

SEA HARVEST NEWS

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Shrimp Permit Reminder

Vessels fishing for shrimp in the federal waters – exclusive economic zone (EEZ) – of the Gulf of Mexico must have the new moratorium permit on board starting March 26, 2007. All open access permits expire March 25, 2007 at midnight. Applications for the moratorium permit will be taken until October 26, 2007. Applications can be obtained at:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov> or you can call the NOAA Permits Branch at 727-824-5326.

Shrimping Effort

The amount of effort that the shrimp fleet exerts each year has become an important issue for two reasons. First, it is essential to understand what effort will achieve the maximum sustained yield for shrimp. Second, shrimp effort is directly related to red snapper bycatch and has an effect on the maximum sustained yield of the red snapper fishery.

Shrimping effort is measured by interviewing shrimpers to determine how many days they fished and how much shrimp they caught. From this information, the catch per unit effort (pounds of shrimp caught per day of fishing) can be determined. Because not all fishermen are interviewed, the total effort can be estimated by dividing the total shrimp catch per year by the catch per unit effort in that year. The result is an estimate

of the total shrimp effort for that year.

Recent estimates of shrimp effort in federal waters show a decline from around 140,000 days fished in the EEZ to about 75,000 days in 2005. Preliminary data indicates that the 2006 effort is even lower. Based on the past history of the industry, it takes about 109,000 fishing days to harvest the maximum sustained yield. As a result, the current effort is well below the effort necessary to harvest the maximum sustained yield.

An important point to remember in this discussion is that the maximum sustained yield refers to the total harvest of all vessels and does not refer to the catch of an individual vessel. Individual vessels may have very good catches when the overall effort is low because of reduced competition or when environmental conditions favor a good shrimp crop.

The issue of red snapper comes into play because the most recent red snapper assessment indicates that all sources of red snapper mortality need to be reduced in order for the stock to rebuild to the point that it can produce the maximum sustained yield. According to the current models, shrimping effort would have to be reduced even further along with severe reductions in the directed red snapper (recreational and commercial) quota to rebuild the stock in the specified time.

The problem for managers is how to manage both fisheries for maximum sustained yield at the same time and maintain the value of both fisheries.

Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Mapping Web Site Launched

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita inflicted severe damage on the Gulf of Mexico coastal region, and

deposited huge amounts of debris over large areas of the Gulf coast. Even though the surface looks calm, beneath the waterline submerged marine debris still poses a hazard to vessel traffic and commercial fishing gear.

In September 2006, NOAA's Office of Coast Survey and Office of Response and Restoration began surveying the waters of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana to locate debris still submerged in fishing areas. NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Marine Debris Project has made available free, online maps to provide mariners with accurate and up-to-date navigational information, available at <http://gulfofmexico.marinedebris.noaa.gov/>. This web site provides users with maps of debris-laden survey areas in the waters of the Northern Gulf Of Mexico, indicating nautical position and other physical properties of each debris contact. The maps can help fishermen avoid gear-damaging debris as well as keep users updated on the status of debris removal in fishing grounds.

Recreational and Commercial Gag, Red Grouper, and Black Grouper Fisheries in Gulf of Mexico Federal Waters will Close February 15 until March 15, 2007

NOAA Fisheries Service announces the prohibition on the possession, sale, or purchase of gag, red grouper, or black grouper harvested from the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from February 15 until March 15, 2007. No person may possess these species in the EEZ regardless of where harvested. Additionally, during the closure, the recreational bag and possession limits of gag, red grouper, and black grouper is zero. This restriction also applies to persons aboard a vessel fishing as a charter vessel/headboat. These fisheries will reopen at 12:01 a.m., local time, on March 15, 2007.

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Pond Questions?

Do you or a neighbor have a pond that is not quite what is used to be? All too often, once great fishing ponds diminish in quality or aesthetic appeal. The good news is that with a pond management plan, the angling quality and beauty of the pond can often be restored. If you are interested in learning more about management options, or have specific questions about a pond, you may contact P.J. Waters at 251.438.5690. P.J. is our recreational pond management expert for southwest Alabama. He is available to assist in any pond related question you may have and looks forward to helping you and your pond.