

Overview of Public Engagement Since Working Group Meeting 1



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Public Input Session #1 - November 18, 2024



Discussed outcomes of the Rec Initiative's first Working Group meeting and gave the public a chance to give their input

Organized feedback based on responses to four questions:

1. Are there key challenges that are not identified here?
2. What are your proposed solutions to these challenges?
3. Does the vision reflect what you want from the fishery?
4. Are there any goals that you think should be added to achieve the vision?

Are there key challenges not identified?



Data Issues:

- Lack of mandatory self-reporting for rec anglers
- Data validation prevents effective use of self-reported data
- Reliance on retrospective data undermines decision-making
- MRIP data cited as problematic and unreliable

Discard and Bycatch:

- High discard rates due to misaligned fishing seasons
- Released fish often preyed upon by sharks or dolphins

Are there key challenges not identified? (cont.)



Environmental and Technological Pressures:

- Degradation of nearshore habitats due to poor water quality
- Anglers forced further offshore
- Advanced fishing technology increases pressure on offshore stocks

Complex Regulations:

- Barriers for casual anglers due to technical language and complex regulations
- Leads to frustration and disconnect from the management process

What are your proposed solutions to these challenges?



Improving Data Collection

- Deploy biologists on private trips for reliable discard data
- Develop phone apps with robust validation for data collection
- Engage divers to provide observational data (e.g., video evidence)

Regulatory Adjustments

- Multi-species management: Keep the first two reef-fish caught
- Align fishing seasons across species to reduce bycatch and discards
- Issue harvest tags to limit mortality and facilitate data collection
- Introduce a “red snapper fishing day” system for anglers to declare specific days

What are your proposed solutions to these challenges? (cont.)



Environmental Efforts

- Collaborate with agencies to reduce river pollution
- Improve water quality to restore nearshore habitats and enable sustainable fishing

Education & Outreach

- Simplify complex concepts across social media
- Build trust and reduce frustration through better communication
- Foster understanding of fishery management processes among anglers

Does the vision reflect what you want from the fishery?



Positive reception

- The vision statement was perceived as comprehensive and addresses important issues

Suggestions for improvement

- Emphasize practical, incremental steps for effective implementation
- Support for regional management to reflect local fish availability and practices
- Encourage adaptable strategies for changing fishery conditions
- Ensure fairness across user groups

Are there any goals that should be added to achieve this vision?



Mandatory Reporting

- Enhance data accuracy and improve management
- Implement innovative tagging systems (harvest tags) for accountability
- Include voluntary data from divers for firsthand observations

Real-Time Data Systems

- Explore methods like Google Analytics to track angler movements
- Use trend-based insights for management decisions

Are there any goals that should be added to achieve this vision? (cont.)



Sustainability Initiatives

- Improve water quality and protect nearshore ecosystems
- Minimize discards through strategies like multi-species bag limits or “first fish” policies
- Reduce need to go further and further offshore

Education & Outreach

- Simplify management concepts using social media
- Build angler understanding and trust
- Foster compliance and reduce frustration

Key Challenges

- Data issues, discard rates, environmental pressures and complex regulations

Proposed Solutions

- Improve data collection, regulatory adjustments, environmental efforts and outreach

Vision Feedback

- Support for regional management and equitable access.

Additional Goals

- Mandatory reporting, real-time data, sustainability and education initiatives

Summary of Public Input

