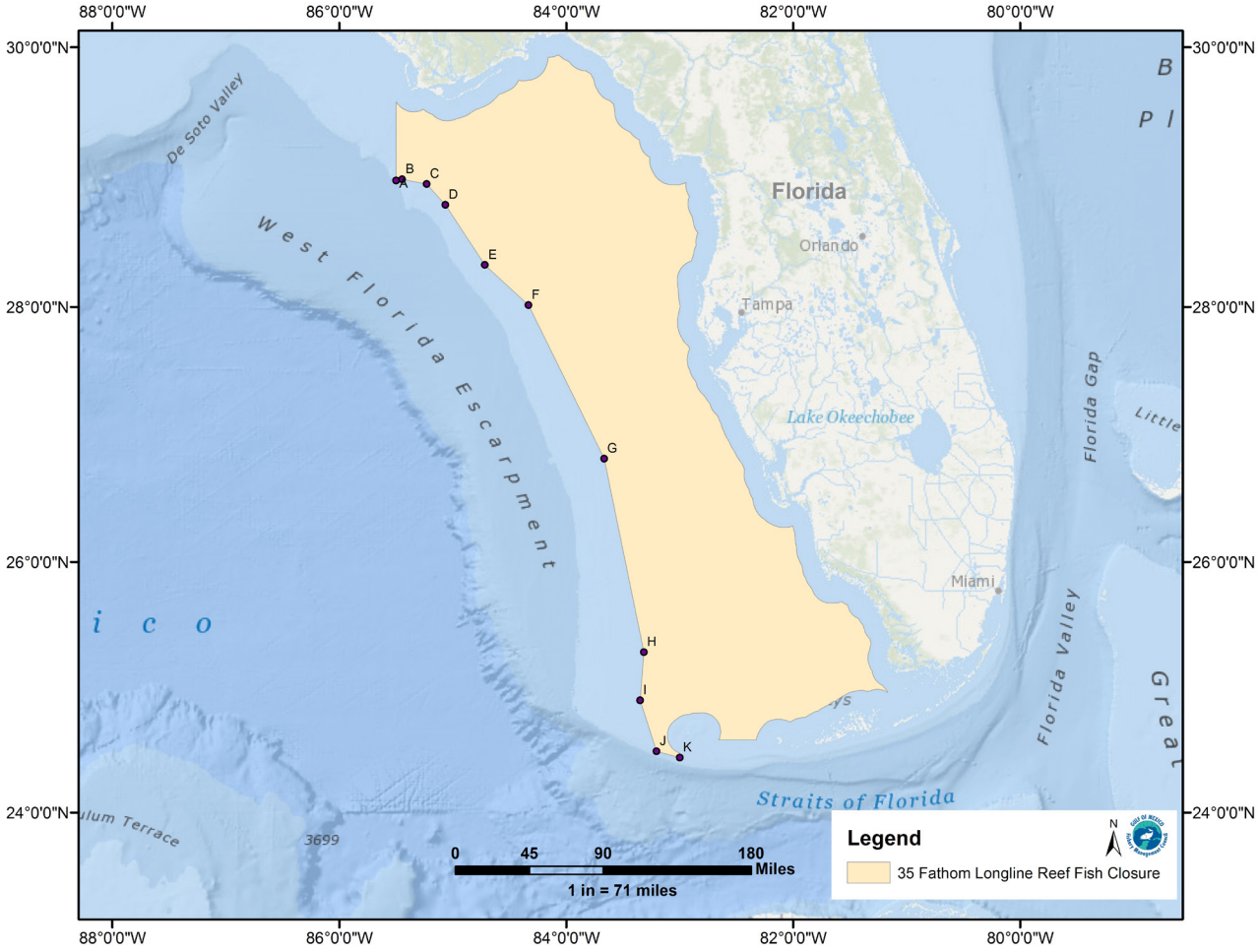
(3) Within the Gulf EEZ east of 85°30' W. longitude, a vessel for which a valid eastern Gulf reef fish bottom longline endorsement has been issued that is fishing bottom longline gear or has bottom longline gear on board cannot possess more than a total of 1000 hooks including hooks on board the vessel and hooks being fished and cannot possess more than 750 hooks rigged for fishing at any given time. For the purpose of this paragraph, "hooks rigged for fishing" means hooks attached to a line or other device capable of attaching to the mainline of the longline.

(c) Reef fish longline and buoy gear restricted area. A person aboard a vessel that uses, on any trip, longline or buoy gear in the longline and buoy gear restricted area is limited on that trip to the bag limits for Gulf reef fish specified in §622.38(b) and, for Gulf reef fish for which no bag limit is specified in §622.38(b), the vessel is limited to 5 percent, by weight, of all fish on board or landed.

NOTE: A bottom longline endorsement is required to fish for reef fish east of Cape San Blas, Florida. The use of longlines and buoy gear for reef fish is prohibited inside of 50 fathoms west of Cape San Blas, Florida. East of Cape San Blas, the use of longlines and buoy gear for reef fish is prohibited inside of 20 fathoms year round and 35 fathoms during June - August (see next page). Vessels fishing within this zone and posessing longlines or buoy gear may not exceed the recreational bag limits, and for reef fish without a bag limit, 5% by weight of all fish aboard.

Bottom Longline Closure

From June through August each year, bottom longlining for Gulf reef fish is prohibited in the portion of the Gulf EEZ east of 85°30' W longitude (Cape San Blas).



Bottom Longline Closure

From June through August each year, bottom longlining for Gulf reef fish is prohibited in the portion of the Gulf EEZ east of 85°30' W longitude (Cape San Blas).

Longline Closure		
Position	Latitude	Longitude
A	28°58'42" N	85°30' 00"W
B	28°59'15"N	85°26' 42"W
C	28°57'00" N	85°13' 48"W
D	28°47' 24"N	85°03' 54"W
E	28°19' 30"N	84°43' 00"W
F	28°00' 48"N	84°20' 00"W
G	26°48' 48"N	83°40' 00"W
H	25°17' 00"N	83°19' 00"W
I	24°54' 00"N	83°21' 00"W
J	24°29' 30"N	83°12' 18"W
K	24°29'30" N	83°00' 00"W

Longlines Photo: Kathy Hoak

Gulf of Mexico Federal Waters

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council manages fisheries in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico Exclusive Economic Zone. Federal waters begin where state waters end and extend to the 200 mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.

Title 50: Wildlife and Fisheries

Part 600 - Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions
Subpart B - Regional Fishery Management Councils

§ 600.105 Intercouncil boundaries.

(c) South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Councils. The Boundary coincides with the line of demarcation between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, which begins at the intersection of the outer boundary of the EEZ, as specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and 83°00' W long., proceeds northward along that meridian to 24° 35' N lat. (near the Dry Tortugas Islands), thence eastward along that parallel, through Rebecca Shoal and the Quicksand Shoal, to the Marquesas Keys, and then through the Florida Keys to the mainland at the eastern end of Florida Bay, the line so running that the narrow waters within the Dry Tortugas Islands, the Marquesas Keys and the Florida Keys, and between the Florida Keys and the mainland are within the Gulf of Mexico.

State Authority in Federal Waters

A state may regulate vessels that are registered in that state and fishing in federal waters for species for which there are no federal fishery management plans or applicable federal regulations, or for which the appropriate fishery management plan has delegated management of the state and the state rules are consistent with federal regulations.

NOTE: Federally permitted for-hire reef fish vessels must comply with the more restrictive of federal or state reef fish regulations when fishing for reef fish in state waters.

Important Phone Numbers

NOAA Fisheries Operations Branch	727-824-5301
NOAA Fisheries Permits and Regulations Branch (see below for tuna permit applications)	877-376-4877
To apply for permits online visit https://fisheriespermits.noaa.gov	
NOAA Fisheries nationwide federal fishing violations hotline	800-853-1964
NOAA Fisheries 24-hour tuna information line Atlantic tuna/Highly Migratory Species vessel permits	978-281-9260 888-872-8862
NOAA Fisheries Highly Migratory Species Managment Division	727-824-5399
NMFS Swordfish/Billfish Recreational Reporting - St. Petersburg Office	800-894-5528
Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary	409-621-5151
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary	305-809-4700
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council	843-571-4366
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission	228-875-5912
U.S. Coast Guard, 7th District (Florida east of St. Marks)	305-415-6683
U.S. Coast Guard, 8th District (St. Marks, Florida to Texas)	504-671-2020
NOAA Fisheries Regional Office for Law Enforcement	727-824-5344
NMFS Enforcement Field Offices:	
St. Petersburg, Florida	727-824-5344
Marathon, Florida	305-743-3110
Niceville, Florida	850-729-8628
Slidell, Louisiana	985-643-6232
Galveston, Texas	409-770-0812
Harlingen, Texas	956-423-3450

Important Phone Numbers *continued*

State Agencies	
Alabama Department of Conservation & Marine Resources	
Fisheries Section - Information	251-861-2882
24-Hour contact line to report state fishing violations	251-476-1256
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission	850-488-4676
Marine Fisheries Management - Information	850-488-9924
To report state fishing violations	888-404-3922
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Information	800-256-2749
To report state fishing violations	800-442-2511
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources	228-374-5000
To report state fishing violations-DMR Marine Patrol	844-WE-R-MDMR (844-937-6367)
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department Information	800-792-1112
To report state fishing violations	800-792-game (800-792-4263)

Goliath Grouper Photo: Angela Collins, FWRI

Spiny Lobster Photo: Emily Muehlstein

Regulation Changes and Updates

This booklet is updated as changes in fishing regulations are implemented. For up-to-date regulations visit www.gulfcouncil.org or download the Fish Rules regulations app. Just visit http://gulfcouncil.org/fish-rules-mobile-app/

NOTE: The Official Electronic Code of Federal Regulations for 50 CFR 622 for Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic is available online.

Please visit: https://gov.ecfr.io/cgi-bin/ECFR

King and Spanish Mackerel Photo: istock

Notes

p | 813-348-1630 e | gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org w | www.gulfcouncil.org