

# Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Operations Plan

2013-2014



October 2012

GSMFC No. 208

# Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

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**GULF OF MEXICO  
COOPERATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT  
OPERATIONS PLAN**

**2013-2014**

by the

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Law Enforcement Committee

and

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
Law Enforcement Advisory Panel

edited by  
Steve VanderKooy

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October 2012

A publication of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award Number NA10NMF4070006. This paper is funded by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA or any of its subagencies.



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## **Introduction**

Current state and federal regulatory approaches require development and implementation of concurrent law enforcement strategies. Concerns over ocean ecosystems, living marine resources, coral reefs, coastal habitat conservation, and international fisheries have continued to escalate law enforcement responsibilities throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The foundations of fishery management plans are dependent upon sound regulations and the ability to maintain acceptable levels of compliance.

Understanding the complexities of fisheries management regulations by the public and user groups requires enhanced interaction and communication by enforcement. Our role as law enforcement is to provide guidance to ensure effectiveness, consistency, and enforceability of proposed and adopted regulations in the fishery management process. Effective education and outreach programs by enforcement will increase public trust and awareness, maximizing voluntary compliance and identifying illegal activity.

This long-term *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Operations Plan* maximizes the effectiveness of interjurisdictional and international fisheries enforcement. This is accomplished by identifying priorities, developing comprehensive planning efforts, and conducting Gulf-wide operations.

## **Vision Statement**

*Effect regulations which enhance, protect, and conserve ocean ecosystems and living marine resources to increase compliance throughout the Gulf of Mexico for the safe use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

## **Mission Statement**

*Law enforcement is dedicated to providing professional guidance and expertise to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We are committed to improving enforceability and regulatory compliance through cooperative efforts that enhance, protect, and conserve shared living marine resources and their supporting ecosystems throughout the Gulf of Mexico.*



## Goals and Objectives

### **GOAL 1: Provide professional law enforcement expertise throughout all rule-making processes.**

*Professional law enforcement expertise and input are integral to the development, promulgation, and implementation of clear and effective regulations.*

**Objective 1.1** – Increase participation in the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) processes.

- Attend LEC and LEAP meetings in conjunction with GSMFC and GMFMC meetings.
- Conduct a LEAP meeting during GMFMC meeting to increase visibility and discourse on enforcement issues when feasible.
- Conduct a summer work session to continue strategic and operations plan activities and opportunistic discussion of enforcement hot topics.
- Evaluate current GSMFC and GMFMC regulatory recommendations/actions.
- Assist in the development of interjurisdictional state and federal management plans.
- Provide timely and substantive comment on GSMFC and GMFMC actions.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will convene monthly conference calls as needed and request discussion items from the membership (upcoming proposals and law enforcement issues) and track previous agenda items to ensure completion.

Task 2. Meeting agendas will be developed based upon monthly conference calls, upcoming law enforcement topics, and issues pertinent to GSMFC and GMFMC business.

Task 3. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will consult the members and coordinate input to the GSMFC and/or GMFMC on enforceability of regulatory/management issues pertinent to FMP development and implementation.

Task 4. Work sessions should be held, as needed, to continue strategic planning, implementation, and review of yearly enforcement operations. Work sessions would allow continued JEA Program discussion and opportunistic coordination and discussion of regional operations.

Task 5. Meetings will take place with GSMFC/GMFMC staff, NOAA staff, and other interested representatives to discuss law enforcement data pertinent to regulatory consideration and provide recommendations.

Task 6. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will consult the members and coordinate input to NOAA on enforceability of regulatory/management issues pertinent to NOAA Secretary of Commerce plans.

Task 7. The LEC/LEAP will continue to meet in conjunction with the GSMFC spring and fall annual meetings.

### **New Task**

Task 1. Fund the LEAP state representative to attend all other GMFMC meetings when in their respective home state.

**Objective 1.2** – Strengthen enforcement’s relationships with the GSMFC and GMFMC.

- Support communication between enforcement and GSMFC commissioners and GMFMC members.
- Provide bi-annual operating plans and interim/annual reports.
- Act as liaison between all law enforcement agencies and GSMFC commissioners and GMFMC members.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The chairmen of the LEC and the GSMFC staff will request the current state rules and regulations for the production of the GSMFC’s *Law Summary - Rules and Regulations* which is distributed electronically.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will provide information, guidance, and representation between all law enforcement agencies and the GSMFC/GMFMC when requested.

Task 3. The chairmen of the LEC and the GSMFC staff will request the current state rules and regulations for the production of the GSMFC’s *Rules and Regulations: Officers’ Pocket Guide* which is printed and distributed to all fisheries officers on the water.

Task 5. LEAP members will make an effort to contact their department representatives on the GMFMC and review issues coming before the Council and debrief with them after Council meetings.

### **New Tasks**

Task 1. The GMFMC staff will ensure that the current GMFMC Standard Operating Plan (SOP) is distributed to the members of the LEAP.

**Objective 1.3** – Increase participation in Secretary of Commerce management plans.

- Provide timely and substantive comments on Secretarial management plans.

### **New Task**

Task 1. The GMFMC staff liaison will provide background material as Secretarial management plans are being developed.

Task 2. Identify the plan coordinators and ensure the LEC/LEAP is added to the distribution list for comments.

Task 3. Provide comment to the plan coordinator at the appropriate time to ensure enforceability of regulatory/management issues pertinent to NOAA Secretary of Commerce plans.

**Objective 1.4** – Provide guidance and input on all regulations to ensure enforceability.

- Provide guidance to modify ineffective regulations
- Provide guidance to identify and prevent unnecessary regulations.
- Promote statutory and regulatory consistency among all state and federal agencies.
- Identify enforcement workload impact and cost-analysis resulting from regulations and changes.
- Identify tools and technologies necessary to provide effective enforcement.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will meet with the GSMFC/GMFMC to discuss enforceability and provide data pertinent to rules and regulations and proposed changes.

Task 2. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP, with the support of its membership, will provide oral and written comments for the record, when appropriate, at state and federal hearings. Members may provide independent comment at those hearings, when appropriate.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will review for consistency state/federal laws and regulations applicable to interjurisdictional fisheries and/or relating to interstate transportation of seafood.

Task 4. The LEC/LEAP will, as appropriate, participate in relevant state and federal legislative agendas.

Task 5. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will place current legislative topics on the monthly conference call agenda for discussion.

Task 6. The LEC/LEAP will identify existing regulatory enforcement concerns and report to the GSMFC and GMFMC.

Task 7. The LEC/LEAP will research and discuss enforcement tools and technologies as a continuing agenda item at semi-annual LEC/LEAP meetings.

Task 8. The LEC/LEAP will provide feedback to the GSMFC and GMFMC on enforcement issues due to ineffective or inconsistent regulations and include these issues in the semi-annual meetings of the LEC and LEAP.

Task 9. The LEC/LEAP will encourage consistent enforcement of federal and state requirements under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act.

### **New Tasks**

Task 1. Establish a process within the GMFMC for the LEAP to review existing federal fisheries regulations that may no longer be applicable or may be in need of rewriting.

Task 2. Establish a process to provide input on the cost analyses associated with enforcement of proposed regulations to the GMFMC to avoid unfunded mandates or liabilities.

### **GOAL 2: Develop and implement effective outreach programs.**

*A working partnership between state and federal partners and the public is essential to maximize resources in order to achieve Gulf-wide regulatory compliance.*

**Objective 2.1** – Improve community-oriented policing programs (COPPs).

- Continue to implement and establish joint programs to increase contact and law enforcement presence among user groups.
- Continue to publicize different state and federal actions through mass media and social networking.
- Utilize user group feedback to evaluate enforcement performance.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will review and evaluate the means to combine successful programs and program elements into current state and federal efforts.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will explore options and mechanisms to establish joint programs between state/state and state/federal agencies.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will review successful public affairs programming in other local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies for potential application to LEC/LEAP efforts.

Task 4. The LEC/LEAP will identify and develop methods to obtain user group feedback (including surveys) on enforcement performance.

Task 5. The LEC/LEAP will explore documentation of community-oriented policing events conducted by enforcement officers which encompass regulatory and management information.

Task 6. The LEC/LEAP will identify other forms of fishery education and public outreach.

**Objective 2.2** – Promote Gulf-wide fisheries information programs.

- Identify and develop web-based services such as social media and smart-phone technology for fishermen and the public to easily obtain current state/federal regulations.
- Encourage the GSMFC, GMFMC, and NOAA to develop mechanisms to compile up-to-date state/federal regulations into an easily accessible, understandable, multilingual format.

**Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. Pursue grant funding for law enforcement related public service announcements to engage, advise, and inform individuals, partners, communities, and industries to facilitate information flow, assure coordination and cooperation, and provide assistance in the use, evaluation, and application of information.

Task 2. Encourage the GMFMC and GSMFC to create mobile apps for Smartphones on fish identification, closed areas, and local/federal regulations.

**Objective 2.3** – Enhance awareness of the importance of state and federal prosecution to the successful adjudication of natural resource regulations.

- Continue outreach to prosecutors and litigators.
- Identify mechanisms to meet with prosecutors and litigators.

**Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP continues to identify relevant judicial entities involved in marine resource violation adjudication.

Task 2. NOAA General Counsel serves as a repository for briefs, case laws, etc. and receives state input.

**GOAL 3: Promote cooperative law enforcement partnerships.**

*Working partnerships are essential to maximize enforcement resources in order to promote Gulf-wide regulatory compliance.*

**Objective 3.1** – Maintain cooperative enforcement agreements (CEAs), joint enforcement agreements (JEAs), memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and reciprocal agreements across states and federal agencies.

- Whenever appropriate, provide comments in support of CEAs, JEAs, MOUs, and reciprocal agreements to state and federal representatives.
- Promote the streamlining of processing and tracking JEAs.
- Promote continuation of National JEA Working Group.
- Encourage JEA-related training for state enforcement personnel.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will provide input to the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) concerning methods to streamline JEAs.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will continue to work with NOAA OLE to develop standardized formulas (man hours, vessel hours, recreational/commercial contact, etc.) for JEAs.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will provide input and support to NOAA OLE concerning current allocation models.

Task 4. The LEC/LEAP will work to improve software for the JEA program to include consistency of data reporting, specific data elements, and vessel categories.

Task 5. The LEC/LEAP will work with NOAA OLE, to identify specific goals and milestones that must be met under the JEA Program.

Task 6. The LEC/LEAP will provide routine reporting to the GSMFC and GMFMC on past years' JEA activities for the whole Gulf through the LEC/LEAP reports at the annual fall meeting.

Task 7. The LEC/LEAP will investigate and develop a natural resource task force or 'officer sharing' program for joint operations and JEA patrols for better agency/agency cooperation and information sharing.

### **New Task**

Task 1. Develop a recognition/award program in each state for exceptional JEA officers.

Task 2. Distribute Louisiana's JEA electronic reporting app Gulf-wide.

***Objective 3.2*** – Identify state and federal programs supporting fisheries enforcement.

- Identify and enhance law enforcement equipment for states.
- Enhance communications among federal and state enforcement partners on Homeland Security issues.
- Enhance inter-operable communications among state and federal enforcement partners.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will identify and evaluate funding sources applicable to law enforcement training and equipment.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will develop additional 'shared' experience training between the states and the NOAA OLE agents.

**Objective 3.3** – Explore a uniform enforcement data collection and reporting system.

- Evaluate available technology.
- Identify funding sources.
- Analyze and distribute information.
- Promote the use of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and NLETS as a point source for natural resource violations and provide input to that system.
- Acquire the wireless ability to access this system in the field by enforcement officers in real time.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will research federal grants to support enforcement data collection and reporting.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will prioritize available technology for data collection based on job safety and job effectiveness.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will share specifications and vendor information on available data collection technology and equipment.

**Objective 3.4** – Coordinate law enforcement effort and evaluate observed compliance.

- Conduct state/federal strategic plan work sessions to evaluate progress and determine milestones.
- Conduct state/federal law enforcement meetings concerning joint Gulf-wide programs and operations.
- Ensure development of future law enforcement programs fisheries management plans.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will request funding and convene cooperative law enforcement strategic plan work sessions at times and locations acceptable to the membership.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will continue to work with the JEA software programmers and vendors to enhance the ability of the states to generate performance and activity reports from the JEA database easily.

**GOAL 4: Promote regulations to protect and enhance the health and sustainability of the ecosystem.**

*Ecosystem health and sustainability is the foundation for a viable living marine environment in the Gulf of Mexico. Regulations that manage, protect, and conserve the ecosystem are critical to maintain its health and sustainability now and in the future.*

**Objective 4.1** – Incorporate realistic compliance estimates into stock assessment models in support of ecosystem sustainability.

- Support the inclusion of law enforcement statistics and other information in stock assessments and biological opinions.
- Identify impacts of noncompliance to living marine resources.
- Identify and evaluate law enforcement strategies to address unique ecosystem enforcement challenges.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will provide recommendations and input when regulations are being developed in support of ecosystem management.

### **New Task**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will provide input through the GSMFC IJF Program Coordinator for inclusion and consideration of enforcement statistics in stock assessment efforts through the SEDAR and GDAR programs.

## **GOAL 5: Protect the American consumer.**

*Ensure the American consumer is receiving a legal and properly identified aquatic product regardless of where harvested.*

**Objective 5.1** – Ensure the integrity of imported fisheries products.

- Identify illegal fisheries products.
- Identify participants of illegal interstate trade.
- Support enhanced development of documentation for imported fisheries species.
- Work cooperatively with other state and federal law enforcement agencies to identify and apprehend traffickers in illegal international trade.

### **Continuing Task**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will continue to stay involved in the product substitution and relabeling issues.

**Objective 5.2** – Protect consumers regarding mislabeled or adulterated product.

- Work with partner agencies in using forensic tools to improve fisheries law enforcement capabilities.
- Identify persons who provide mislabeled or adulterated products.
- Support enhanced development of documentation for all marine species.



## **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will explore development and use of forensic technology in fisheries enforcement.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP members, in their respective states, will identify current forensic resources, laboratories, species-specific and other capabilities, and laboratory contact information.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will identify current documentation and procedure requirements used for importing marine species.

## **GOAL 6: Obtain funds to aid state and federal law enforcement agencies.**

*State and federal agencies do not have sufficient resources or assets to provide continuous support of state/federal marine resource enforcement operations.*

**Objective 6.1** – Explore and enhance federal grant and funding programs for law enforcement.

- Identify and evaluate law enforcement grant and funding programs.
- Promote adequate long-term funding for JEAs that takes into account increased operation costs at a minimum of the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) to maintain historical JEA patrol levels.

## **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will research, identify, track, and discuss grant and funding opportunities and resources for marine enforcement.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will discuss potential funding sources and identify appropriate processes to obtain funds.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will request GSMFC/GMFMC assistance in using their resources and expertise to seek funding for state law enforcement programs.

Task 4. The LEC/LEAP will arrange to meet with state and federal legislators and/or committees to request support for grant and funding initiatives, as appropriate.

Task 5. The LEC/LEAP members will initiate and maintain contact with each state's respective Congressional delegation or their aides to determine the status of potential enforcement issues.

## **New Task**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will pursue funding for law enforcement related public service announcements to engage, advise, and inform individuals, partners, communities, and industries to facilitate information flow, assure coordination and

cooperation, and provide assistance in the use, evaluation, and application of information.

**Objective 6.2** – Seek a long-term, dedicated source of funding/appropriations for the JEA program to support regulatory compliance initiatives in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Identify the positive performance of the JEA program.
- Evaluate the cost effectiveness of current federal funding in fisheries law enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Continuing Tasks**

Task 1. The LEC/LEAP will arrange to meet with state and federal legislators and/or committees to increase funding for state agencies.

Task 2. The LEC/LEAP will discuss additional workload indicators as a result of changes in U.S. Coast Guard fisheries enforcement resulting from Homeland Security issues.

Task 3. The LEC/LEAP will continue developing management strategies to include funding for personnel and vessels for offshore patrols.

Task 4. The LEC/LEAP will request the GSMFC and GMFMC to send letters in support of the JEAs to the appropriate federal partners or legislative delegates to highlight the need for secure, long-term funding/appropriations in support of JEA.

Task 5. The LEC/LEAP will request the GMFMC to identify increased JEA funding needs for enforcement when implementing new FMP regulations in order to prevent the lowering of work effort to existing FMPs currently under the JEA.

**Objective 6.3** – Obtain adequate funding for the strategic planning process and greater representation of the LEC and LEAP at GSMFC and GMFMC meetings.

- Seek funding from the GSMFC and GMFMC for the LEC and LEAP to attend the GSMFC spring and fall annual meetings.
- Fund the LEAP state representative to attend each of the GMFMC meetings when in their home state.

### **Continuing Task**

Task 1. The chairmen of the LEC/LEAP will request funding assistance from the GSMFC and GMFMC to conduct law enforcement meetings to accomplish the *Strategic Plan and the Operations Plan*. When possible, these meetings will be held in conjunction with other LEC/LEAP meetings.

**GOAL 7: The five states will work together for the short-term response and long-term recovery from the Deepwater Horizon Disaster and potential future disasters.**

- Evaluate the needs of officers responding to the disaster.
- Determine the effectiveness of large-scale closures due to disasters.
- Evaluate the cost of enforcing large-scale closures.

**Continuing Task**

Task 1. The LEC and LEAP need to have a critique of the BP disaster and the state responses to develop a comprehensive response plan in advance of the next disaster.



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