TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

FISHERIES ENFORCEMENT ALONG THE TX/MX BORDER

“THE TEXAS NAVY”
www.tpwd.texas.gov/warden
NOAA Fisheries: Seafood Import Monitoring Program
Driving Factors for U.S. Action
Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud threaten valuable natural resources that are critical to global food security and put law-abiding fishers and seafood producers, here in the U.S. and abroad, at a disadvantage.

- Presidential Memorandum: June 2014
  - NOAA and its U.S. Government partner agencies are directed to report on recommendations for the implementation of a comprehensive framework of integrated programs to combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud that emphasizes areas of greatest need.

- 15 Recommendations released: December 2014
  - Recommendation #14 & 15 - first phase of a risk-based traceability program to track seafood from point of harvest to entry into U.S. commerce.

- Proposed Rule for a Seafood Import Monitoring Program released: January 1, 2018
  - January 1, 2018 is the mandatory compliance date for most priority species included in the rule.

- Released Action Plan calling for identification of Species Vulnerable to IUU Fishing and Seafood Fraud and Implementation: March 2015
  - Ongoing public engagement through public meetings, webinars, Federal Register notices, and demarches.

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The Seafood Import Monitoring Program establishes permitting, data reporting and recordkeeping requirements for the importation of certain priority fish and fish products that have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to IUU fishing and/or seafood fraud.

Key Points You Should Know:

1. The rule establishing the Seafood Import Monitoring Program applies only to seafood entering the U.S. from a foreign country. The importer of record will be required to keep records regarding the chain of custody of the fish or fish product from harvest to point of entry into U.S.

2. The data collected will allow these priority species of seafood to be traced from the point of entry into U.S. commerce back to the point of harvest or production to verify that it was lawfully harvested or produced.

3. The collection of harvest and landing information for these priority seafood species will be accomplished through International Trade Data System (ITDS) reporting.

4. The information collected under this program is confidential.

5. The rule also applies to re-imported product of priority species originally harvested in the U.S.
Seafood Import Monitoring Program: Information to be Collected/Reported

**Harvesting or Producing Entity**
- Name and flag state of harvesting vessel(s)
- Evidence of authorization to fish (permit or license number)
- Unique vessel identifier (when available)
- Type(s) of fishing gear used
- Name(s) of farm or aquaculture facility

**Fish – What, When and Where**
- Species of fish – Aquatic Sciences Fishery Information System (ASFIS) number
- Landing date(s)
- Point(s) of first landing
- Name of entity(s) to which the fish was landed or delivered
- Product form(s) at time of landing including quantity and weight of product
- Area(s) of wild-capture or aquaculture harvest

**13 PRIORITY SPECIES**
- Abalone
- Atlantic cod
- Blue crab (Atlantic)
- Dolphinfish (Mahi Mahi)
- Grouper
- King crab (red)
- Pacific cod
- Red snapper
- Sea cucumber
- Sharks
- Shrimp
- Swordfish
- Albacore, bigeye, skipjack, bluefin and yellowfin tuna

**Importer of Record**
- Name, affiliation and contact information
- NOAA Fisheries issued international fisheries trade permit (IFTP) number
- Importer of record is responsible for keeping records regarding the chain of custody (above)
- Information on any transshipment of product (declarations by harvesting/carrier vessels, bills of lading)
- Records on processing, re-processing, and commingling of product
PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

- TPWD
- NOAA OLE
- CUSTOMS OFO
- USFW
- FDA
PORT OF ENTRY INSPECTIONS
INSPECTIONS CONTINUED
ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

- VEHICLES INSPECTED – 6
- CITATIONS- 52
- WARNINGS- 2
- RESOURCE SEIZED- 255 RED SNAPPER
SEIZURES
ILLEGAL FISHING ALONG THE TEXAS/MEXICO BORDER
BORDER WATERS OF TEXAS

- Lake Amistad
- Gulf Of Mexico
- Falcon Lake
- Rio Grande River
TYPES OF ILLEGAL FISHING

• Gill Netting
• Long Lining
• Crabbing
• Shrimping
• Cast netting
GILL NETS
CRABBING
CAST NETTING
ILLEGAL FISHING ALONG THE TX/MX BORDER

ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS
MTOG Game Wardens teamed up with USCG Station SPI personnel in response to heavy “lancha” traffic in Texas waters; north of the maritime boundary line and south of South Padre Island. The team was able to successfully remove and seize 3,511 feet of gill-net set by fishermen out of Mexico before further damage could be done to the states natural resources.

At time of removal the net contained:

- 139 Sharks
- 67 Spanish Mackerel
- 358 Menhaden
- 1 Spotted Sea Trout
- 1 Crab
On 9-24-18 MTOG members launched the SafeBoat out of SPI and patrolled the Gulf of Mexico for the enforcement of shrimping regulations. After several boardings and prior to returning to the dock the team came across illegal fishing gear.

The team successfully removed 2,650ft of gill net and 300ft of long-line that was illegal set just off the Boca Chica beach.
USCG Station SPI alerted MTOG members of possible illegal gill net in the Gulf of Mexico.

The team, who was already patrolling nearby, responded to the area and removed two sets of gill net from Texas waters totaling 7,920ft of illegal fishing gear. Among the species caught in the nets were: Shark, Spanish Mackerel, Jack Cervalle, Stingray, and Blue Crab.
On Saturday August 11th Cameron County Game Wardens Colby Hensz, Juan Rosendo, and David Stokes were patrolling the Rio Grande River near the Gulf of Mexico when they observed a fisherman running gill net on the US side of the river. The Game Wardens were able to box the subject's boat in, arrest the subject, and retrieve the other nets the fisherman had already set in US waters.

Earlier in the same week, Texas Game Wardens had already patrolled the Rio Grande river near the mouth. On that day they removed 10 gill nets, and 8 crab traps. The Wardens were able to release numerous species including Snook, Red Drum and Mangrove Snapper.
TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
SPECIAL OPERATIONS - TAC/OPS

OPERATION GULF SENTINEL
JANUARY 15-19, 2018
OVERVIEW

• Texas Game Wardens' assigned to the Marine Tactical Operations Group and Region 8 District 5 personnel assigned to the 65’ Cpt. Williams offshore patrol vessel were deployed for 5 consecutive days to conduct Water Safety and Commercial Fisheries Enforcement on all vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and the Lower Rio Grande River. These are areas where illegal fishing activity is known to occur and where illegal fishing vessels are commonly spotted.

• The intent of this operation was to ensure that all state laws are being adhered to during and around the operation of any Texas Parks and Wildlife regulated commercial activity.
15 JAN 2018

• Operation begins

• Day one patrol slated for Gulf of Mexico

• 1 Mexican Longline seized totaling 5,280 feet

• A total of 110 Nautical Miles covered during patrol
16 JAN 2018

• Transitioned to Rio Grande River in Cameron County near Boca Chica

• Several Mexican Commercial Fisherman encountered working gill nets

• 7 Gill Nets totaling 2,100 feet seized on Texas side of river

• 36 Nautical Miles patrolled
17 JAN 2018

- Continued patrol of Rio Grande River
- Several Mexican Commercial Fisherman encountered working gill nets
- 12 Gill Nets totaling 3,600 feet seized on Texas side of river
- 11 Nautical Miles patrolled
18 JAN 2018

- Continued patrol of Rio Grande River
- 49 Gill Nets totaling 14,700 feet seized on Texas side of river
- 56 Nautical Miles patrolled
Operation Totals

- 1 Gulf of Mexico Longline
- 68 Rio Grande River Gill Nets
- 25,680 feet of illegal fishing gear. Approximately 4.9 Miles
- 103 Rio Grande River Nautical Miles patrolled
- 110 Gulf of Mexico Nautical Miles patrolled
A POSITIVE SHIFT ON FALCON LAKE

- **January 2011-July 2014**
  - Vessels Seized - 80

- **January 2013-July 2014**
  - Vessels Seized - 33

- **January 2013-July 2014**
  - Gill Net Seized =113,520 ft.
  - Hoop Nets Seized - 35

**CURRENT ACTIVITY**

INCREASED RESOURCES IN THIS AREA BY STATE AND FEDERAL PARTNERS HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE. ILLEGAL FISHING VESSELS AND GEAR ARE NOW RARELY ENCOUNTERED
ILLEGAL FISHING ACTIVITY IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

• Increased resources in this area by State and Federal Partners have been effective in reducing illegal fishing activity conducted by Mexican Fishing Vessels in the Gulf of Mexico within the Texas State waters. Although illegal fishing by Mexican Fishing Vessels has been reduced in Texas State Waters, illegal fishing activity has not been reduced in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ off of Texas.

• A shift in effort by these illegal fishing vessels has occurred. The target fishing areas are now mostly outside of State Waters and now the majority of the fish targeted are red snapper.
TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT AND THE U.S. COAST GUARD ARE CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING MULTIPLE CASES INVOLVING ILLEGAL FISHING ACTIVITIES ALONG THE TEXAS/MEXICO BORDER. THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE ILLEGAL LONG LINING, Gill NETTING, CRABBING, HOOK NETTING, SHRIMPING, ETC. THE GULF OF MEXICO, RIO GRANDE RIVER, FALCON LAKE, AND AMISTAD LAKE ARE INCLUDED IN THE AFFECTED AREAS. THESE ACTS OF ILLEGAL AND UNREPORTED FISHING ADVERSELY AFFECT BOTH THE RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRIES. ANY INFORMATION RELATED TO SUCH ILLEGAL FISHING ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THE TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT OR THE U.S. COAST GUARD.