PRESS RELEASE

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REGIONAL BLUE CRAB MANAGEMENT PLAN DRAFT AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida – The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) is in the process of completing a revision to the Blue Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, United States: A Regional Management Plan - 2001 Revision. The draft 2015 management plan is a cooperative effort on the part of the five Gulf States to describe the blue crab populations within the territorial seas of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and the fisheries they support. Final approval of the management plan will be considered by the Commission following the public comment period.

The plan is a comprehensive document of the biology of the blue crab (Callinectes sapidus) and includes a description of the fisheries as well as discussion on the distribution, habitat, and genetics of this species in the Gulf. Management authorities, their laws, regulations, and policies are included as well as the sociology and economics of the fishery.

The GSMFC is seeking public comments on this draft management plan. An electronic copy is available for review at the GSMFC website as an Adobe PDF document http://tinyurl.com/BlueCrab2015. Comments are requested electronically by email or in writing by Thursday, April 30, 2015 to ensure that they are summarily included in the GSMFC deliberations. Please send written comments to the attention of Mr. Steven J. VanderKooy at the GSMFC office at Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, 2404 Government St., Ocean Springs, MS 39564, or email comments to svanderkooy@gsmfc.org.
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.