

Audubon Nature Institute



G.U.L.F.

—Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries—

Mississippi Shrimp Summary Action Plan Marine Advancement Plan (MAP)

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Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

About Marine Advancement Plans

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).

G.U.L.F. adapted market-accepted models of FIPs by incorporating assessments conducted using the FAO CCRF and have called them **Marine Advancement Plans (MAPs)**. 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
 - Mississippi 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)
 - Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR)



Current Participants



Status of the Fishery

The Mississippi shrimp fishery primarily harvests brown (*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*) and white shrimp (*Litopenaeus setiferus*) in Mississippi state territorial waters and federal waters in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico. Total shrimp harvest landed in Mississippi in 2015 was 10.2 million pounds with a dockside value of \$11.5 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 Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) manages the fishery within state waters.

The primary gear types used in the Mississippi fishery are otter trawls and skimmer trawls. Butterfly nets and cast nets are also legal gear in Mississippi and sometimes used but landings from these gear types are 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 Mississippi state waters; however, many fishermen in state waters do pull BRDs, with recent research indicating that approximate 45% of skimmer trawls pull BRDs. Fishermen in Mississippi 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.

G.U.L.F. completed a Sustainability Benchmarking Report in September 2015 to assess the current status of the Mississippi 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 information regarding use of BRDs in state waters is limited
- Mississippi 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.	

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/ .	



Example of Tow the Time Decal

ACTION 3	Develop a Mississippi Shrimp Task Force
Reference:	Industry recommendations, G.U.L.F. SBR - 7.1.2(a, b)
<p>Participants agree to work with MS shrimp industry members and MDMR to develop a task force with representatives from each area and each aspect of the industry (skimmer and otter trawl fishermen, dealers, processors, biologists and managers).</p> <p>Update - Due to lack of MCMR interest, MAP Committee determined that best path is to engage the Commission informally and update on progress of project. Should need for industry task force arise in future, MAP Committee will support formation and continue to be engaged.</p>	

ACTION 4	Develop a Bycatch Management Plan
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
<p>Participants agree to work with MDMR to develop a bycatch management plan for state waters and agree to work with vessels to encourage use of BRDs on vessels within state waters.</p> <p>Task 1 - Determine voluntary BRD use through industry surveys.</p> <p>Task 2 - Determine current level of bycatch utilization vs discard.</p> <p>Task 3 - Engage NOAA regarding including BRD compliance on TED boarding form.</p>	

ACTION 5	Explore Traceability Systems
Reference:	
<p>At a committee meeting on 1.11.17, participants expressed interest in exploring traceability to differentiate and highlight domestic product.</p>	



PROGRESS (UPDATED 3.2.2017)

Date	Activity #	Action	Participants
April 2016	#2	Distributed Tow Time Stickers to MSCFU board for distribution to members	MSCFU
August 2016		M&M/Biloxi Freezing joined Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Gulf of Mexico Supplier Roundtable	M&M Shrimp
December 2016	#3	Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources met to vote on establishment of Mississippi Shrimp Task Force. Motion did not carry.	MSCFU, M&M Shrimp
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.	MSCFU, M&M Shrimp, Gulf Pride
January 2017		Committee meeting to update Action Plan.	MSCFU, M&M Shrimp, Gulf Pride
January 2017	#3	Due to lack of interest from MCMR, determined that best path forward is to engage the Commission informally and update on progress of project. Should need for industry task force arise in future, MAP Committee will support formation and continue to be engaged.	
January 2017	#2	Participants attended NOAA Scoping meetings on proposed rule for TEDs in skimmers.	MSCFU, M&M Shrimp, Gulf Pride
February 2017	#2	Participants coordinated an educational workshop for industry members to further discuss the proposed rule and solicit public comment from industry.	MSCFU

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