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## THE PURPOSE

The **Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC)** is an organization of the five states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida), whose coastal waters are the Gulf of Mexico. This compact, authorized under Public Law 81-66, was signed by the representatives of the Governors of the five Gulf States on July 16, 1949, at Mobile, Alabama. It has as its principal objective the conservation, development, and full utilization of the fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico, to provide food, employment, income, and recreation to the people of these United States.

## COMMISSIONERS

Fifteen Commissioners, three from each of the five Gulf States, work to set policy, approve GSMFC's budget and provide direction for GSMFC activities. Of these voting members, one-third are appointed by the state legislatures, one-third are private citizens with a knowledge of and interest in marine fisheries who are appointed by the states' governors, and the remaining third are state fishery resource agency directors. The offices of chairman, first vice-chairman and second vice-chairman of the GSMFC are rotated annually among the states.

One of the most important functions of the GSMFC is to serve as a forum for the discussion of various problems and programs of marine management, industry, research, etc., and to develop a coordinated policy to address those issues for the betterment of the resource and all who are concerned. The annual meeting of the GSMFC is held each year during the third week in the month of October. The spring meeting is held each year during the second week in the month of March. Upon written request of a majority of the Commissioners of each state from three or more states, the chairman shall call a special meeting of the GSMFC. The regular meetings are rotated among the states in order that the GSMFC may better familiarize themselves with the fisheries and coastal areas of the entire Gulf of Mexico.

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## STAFF

Located in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, the GSMFC staff administers the GSMFC's programs; participates in public forums and other councils, commissions and committees; and inter-regional efforts. When the GSMFC is joined by the Atlantic States and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commissions on national fisheries issues, a 24 state voice is raised in unison to foster the needs of coastal fisheries.

## PROGRAMS

Since the 1970s, the GSMFC has had the responsibility of administrative support and coordination of the Gulf State-Federal Fisheries Management Program. This program was designed to develop management plans for transboundary stocks that migrate freely through state and federal boundaries. In 1986 that program was replaced with the **Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program**. This program promotes interjurisdictional



fisheries research and management among the Gulf States through the cooperative development of fishery management plans (FMPs). The states are requested to implement FMP recommendations through consistent regulations wherever possible, and to address cooperative research and data needs. Currently, the GSMFC has completed FMPs for menhaden, Spanish mackerel, striped bass, blue crab, oyster, black drum and striped mullet.

The **Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP)** is a state/federal/university program for the collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent data and information in the southeastern United States. The overall program consists of three operational components:



SEAMAP-Gulf of Mexico (begun in 1981); SEAMAP-South Atlantic (implemented in 1983); and SEAMAP-Caribbean (formed in 1988). The SEAMAP-Gulf component is coordinated through the GSMFC. SEAMAP resource surveys include the Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Spring Plankton Survey, Spring Reef Fish Survey, Summer Shrimp/Groundfish Survey, Fall Plankton Survey, and environmental surveys. Publications of the SEAMAP program include environmental and biological atlases of the Gulf of Mexico for each year from 1983 through 1993.

The **Sport Fish Restoration Program** was established by the GSMFC in 1987, under the authority of the U.S.



Fish and Wildlife Service's Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program, through the administrative portion of that program's enabling legislation. The primary goal of the program is to provide coordination of the recreational fisheries programs in the five Gulf States. There are four major

categories of programs which are addressed, including anadromous fish restoration, artificial reefs, fisheries data, and fisheries management. Efforts focused on striped bass restoration through the GSMFC since 1985 have resulted in the development of an FMP, including a regulatory amendment, establishment of sampling guidelines for all life stages of striped bass, and a strategic plan for restoration which encompasses regulatory, habitat, research, and enhancement issues. Currently, the program is establishing a data base for the distribution of genotypes of striped bass across the Gulf coast. The primary focus of the artificial reef program has been to establish, through the assistance of the former Sport Fishing Institute's Artificial Reef Development Center, a regional data base on all permitted artificial reef sites in the Gulf of Mexico. A publication summarizing much of that information is available from the GSMFC office.

Perhaps the most exciting work accomplished through the program is the review and evaluation of existing recreational fishery data collection and management programs in the southeastern U.S. From this effort has

come the **Southeast Recreational Fisheries Information Network [RecFIN(SE)]**. This program has established an organizational structure through which all recreational fishery data collection and management programs in the southeast will be coordinated, striving to develop compatible methodologies and procedures for collecting and managing data, and making the programs more responsive to today's fishery management needs. The success of the RecFIN(SE) has lead to the establishment of the **Commercial Fisheries Information Network (ComFIN)**, which provides coordination for commercial fishery data collection and management programs in the Southeast Region.

The purpose of these state-federal programs is to collect, manage, and disseminate statistical data and information on the recreational and commercial fisheries of the Region. The programs are the result of combined efforts of program partners which include states and territories of the Region, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the South Atlantic, Gulf, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils, and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions.

## IN CONCLUSION

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission looks forward to continuing to serve the needs of our member states regarding the management and utilization of the living marine resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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*Serving the Marine Resources of the  
Gulf of Mexico since  
1949*

### Member States:

Alabama  
Florida  
Louisiana  
Mississippi  
Texas

A Compact Established by P.L. 81-66