

Louisiana Shrimp FIP Interim Work Plan August 2015-January 2016

Current Participants: Gulf Island Shrimp; Paul Piazza & Son, Inc.

Status of the Fishery: The Louisiana shrimp fishery harvests brown and white shrimp in Louisiana state territorial waters and federal waters in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 67% of landings occur in state waters within 3 nautical miles of shore. 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. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) manages the fishery within state waters.

The primary gear types used in the Louisiana fishery are otter trawls and skimmer trawls. Butterfly nets and cast nets are also sometimes used, with butterfly nets harvesting approximately 3% of catch, and only a small number of documented landings by cast net. These are the only legal gear types allowed by Louisiana and federal regulations. The primary gear offshore is otter trawl, the dominant gear inshore is skimmer trawl. Skimmer trawls and butterfly nets are only 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, USCG, and LDWF. Skimmer trawls and butterfly nets 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 Louisiana; however, many fishermen in state waters do pull BRDs (recent research indicates that approximate 45% of skimmer trawls pull BRDs), and fishermen in Louisiana are allowed to retain bycatch species for sale or personal consumption within regulatory requirements for those species.

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

Initial sustainability issues identified (taken from previous work plan):

- Lack of publically available information on the status, management, and ecosystem impacts within Louisiana's jurisdiction
- In federal waters, bycatch ratios are high in comparison to other US trawl fisheries
- Stock statuses of most frequent bycatch species are unknown
- Observer coverage is low (1-2%)
- TED compliance rate has fluctuated close to the required levels in recent years
- Recent research suggests that compliance with tow time regulations is low and Kemp's ridley turtle captures have been documented

In 2010, a FIP was announced for the Louisiana shrimp fishery led by the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP). A public work plan for the fishery was finalized in November of 2012 with the following goals:

1. Create a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the shrimp fishery management and monitoring in state waters.
2. Release information on sea turtle interactions in state waters.
3. Publish information on state fishery management systems.
4. Release information on fishery enforcement including summarized compliance and enforcement data.

As of August 2015, all of these actions have been completed. The Louisiana shrimp FMP is posted on the LDWF website, available at

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/page/37762-fishery-management-plans-marine/shrimpfmp7-27-15.pdf>.

Information on sea turtle interactions, state fishery management systems, and fishery enforcement data are included in the Louisiana shrimp FMP, and can also be found on the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force (STF) website at <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/fishing/meetings>.

SFP has handed leadership of the FIP to the Audubon Nature Institute's Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries Program (G.U.L.F.) as a regional group able to work closely with industry members in Louisiana to further enhance the sustainability of the fishery. The G.U.L.F. program develops Marine Advancement Plans (MAPs), which are FIPs tailored to the Gulf of Mexico region. MAPs are designed to engage both industry and management within each fishery to address the main sustainability principles (stock status/harvest rates, bycatch and ecosystem impacts, and governance), as well as social and economic concerns of the fishery.

Due to the significant changes in the fishery noted above, a new assessment is needed before a new formal work plan can be developed. This document serves as an interim document to track current actions during the assessment and work plan development process.

Interim Work Plan:

1. Reassessment of fishery:
 - o MSC Pre-Assessment
 - o Audubon G.U.L.F. FAO based pre-assessment
2. Stakeholder engagement:
 - o Industry scoping to determine potential new participants and industry needs
3. Plan stakeholder meeting to develop new work plan based on assessment results

Ongoing activities:

1. Both current participants (Gulf Island Shrimp and Paul Piazza & Son, Inc.) continue to participate in the activities of the SFP Shrimp Supplier Roundtable. <https://www.sustainablefish.org/fisheries-improvement/shrimp-and-lobster/gom-shrimp-supplier-roundtable>
2. Continued gear tuning. Compliance with TED and BRD regulations requires ongoing upkeep and FIP participants agree to continue to work with harvesters to ensure that gear is properly tuned through regular courtesy checks by Texas Sea Grant or NOAA Gear Monitoring Team.
3. Tow the Time campaign. The G.U.L.F. and Louisiana Sea Grant have developed outreach materials to increase awareness and compliance with current tow time regulations for skimmer trawls. <http://www.laseagrant.org/outreach/projects/tow-the-time/>

Progress:

Task 1:

- On September 14, 2015, current FIP stakeholders and LDWF requested that the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force contract a new MSC pre-assessment for the Louisiana shrimp fishery. The STF approved this request and LDWF contracted an accredited third party assessment group to complete an updated MSC pre-assessment report.
- At the same time, FIP participants and LDWF requested a Sustainability Benchmarking Report from the Audubon G.U.L.F. program using FAO guidelines, which is also verified by a third party certification body.
- Both pre-assessment reports are currently underway and are expected to be completed by December 2015.
- At the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force meeting in Houma on December 9th, 2015, LDWF informed the Shrimp Task Force that a draft of each report had been received and that each report was in the final review and revision stage. Both reports will be finalized before the end of year and distributed to the Shrimp Task Force for review.
- The next Shrimp Task Force meeting will be held in January 2016 (exact date TBD, between the 15th-25th)

Task 2:

- December 9, 2015 Update to Louisiana Shrimp Task Force on the current status and actions of the FIP.
- Informal discussions continue with several Louisiana shrimp industry members interested in joining the FIP as it moves into the next stage.

Task 3:

- Current FIP participants plan to meet during the final week of January 2016, after the Shrimp Task Force reviews and releases the results of the pre-assessments. Date TBD pending finalized date of the Shrimp Task Force.