

Gulf Fishery News

A publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Nov - Dec, 2014
Volume 36 Issue 4

Gulf Council Research & Monitoring Priorities 2015-2019

The science that informs fishery management is incredibly complicated, and the management decisions made using that science can be controversial. While the members of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council are knowledgeable about specific aspects of the harvest, conservation, or business of Gulf fisheries, they're not always scientists - but they don't have to be. The Council relies on the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to assess fish stocks and provide them with the science necessary to make informed management decisions.

Every five years the National Marine Fisheries Service asks the fishery management Councils for a "wish-list" of their fishery monitoring and research priorities. The



FWRI deploys a video array

Southeast Fisheries Science Center, which is responsible for the Gulf, Caribbean, and South Atlantic Councils, then incorporates the priorities of each Council into its own research plan.

The research and monitoring priorities are broken into three categories. The first one focuses on broad, multi-purpose research programs that aim to collect data for a variety of species over a long period of time. The Council has asked for enhanced:

1. Fisheries-independent sampling

Specifically, more video and trawl surveys conducted in the eastern Gulf. Also, vertical, bottom long-line, visual, and larval studies to better understand the abundance of various sizes and ages of fish. This

will help determine the number of young fish that could become reproductive and harvestable adults.

2. Fisheries-dependent sampling

Existing recreational and commercial data collection programs should continue to achieve better coverage to collect data on abundance, size and species of fish landed. Electronic data collection systems should be developed for the charter-for-hire vessels to improve timeliness and accuracy of reporting.

3. Social and economic monitoring

A study of human attitudes, behavior, and reliance on marine fisheries should be developed to monitor changes in communities over time, particularly due to changes in recreational and commercial fishing regulations.

4. Estimations of bycatch and discards

Observer coverage and data collection on bycatch from commercial shrimp trawlers, longliners, and vertical line fisheries should be enhanced. Continued development of technologies including cameras, phones, and



Size data is collected for tag and recapture study

See next page

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| MRIP News | 2 |
| Draft Recreational Fisheries Policy | 4 |
| Fisheries of the US | 5 |
| Sea Grant Teams up with GoMRI | 6 |
| Send us Your Photos | 7 |

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 workshops and public hearings. The Council also takes open public comment during each Council meeting and accepts written 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 Charlene or Emily at 813-348-1630

Research Priorities *continued*

tablets should be utilized to collect estimations of total discards and discard mortality rates in all sectors.

The next category of research priorities is based on individual species managed by the Gulf Council. The recommendations in this section are based on gaps in data that were identified in recent stock assessments and through the development of management plans. The highest priority items focus on species that are currently in rebuilding plans - research priorities for numerous other species are included in the full document.

1. Red snapper – More efforts should be directed toward determining the effects of the oil spill; the influence of artificial reef structures on the population and spatial distribution across the Gulf; and the ecological effects of population expansion specifically, as it relates to interactions with other species.
2. Greater amberjack – More age and growth studies should be performed to determine size at age, and work should continue to verify the size of females at reproductive maturity.
3. Gray triggerfish – Additional studies on the aging, catchability of dominate males during the spawning season, and movement of triggerfish should be conducted.

Next, the Council focuses on economic and socio-cultural research and monitoring needs. Future fishery management challenges will increasingly pertain to the social environment, so a better understanding of the human dimension of fisheries is necessary.

1. Effects of proposed management changes on recreational and commercial fishing

Evaluations of the economic benefits, participation rates, and behavior of all modes of recreational and commercial fishing should be performed to enhance understanding of the social implications of management changes including size limits, bag limits, quotas, seasons, and marine reserves.

2. Development of regional economic models

Data should be gathered and tools should be developed to assess the regional economic effects of regulations or environmental events such as hurricanes and red tides.

The role of the Gulf Council in the research and monitoring side of fisheries management is often confused. The Council isn't responsible for collecting or interpreting fisheries data, nor does the Council assess the health and size of fish stocks. Rather, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center perform and report the science to the Gulf Council for use in management decisions. The Council simply takes an advisory role in directing the scientists on where to focus their research. As you can see, the Gulf Council has identified some very important research and monitoring needs that will help ensure the science fits the needs of the decision makers to better inform fisheries management decisions.



Trawl net is hauled in.



Improving the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey



NOAA Fisheries is intending to move, within the next few years, to a new MRIP-based method for surveying Atlantic and Gulf Coast saltwater recreational shore and private boat anglers about their fishing trips.

NOAA Fisheries is making available preliminary findings from an extensive, **multi-year MRIP pilot project**, which previews a promising new method for surveying saltwater recreational anglers about their trips. The findings indicate mail surveys are likely do a better job of capturing recreational fishing trips (fishing effort) by reaching a broader population of anglers, getting more accurate information from respondents, and delivering higher response rates.

See Next Page

MRIP *continued*

Earlier this year, we highlighted the results of the three previous pilot studies that led us to this final project. The pilot study was conducted across four states (Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, and Florida) and showed that more people report fishing in a mail survey than the telephone survey. Varying by state and fishing mode, mail survey estimates of total effort were 2-6 times higher than the Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS) estimates that are currently being used to measure fishing effort. This doesn't necessarily mean fishing effort itself has changed, but rather our ability to accurately measure it has. This also does not mean that we have been overfishing or have been underestimating abundance.

We know that our new survey will likely show increases - and in some cases potentially significant increases - in overall fishing effort. Because of the complex relationship between effort estimates and other data that go into determining fishery health, higher effort estimates alone do not necessarily mean that overfishing has or is occurring. In addition, we can't know how the results we've seen from our pilot study, conducted over a limited amount of time and geography, will play out on a larger scale. It will take a minimum of two years before we can determine exactly how the new numbers compare with those from our current survey, and how they fit into the stock assessment - and ultimately management - processes.

Given the implications of this project report, NOAA Fisheries identified members for a **Transition Team** that includes experts from state agencies, Regional Fishery Management Councils, Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and NOAA Fisheries. The charge of the team is to produce a comprehensive transition strategy. The Team's work is just beginning, and will follow a four-step process:

Step 1: State and Regional Input - The Transition Team will work with state and regional data partners and stakeholders to determine their top concerns and priorities with respect to the transition process.

Step 2: Side-by-Side Comparison - NOAA Fisheries will conduct the new mail survey alongside the current coastal telephone survey on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in 2015 and 2016 (and additional years, if necessary).

Step 3: Calibration - The transition team will develop a method for calibrating the two sets of estimates and use it to adjust historical time series of data, as necessary.

Step 4: Transition - Decision-makers will carefully work the calibrated estimates into fishery stock assessments beginning in 2016. Managers will then begin using the results to set the fishing levels and annual catch limits. This will occur no earlier than 2017.

Only after all four elements have been achieved will we use the estimates from the new methodology in the management process.

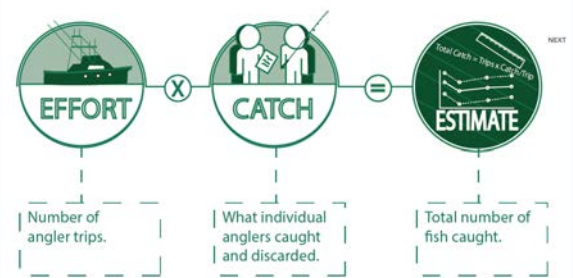
We expect to conduct the new mail survey alongside the telephone survey for a minimum of two years to determine how effort estimates using the old and new methodologies compare. The current phone survey will continue to provide shore and private boat recreational fishing effort information for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts for science and management decision-making at least through 2016. We will not fully shift to the new survey method until we are confident that we can explain any differences between estimates, and determine how to integrate the new numbers into stock assessments and catch accounting. Only then will it be appropriate to base management decisions on the revised estimates.

As with any changes to angler surveys, we are unable to predict what differences we will see in effort estimates based on our improved methodology. However, we do know that we'll be doing a better job of contacting more anglers, which ensures that we are collecting better data.

The Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, is the way NOAA Fisheries is counting and reporting marine recreational catch and effort. It is a customer-driven initiative that not only produces better estimates, but does so through a process grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability and engagement.

For More Information:

Leah Sharpe
(301) 427-8205
leah.sharpe@noaa.gov



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Doug Gregory
Executive Director

Carrie Simmons
Deputy Director

Appointed Voting Members

Pam Dana
Destin, FL
850-650-3212

David Walker
Andalusia, AL
334-300-6625

John Sanchez
Homestead, FL
786-255-1880

Doug Boyd
San Antonio, TX
830-230-5032

Greg Stunz
Corpus Christi, TX
361-825-3254

Camp Matens
Baton Rouge, LA
225-769-9080

Corky Perret
Poplarville, MS
504-722-1366

John Greene
Daphne, AL
251-747-2872

Roy Williams
Vice Chair
Tallahassee, FL
850-445-0778

Leann Bosarge
Pascagoula, MS
228-762-0888

Harlon Pearce
Kenner, LA
504-467-3809

State/Federal Voting Members

Robin Riechers
Austin, TX
512-389-4645

Dale Diaz
D'Iberville, MS
228-861-3190

Martha Bademan
Tallahassee, FL
850-487-0554

Myron Fischer
Cut Off, LA
985-632-4525

Kevin Anson
Chair
Gulf Shores, AL
251-968-7576

Roy Crabtree
NMFS SERO
727-824-5301

Non-voting Members

Glenn Constant
USF&WS
225-578-4243

Dave Donaldson
GSMFC
228-875-5912

RADM Kevin Cook
USCG District
504-589-6223

David Hogan
OES/OMC
202-647-2335

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, Florida 33607
813-348-1630

New Draft Recreational Fisheries Policy

From the NOAA web site



NOAA Fisheries has released a draft Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy for public review and comment until December 31. Developed in cooperation with anglers, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, and the Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, the policy will serve as a guide for agency actions and responsibilities.

Saltwater recreational fishing is woven into our nation's social and economic fabric. NOAA Fisheries, the federal agency responsible for the stewardship of our ocean and coastal resources, is asking for your help in developing a national policy on saltwater recreational fisheries. At the 2014 national Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit, NOAA Fisheries committed to develop an Agency-wide policy.

Why do we need a saltwater recreational fisheries policy?

For an organization the size of NOAA, process and policy are important. A clear statement about our operating principles does two things: 1) it institutionalizes our commitment to healthy recreational fisheries and the benefits they provide to the nation and 2) it provides guidance when difficult choices need to be made.

What is a policy exactly?

A national saltwater recreational fisheries policy outlines a set of principles to guide NOAA actions and decisions over the long-term. The policy will share basic tenets with the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), the legislation that governs fisheries management in federal waters. While the MSA outlines the legal requirements, this new policy will make clear the values we will keep in mind when implementing the law.

Further, the policy will serve as the underpinning to the Agency's recreational fishing Action Agenda, which we update every 4 years.

How can I share my opinion?

Submit your comments by December 31, 2014 to: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1p0tLl0btNpg4IyUe5mvXoyak_YyPCNUqptSGBrASkxo/viewform.



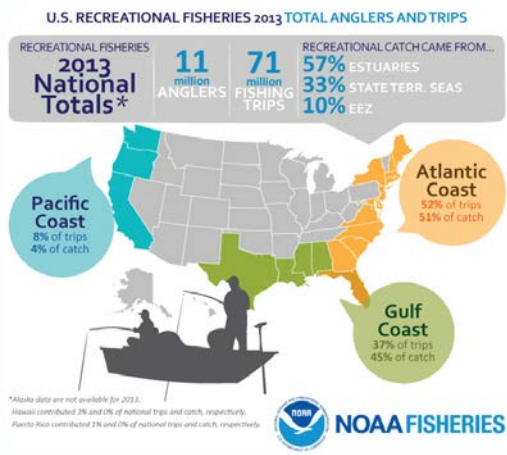
Find us on
Facebook

Find us on Facebook!

Become a fan by clicking **Like** on our page. Just log on to Facebook and search for Gulf Council!

Fisheries of the United States 2013 Available Now for Download

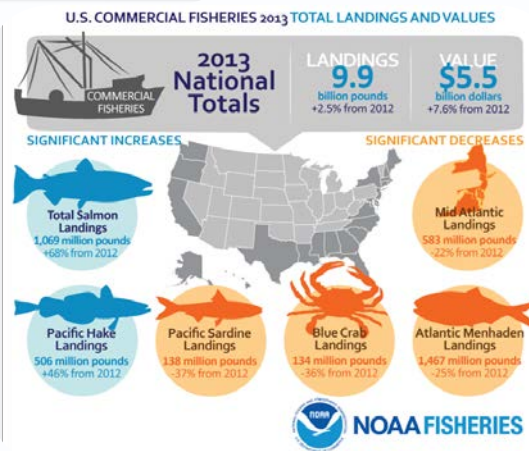
Here are the highlights:



Each year, NOAA Fisheries compiles key fisheries statistics from the previous year into an annual snapshot documenting fishing's importance to the nation. Inside the 2013 report, you'll find totals for both domestic commercial and recreational fishing by species. This information

allows NOAA Fisheries to track important indicators, such as annual seafood consumption and the productivity of top fishing ports.

To review the fact sheet or to read the full report, visit <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/fus/fus13/materials>



Stay in the loop with Gulf Currents

Stay up to date on Gulf of Mexico Fishery issues - visit our blog - *Gulf Currents*.

Gulf Currents will keep you in the loop and prepare you to participate effectively in the fishery management process by educating you about current events, possible management considerations, regulatory changes, the fisheries management process, and more.

Check it out at:

<http://gulfcouncil.blogspot.com/>



Red Snapper Accountability Measures Open for Public Comment

In August, the Gulf Council approved a framework action for Recreational Red Snapper Accountability Measures which aim to reduce the probability of exceeding the recreational quota and apply harvest

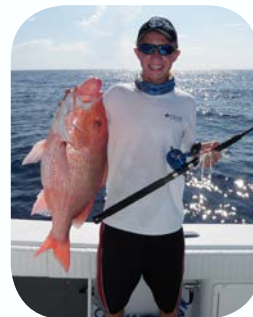


Photo: Jeff Berman

adjustments in the event the quota is exceeded. The framework action was transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce, who is taking public comments until **December 22, 2014**.

Submit your comments here <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0120>.

Upcoming Meetings

January 5 - 8, 2015

Standing, Special Reef Fish and Special Mackerel SSC
Gulf Council Office

January 12, 2015

King Mackerel Gillnet Workshop
Key West, Florida

January 13 - 15

Joint South Florida Committee
Key West, Florida

January 26 - 29, 2015

Gulf Council Meeting
Point Clear, Alabama

Visit www.gulfcouncil.org to find out more information



Program Shares Science to Answer Question: *What impact did the Deepwater Horizon oil spill have on the Gulf of Mexico?*

The Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant programs have teamed up with the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) to study the impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and dispersant use on the marine environment and public health. Four Sea Grant Oil Spill Science Outreach Specialists have will communicate the research results to those whose livelihoods depend on a healthy Gulf of Mexico, including the fishing industry, tourism industry, ports and harbors employees, public health officials, natural resource managers, emergency responders, and many others.

To date, GoMRI has funded more than \$170 million worth of research projects and published more than 380 peer-reviewed journal articles. These studies, combined with many more, are beginning to reveal more information about the impacts that the oil spill has had on aquatic life, wildlife, the environment and people.



Over the next year, the Oil Spill Science Outreach Team will hold workshops around the Gulf to present the latest oil spill findings and receive feedback from communities about oil spill topics of interest. They will also create and distribute bulletins that focus on oil spill science topics such as:

- Dispersants, including their role in oil spill response, their fate, transport and effectiveness and their impact on aquatic life
- Fish, including the impact of the oil spill on fish health, fisheries and seafood
- Oil encounters, including an overview of what oil is and how it is used, the modeling and tracking of oil in the environment and what oil products might be found on our beaches

GoMRI is a ten-year research initiative established in 2010 and funded by a \$500 million commitment by BP. GoMRI is administered by an independent Research Board, which consists of 20 experts in science, research administration, and public health. The Research Board evaluates research proposals following merit review guidelines of the National Academies of Science and procedures similar to those of the U.S. National Science Foundation. All funding decisions are made by the Research Board, which is independent of BP and not connected to the Natural Resources Damage Assessment process.

To learn more about this effort or to be placed on the mailing list, please contact your state Oil Spill Research Extension Specialist - <https://gulfseagrant.wordpress.com/oilspilloutreach/contact-a-member-of-the-oil-spill-outreach-project/>



January Council Meeting Reminder

The next Council meeting is scheduled for the week of January 26-29, at the Grand Hotel Marriott, Point Clear, Alabama. Please make your reservation under the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council room block to receive the special discounted room rate.

Note that all written comments will be posted on the Council's web site for viewing by Council members and the public.

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

Comments can be submitted online by clicking the thermometer on the Council's homepage - www.gulfcouncil.org. Find your topic of interest and click on the "Submit Your Comments here" link.

Materials submitted to Council members or staff for distribution prior to or during a Council meeting will be treated as all other written comments and will be posted to the web site.

Oral 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. Further, knowingly and willfully submitting false information to the Council is a violation of Federal Law.

A draft agenda will be posted on the Gulf Council web site at www.gulfcouncil.org.

Quick Guide to Submitting Online Comments

The Gulf Council wants your input on the many issues under consideration. You can give your input by attending scoping workshops and public hearings held around the Gulf of Mexico. It's impossible for the Council to hold workshops or hearings in every coastal community, so if you can't make a meeting because it's too far away or because of other commitments, you can watch online presentations and submit comments electronically for each amendment.

Check it out! Go to www.gulfcouncil.org and click on the thermometer in the middle of the page. From there you can read up on all the pending actions, watch the video presentations, read comments, and submit your own. All comments submitted through the online form are automatically posted on our web site for Council review. Other comments are manually posted every couple of days.

There is also a thermometer for each issue that lets you know where the Council is in the process for that particular amendment, whether its the scoping phase, final action, or implementation.

Let us hear from you!

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Click on the thermometer to:

- review pending fishery management plans and amendments
- review available amendment guides
- review public comments
- submit public comments



Photo: Superknot Charters

Send us Your Fishing Photos

We want to see your favorite fishing photos! Whether from a spear fishing adventure, a charter trip, or a commercial effort, we'd like to see your photos and possibly use them on our web site or in our publications.

Send us your photos and help us build a photo library! To submit your photos, send an e-mail with "Photo Library" in the subject line to gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org. Please include your name, address, and phone number, along with a description and photo credit, then simply attach the image and send.

Photo descriptions may be edited for grammar, clarity, or length. Photos must be in jpeg format and cannot exceed 1.5 MB (200 ppi).

NOTE: By submitting photos, you understand that your photo may be used on our web site, in our newsletter, or in other publications.

Happy Holidays
from all of us at the
Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council



The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Protecting our marine resources

2203 North Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607
Phone: 813-348-1630
Fax: 813-348-1711



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 Charlene Ponce, Public Information Officer, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Materials can also be sent via fax to 813-348-1711, or by email to charlene.ponce@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.