

SEA HARVEST NEWS

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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to Conduct Scoping Meetings on Proposed Joint Reef Fish/Shrimp Amendments

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has scheduled a series of scoping meetings to solicit public comment on two draft scoping documents. The first, Joint Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp 14 proposes actions that deal with adjustments to the total allowable catch (TAC) for red snapper, size limits, bag limits, recreational season dates, and the certification of new shrimp bycatch reduction devices (BRDs). The amendment will also look at directed fishery gear restrictions and depth restrictions on the commercial fishery.

The second document, Joint Reef Fish Amendment 28/Shrimp 15, will consider such issues as shrimp trawl gear limits, limitations of shrimp vessel permit transferability, further reducing bycatch, shrimp fishery bycatch quota and quota monitoring, vessel monitoring systems (VMS), possible area closures for shrimp, and other management alternatives.

A recent stock assessment shows that red snapper continues to be overfished and is undergoing overfishing. Shrimp trawl bycatch, combined with bycatch of red snapper from the directed commercial and recreational fisheries jeopardizes the success of the recovery plan. The

proposed amendments may change current management practices to help achieve an appropriate level and rate of rebuilding of the red snapper fishery. Other actions could further reduce bycatch and affect the shrimp fishery. Scoping meetings give the public an opportunity to provide input on the types of management changes the Council will consider.

“I would encourage anyone who has an interest in the reef fish or shrimp fisheries to participate in the scoping process. It’s the best way to have your ideas considered up front,” said Dr. Rick Leard, Deputy Director, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

Interested parties are encouraged to participate in this process and can obtain copies of the documents by calling the Council at 813-348-1630, or by e-mailing the Council at gulfcouncil@glfcouncil.org. Written comments will also be accepted and should be received on or before March 6, 2006.

All scoping meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. and will conclude when public testimony is completed. Local meeting dates and locations are as follows:

Monday, January 23, 2006

Holiday Inn Mobile I-10 Bellingrath Garden
5465 Highway 90 West
Mobile, Alabama 36619
251-666-5600

Tuesday, January 24, 2006

LaFont Inn
2703 Denny Avenue
Pascagoula, Mississippi 39567
228-762-7111

Wednesday, January 25, 2006

Hilton Garden Inn Orange Beach

23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard
Orange Beach, Alabama 36561
251-974-1600

Nearly 11,000 Kemp’s Ridley Nests Counted

The recovery of the endangered Kemp’s ridley sea turtle remains one of the unheralded success stories in endangered species management. The number of Kemp’s ridley sea turtle nests counted on Mexican beaches reached 10,999 in 2005. This is a substantial increase over the 2004 count of 7,147 and continues an 18-year trend of increasing nests counts.

The number of nests is not a direct count of the Kemp’s ridley population but is the best index of how the population is doing.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>
1978	924	1992	1,275
1979	954	1993	1,241
1980	868	1994	1,562
1981	897	1995	1,930
1982	750	1996	2,080
1983	746	1997	2,387
1984	798	1998	3,845
1985	702	1999	3,640
1986	744	2000	6,277
1987	737	2001	5,442
1988	842	2002	6,436
1989	888	2003	8,323
1990	992	2004	7,147
1991	1,178	2005	10,999

Sources: Lagniappe. January 3, 2006. Vol. 30, No. 1. LSU Ag. Center. Louisiana Sea Grant. Gerald Horst.

Fuel Grant

Alabama shrimp fishermen affected by Hurricane Katrina may receive assistance from Aramco Services Inc. and the people of Saudi Arabia through a grant for fuel administered by the

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Organized Seafood Association of Alabama, Inc. If you landed shrimp in Alabama during the summer of 2005 and have not already been contacted, you can call 251-824-1672 for more information.

Shrimp Permits for the South Atlantic Region

The National Marine Fishery Service now requires an owner or operator of a trawler that harvests or possesses brown, pink or white shrimp in or from federal waters off the southern Atlantic states to obtain a commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic penaeid shrimp. Call 727-824-5326 for more information on obtaining a permit. Note, this is not the same as the rock shrimp permit that has been in place for several years.