Gulf Council to hear more Testimony on Shrimp Vessel Permit Moratorium

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will be meeting May 9 – 12 at the Palace Casino Resort, 158 Howard Avenue, Biloxi, MS. On Wednesday, May 12th at 8:45 a.m., the Council will hear public testimony on Shrimp Amendment 13 which would establish a moratorium on issuance of commercial shrimp vessel permits in the Gulf of Mexico. Other proposed actions in Amendment 13 include:

1. Establish by-catch methodologies
2. Require completion of a Gulf shrimp vessel and gear characterization form
3. Strengthen the system for reporting landings.

For more information contact the Council at 813-228-2815 or email: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org. Information is also available on the Council’s website at www.gulfcouncil.org.

The Shrimp Management Committee of the Gulf Council will be meeting May 9th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the same location as the Council meeting. The committee meeting is a good place to learn more about Amendment 13 and what is being recommended. There is no public testimony at the committee meeting but the public can talk to committee members before and after the meeting.

Alabama Shrimpers to vote on May 5th

On May 5, licensed and authorized shrimp boat owners/producers will be able to vote whether to impose an assessment on themselves to be used for the promotion of the shrimp industry in the state of Alabama. Shrimpers have to be certified by the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama in order to vote. Certified shrimpers can vote at the following locations on May 5th between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.:

1. Bayou La Batre Community Center
   12745 Padgett Switch Road
   Bayou La Batre, AL 36509

2. Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center
   4170 Commanders Drive
   Mobile, AL 36615

3. Baldwin County Extension Office
   302 A Byrne Street
   Bay Minette, AL 36507

4. Nelson Net Shop
   16746 Kennedy Road
   Bon Secour, AL 36511

New National Marine Fisheries Service Phone Numbers

The Southeast Regional Office (SERO) of the National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) also referred to as NOAA Fisheries, has changed locations and phone numbers. The new phone numbers are:

- Directorate, Office of the Regional Administrator
  727-824-5301

- Operations, Management and Information Division
  727-824-5301

- Sustainable Fisheries Division
  727-824-5305

- Protected Resources Division
  727-824-5312

- Habitat Conservation Division
  727-824-5317

Highly Migratory Species Management Division
  727-824-5399

Permits Branch
  727-824-5326

State/Federal Liaison Branch
  727-824-5324

General Counsel
  727-824-5370

Office of Law Enforcement
  727-824-5344

Damage Assessment/Restoration Center
  727-824-5391

Southeast Financial Services Branch
  727-824-5377

Red Snapper Season to Open

The recreational fisheries for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico federal waters will open on April 21, 2005 with a 16-inch minimum size limit and a four-fish bag limit. Red snapper and most other fish must be landed with heads and fins intact. The fishery will close October 31, 2005, when the recreational quota of 4.47 million pounds is projected to be caught.

Survival of Small Fish

One of the harder things for fishery scientists to determine is how many fish survive from the time eggs are fertilized during spawning until young fish are readily caught either by fishermen or researchers. It is assumed that most species produce many more eggs, larval fish, and small juvenile than can possibly survive to adulthood. Many, if not...
most, are eaten by predators or lost to environmental conditions (lack of food, weather, etc.). But, figuring out how many survive to any particular point (1 day, 10 days, 3 months) is difficult and often involves assumptions based on little data. Why is this important?

Two current major issues facing fishery managers have to do with estimating survival in young fish (also shrimp, crabs and other sea life). The two issues are the proposed offshore LNG plants that would destroy millions of eggs, larval fish and possibly some small juveniles and the ongoing debate over the effect of shrimp trawls on red snapper populations.

In both cases, the question boils down to – Are the numbers being killed meaningful relative to the number that would die of natural causes? The debate will center around estimating the effect these activities have on the catchable populations of important fish and shellfish.