

Audubon Nature Institute



G.U.L.F.

Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries

Alabama Shrimp Summary Action Plan Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)

Updated September 2018

Prepared by:

Audubon Nature Institute
Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries (G.U.L.F.)



INTRODUCTION

Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries (G.U.L.F.) was founded in 2012 and is the sustainable seafood program of Audubon Nature Institute, a not-for-profit network of attractions dedicated to “Celebrating the Wonders of Nature.” G.U.L.F.’s Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) were initiated under the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) Oil Disaster Recovery Program (ODRP). GSMFC requested that G.U.L.F. create FIPs based on assessments of U.S. state fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico using the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). Comprehensive information on the fishery was gathered through interviews with management and industry representatives, public documents, and research publications, and compared to the CCRF in a G.U.L.F. Sustainability Benchmarking Report (SBR).

Scope

- Species:
 - White shrimp (*Litopenaeus setiferus*)
 - Brown shrimp (*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*)
- Location
 - Alabama state territorial waters (three nautical miles)
 - U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ, 200 nm)
- Gear
 - Otter Trawl
 - Skimmer Trawl
- Management
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
 - Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC)
 - Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR)



Current Participants



Status of the Fishery

The Alabama shrimp fishery primarily harvests brown (*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*) and white shrimp (*Litopenaeus setiferus*) in Alabama state territorial waters and federal waters in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico. Total brown and white shrimp harvest landed in Alabama in 2016 was 21 million pounds with a dockside value of \$55 million. Harvest of brown shrimp peaks in the summer (spring season: mid-May to July), and harvest of white shrimp peaks in the fall (fall season: mid-August to December). Brown and white shrimp stocks are found in both state and federal waters in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and are assessed regionally. Stock assessments conducted by NOAA Fisheries Galveston Lab indicate that neither shrimp species is overfished or experiencing overfishing. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) and NOAA Fisheries manage the fishery in federal waters and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) manages the fishery within state waters.

The primary gear types used in the Alabama fishery are otter trawls and skimmer trawls. Butterfly nets and cast nets are also legal gear in Alabama and sometimes used but landings from these gear types is minimal. The primary gear offshore is otter trawl and both otter trawl and skimmer trawl gears are used inshore.

Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) are required in otter trawls in both state and federal waters by federal regulation and this regulation is enforced by NOAA, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and MDMR. Skimmer trawls are exempt from TED requirements, but must adhere to tow time limits (55 minutes from April 1-October 31, 75 minutes from November 1-March 31).

All shrimp trawls in federal waters are required to use certified bycatch reduction devices (BRDs).



BRDs are not required in Alabama state waters; however, some fishermen in state waters do pull BRDs voluntarily. The rate of voluntary BRD use in Alabama state waters is not generally known.

Notable improvements made in the shrimp fishery in recent years include stock monitoring, bycatch reduction, area closures, and sea turtle nesting enhancement projects.

G.U.L.F. completed a Sustainability Benchmarking Report in September 2015 to assess the current status of the Alabama shrimp fishery and identify areas of potential improvement. Initial sustainability gaps identified include the following:

- Bycatch ratios are still high in comparison to other US trawl fisheries
- Observer coverage is low (1-2% on otter trawl fleet and <1% on skimmer trawl fleet)
- Recent research suggests that compliance with tow time regulations is low and Kemp's ridley turtle captures in skimmers have been documented
- TED compliance rate has fluctuated close to the required levels in past years, but currently remains above minimum threshold
- Bycatch data and use of BRDs in state waters is limited
- Alabama does not have an industry task force for shrimp
- The state Fishery Management Plan is outdated

Work Plan

ACTION 1	Gear tuning
Reference:	G.U.L.F. SBR 7.2.2 (d), 7.2.2 (g)(iii), 7.6.9 (a)(i,ii,iii), 8.5.1 (a), 12.10(c) MSC Principle 2 - bycatch; endangered, threatened, and protected species; ecosystem
Compliance with TED and BRD regulations requires ongoing maintenance. Participants agree to continue to work with harvesters and docks to ensure that gear is properly tuned through regular courtesy checks (at least annually) by Texas Sea Grant and/or NOAA Gear Monitoring Team. As of September 2018, eight vessels participated in voluntary gear checks in Alabama.	

2018 Gear Evaluations								
	Date	Vessel #	# of TEDs	FC*	Minor NC**	Major NC**	NC** Fixed?+	Add'l Advice?
1	6/15/18	BLB8	4	4				
2	6/15/18	BLB7	3	2	1			
3	6/15/18	BLB5	4	4				
4	6/15/18	BLB4	4	3	1			
5	6/15/18	BLB3	4	4				
6	6/15/18	BLB2	4	4				
7	6/14/18	BLB6	4	1	3		Y	
8	4/6/18	BLB1	4	4				

+ = Some gear adjustments require more time than is available during site visits. Participants acknowledge any issues and are committed to resolving them.

*FC = Fully compliant

**NC = Non-compliance

ACTION 2	Tow the Time Campaign
Reference:	G.U.L.F. SBR 7.2.2 (d), 7.2.2 (g)(iii), 7.6.9 (a)(i,ii,iii), 8.5.1 (a), 12.10(c) MSC Principle 2 - bycatch; endangered, threatened, and protected species; ecosystem
G.U.L.F. and Louisiana Sea Grant developed outreach materials to increase awareness and compliance with current tow time regulations for skimmer trawls. Participants agree to work with skimmer vessel captains to ensure that tow times are strictly adhered to unless skimmer nets have TEDs installed. Information about Tow the Time Campaign can be found at http://www.laseagrant.org/outreach/projects/tow-the-time/ .	



PROGRESS (UPDATED 9.27.2018)

Date	Activity #	Action	Participants
July 2018		GULF participated in a meeting to develop solutions to certification challenges regarding federal bycatch data	GULF
April to June 2018	#1	Conducted gear checks on eight vessels	GULF
January 2017		Public Comment meeting for proposed rule requiring TEDs in skimmer trawls.	all
December 2016	#2	NOAA published a Draft EIS and proposed rule to eliminate tow times and require TEDs in skimmers, butterfly, and wing nets. MAP Committee members will continue to encourage tow time compliance until new rule is finalized.	all
November 2016	#2	Distributed Tow Time Stickers To Sea Pearl	Sea Pearl
April 2016	#2	Distributed Tow Time Stickers to ADCNR	all

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