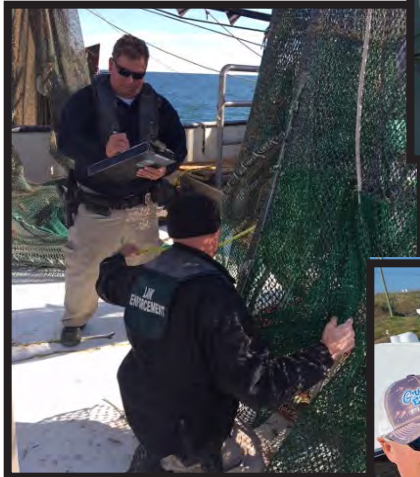


# Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan 2021-2024



*Expertise and input from law enforcement*

*Cooperative interface for state and federal partners*



*Maximizing resources to achieve Gulf-wide regulatory compliance*



*Ecosystem health and sustainability through regulations that manage, protect, and conserve*

*Legal and properly-identified aquatic products for the seafood consumer*



*Resources to provide continuous support of state/federal marine resource enforcement*





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

**2021-2024**

by the

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Law Enforcement Committee

and

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
Law Enforcement Technical Committee

edited by  
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August 2021

A publication of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award Number NA19NMF4070125. 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 Strategic 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 LETC meetings in conjunction with GSMFC and GMFMC meetings.
- 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.

**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.

**Objective 1.3** – Increase participation in federal fishery management plans.

- Provide timely and substantive comments on federal fishery management 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.

### **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.
- Coordinate with the GMFMC Outreach Committee on specific public events.

**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.

**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.
- Work with the case agent or officer to aid in adjudication and disposition of evidence.

**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.

**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.

**Objective 3.3** – Explore a uniform enforcement data collection and reporting system for violation and management trends across the Gulf states.

- Evaluate available technology.
- Identify funding sources.

- Analyze and distribute information.
- Promote development and use of a shared database for natural resource violations across the state and federal resource agencies similar to NCIC or the TPWD's Pocket Cop inquiry tool.
- Acquire the wireless ability to access this system in the field by enforcement officers in real time.
- Identify and evaluate under-reporting issues and address gaps in state reporting requirements along with federal reporting requirements to determine possible trends in neighboring states.

**Objective 3.4** – Coordinate law enforcement effort and evaluate observed compliance with regulations based on federal management plans.

- 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 that future law enforcement programs support fisheries management plans.
- Ensure enforcement partners are informed of federal rule/law changes in a timely manner and provide training if needed.

**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.

**GOAL 5: Protect the consumer.**

*Ensure the consumer is receiving properly identified aquatic product that legally entered the domestic market.*

**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.

**Objective 5.2** – Ensure the integrity domestic fisheries product.

- Work with partner agencies in using forensic tools to improve fisheries law enforcement capabilities.
- Identify persons who provide mislabeled, adulterated, or substituted domestic products.
- Support enhanced development of documentation for all marine species.
- Work with partner agencies to identify and deter illegal fisheries activities from neighboring foreign nations.

**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.

**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.

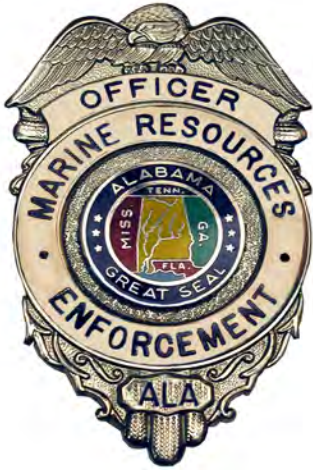
- Identify the positive performance of the JEA program.
- Evaluate the cost effectiveness of current federal funding in fisheries law enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico.

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

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

**GOAL 7: The five states will work together for the short-term response and long-term recovery from manmade and natural 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.



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