



GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

2404 Government Street, Ocean Springs MS 39564

(228) 875-5912 • (228) 875-6604 Fax

www.gsmfc.org

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update of the Gulf of Mexico Gulf Menhaden Stock Assessment (GDAR02)

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida – The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) has completed an update of the stock assessment of the Gulf menhaden population in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The regional assessment has been completed through the GSMFC's Gulf Data, Assessment, and Review (GDAR) Program as GDAR02. Each of the five state marine resource agencies provided the necessary data and expertise to develop abundance indices for use in stock assessment model. This assessment provides an update to the 2013 Gulf menhaden (*Brevoortia patronus*) benchmark for the Gulf of Mexico (SEDAR32A). The assessment was updated with recent data from 2012-2015. The final stock assessment report is available on the GSMFC's website at:

<http://www.gsmfc.org/publications/GSMFC%20Number%20254.pdf> or <http://tinyurl.com/GDAR02>

The stock status for the updated assessment remained the same as the stock status from the benchmark assessment (SEDAR 32A). The updated model was the Beaufort Assessment Model (BAM), a statistical catch-age formulation. The model indicates that fishing mortality rates decreased during the 1990s and has remained at a low level through today. Additionally, spawning stock biomass (measured as fecundity) has increased steadily since the 1990s and remains at a high level. In summary, the update concludes that the Gulf of Mexico Gulf menhaden stock is *not experiencing overfishing and is not overfished*. The results of GDAR02 suggest a greater increase in population biomass and spawning stock biomass exists in the Gulf of Mexico than the benchmark assessment (SEDAR 32A) generated.

The GSMFC's Menhaden Advisory Committee (MAC) recommends that the next benchmark assessment occur in two years (2018), that new data be further explored and considered, and that data currently being used be re-evaluated.

Editor - For More Information Contact:
Mr. Steven J. VanderKooy
(svanderkooy@gsmfc.org)
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
2404 Government Street
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
(228) 875-5912

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) was established by an act of Congress (P.L. 81-66) in 1949 as a compact of the five Gulf States. Its charge is

“to promote better utilization of the fisheries, marine, shell and anadromous, of the seaboard of the Gulf of Mexico, by the development of a joint program for the promotion and protection of such fisheries and the prevention of the physical waste of the fisheries from any cause.”

The GSMFC is composed of three members from each of the five Gulf States; the head of the marine resource agency of each state, a member of the state legislature, and a citizen appointed by the governor. The GSMFC is empowered to make recommendations to the governors and legislatures of the five Gulf States on action regarding programs helpful to the management of the fisheries. The states do not relinquish any of their rights or responsibilities in regulating their own fisheries by being members of the GSMFC. Recommendations to the states are based on scientific studies made by experts employed by state and federal resource agencies and advice from law enforcement officials and the commercial and recreational fishing industries. The GSMFC is also authorized to consult with and advise the proper administrative agencies of the member states regarding fishery conservation problems. In addition, the GSMFC advises the U.S. Congress and may testify on legislation and marine policies that affect the Gulf States. One of the most important functions of the GSMFC is to serve as a forum for the discussion of various problems, issues, and programs concerning marine management.