

# SEA HARVEST NEWS

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## Scoping Meeting for the Red Snapper and Shrimp Fisheries to be held in Orange Beach

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will hold a scoping meeting to receive comments on possible ways to reduce bycatch in the directed reef fish fishery and ways to further reduce bycatch in the shrimp fishery, particularly of red snapper. Other topics for scoping comments include: ways to further reduce effort in the shrimp fishery as needed; possibly requiring VMS on permitted shrimp vessels in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf; and possible limits on transferability of federal shrimp vessel permits. The Council is soliciting public comment on these issues through these scoping meetings and by mail, e-mail, or facsimile.

All written comments must be received by the Council on or before November 10, 2005. Copies of documents can be obtained by calling the Council at 813-348-1630 or by e-mail at [gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org](mailto:gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org).

A scoping document is a working document that outlines the issues being considered in the proposed fishery management plan and gives a brief discussion or history of the fishery being reviewed.

The public hearing will be held beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Reef Fish Amendment 26 immediately followed by the scoping meeting for a Joint Shrimp Amendment 14/Reef Fish Amendment 27. The meeting will conclude no later than 10:00 p.m. at the following location in Alabama:

**Tuesday, October 18, 2005**  
Hilton Garden Inn Orange Beach  
23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard

Orange Beach, Alabama 36561  
Phone: 251- 974-1600

Important note: This scoping meeting will be preceded by a public hearing on draft Amendment 26 to the reef fish fishery management plan which addresses an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program for the commercial red snapper fishery. Shrimp and reef fish fishermen wanting to participate in the scoping meeting will have to wait until the public hearing on IFQs concludes.

## Shipp Returns to Gulf Council

Dr. Bob Shipp was recently selected by the Secretary of Commerce to serve on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Dr. Shipp previously served on the Council for nine years in the 1990s. Dr. Shipp can be contacted at 251-460-6351.

## Hurricanes and the Alabama Seafood Industry

It is pretty difficult to put numbers on the damage Hurricane Katrina inflicted on the Alabama seafood industry. A boat or processor that was out of service yesterday is back at work tomorrow. While some vessels need extensive repairs and may not fish again, many others are already fishing.

Just about every one of the 118 seafood processors in Alabama had some damage. Three weeks after the storm about half of the processors were able to work.

Twenty-five percent of those remaining thought they would be back on line within a few weeks and the remaining 25 percent were not certain as to when or if they would reopen.

## TED Exemption

The National Marine Fishery Service has approved a temporary 30-day TED exemption to shrimp fishermen working out to 50 miles offshore. This exemption is in effect for the north central Gulf Coast beginning at the Alabama-Florida line and extending west to the western edge of Vermillion Bay and Louisiana. All waters, both state and federal, are included. During this period, tow time is limited to a

maximum of 55 minutes. Enforcement officers will be checking vessels to ensure compliance. The exemption expires at midnight, October 22, 2005.

## Experimental Oyster Dredging to be Allowed

The Marine Resources Division, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources announces that as of Monday, October 3, 2005, oyster dredging will be allowed on an experimental basis on the newly established New Reef and Hard Reef in Portersville Bay. The dredging activity will be strictly regulated and will be closely monitored by Marine Resources enforcement and biological personnel. The reefs will be closed when biological surveys and landings data indicate that the oyster resources would be best served by closure of the two experimental dredging reefs.

Those who participate in the experimental dredging program must have a valid oyster license, must have a valid dredge license, must obtain a special dredge permit for the areas, may possess only one dredge upon the permitted vessel, must use a self dumping basket, must have dredges inspected and tagged, and must have a rope no shorter than ten feet with a floating buoy no less than six inches in diameter bearing the operator's permit number permanently affixed to the dredge at all times.

Persons utilizing the dredge reefs may only take oysters Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, are limited to 16 sacks of oysters per boat per day, must check out at the established check station, and must purchase special oyster tags at the station. The two experimental reefs shall be closed to the taking of oysters by any means when closed to dredging.

If someone needs to have an oyster dredge inspected and tagged please call the Marine Resources office at Dauphin Island at (251) 861-2882 and schedule an appointment.

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## Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Permits by State

AL	196
FL	364
LA	757
MS	256
TX	822
<b>Total</b>	<b>2395</b>
Other	47
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2442</b>