

# Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Programmatic Update



# History

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- Established in 1949 by Congress
- Compact among the five Gulf States (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida)
- Promote the better utilization of the marine resources in the Gulf of America



# Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP)

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- Federal/State/University cooperative program for the collection, management and dissemination of fishery-independent data and information in the southeastern United States
  - Trawl Surveys – Summer and Fall Shrimp/Groundfish Survey
  - Plankton Surveys – Spring and Fall Plankton Survey
  - Video and Habitat Mapping Survey – Reef Fish Survey
  - Bottom Longline Survey
  - Surveys assess the abundance and distribution of fauna in the shelf and slope waters of the US Gulf of America
  - Collect size, sex, maturation and life history data of sampled species
  - SEAMAP data are used in stock assessments for 35 species/species complexes
- More Information: Jeff Rester, [jrester@gsmfc.org](mailto:jrester@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Gulf Fisheries Information Network (GulfFIN)

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- Cooperative state/federal fisheries dependent monitoring program
- Collection, storage, and dissemination
  - Recreational effort/landings data (MRIP, state surveys, NSAR data, SEFHIER)
  - Commercial landings (trip ticket data)
  - Biological data (age, length, weight)
- Funding vehicle to support field work
- Provide data to SEDAR and states to support stock assessments
- Liaison between state and federal agencies on fishery dependent data collection issues
- More Information: Gregg Bray, [gbray@gsmfc.org](mailto:gbray@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF)

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- The IJF Program is one of the oldest cooperative state/federal management efforts.
  - Originated from the Commercial Fisheries Research and Development Act of 1965 (P.L. 88-309) and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IFA) of 1986, as amended (Title III, P.L. 99-659).
- IFA funding supports
  - state monitoring and assessment programs and other research efforts to gauge the health of various commercially and recreationally important fish stocks,
  - development of the Commission's management profiles and FMPs which aid the states in maintaining sustainable fishery stocks into the future and
  - data collection for the Gulf Menhaden commercial fishery including daily at-sea estimates, dockside landings and age composition from the catches.
- Commission IJF funds provide additional support to the states for otherwise unfunded data collection and research through the State Research Funding (SuRF) program.
- More Information: Steve VanderKooy, [svanderkooy@gsmfc.org](mailto:svanderkooy@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Aquaculture Program

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- In 2016, the Gulf Commission began a cooperative effort with NOAA's Office of Aquaculture to develop and manage a small grants program to address the technical and regulatory opportunities and challenges of aquaculture in the Gulf region.
  - Off-bottom Oysters (2016 and 2017)
  - Aquaculture Pilots (2017-2019)
  - Regional Oyster Consortium (2018-present)
  - Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) (2022-present)
- To date, the program has provided a total of \$11.68M for research and development of aquaculture in the Gulf of America.
- More Information: Steve VanderKooy, [svanderkooy@gsmfc.org](mailto:svanderkooy@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Gulf of America Multi-Jurisdictional Finfish Research

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- In 2023, Congress directed the NMFS to partner with the Gulf Commission to provide grant(s) to conduct fishery-independent research on transboundary, multi-jurisdictional fish species in the Gulf of America for which current data is deficient (e.g. Cobia, Tripletail, Tarpon, and Gray Triggerfish), including species that are solely managed by the Gulf States.
- In 2025, funding was provided to the Gulf Commission in the amount of \$5.0M for the program. An RFP was published intended to gather critical data to support management of Cobia and Tripletail in the first year with additional years of funding anticipated which would expand to Tarpon and Gray Triggerfish.
- A total of three projects were received and following an extensive review process, the final decision was made in mid-December to award the University of South Alabama with the project which will begin in early 2026.
- More Information: Steve VanderKooy, [svanderkooy@gsmfc.org](mailto:svanderkooy@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Sport Fish Restoration Program

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- Artificial Reef Coordination
  - Regional coordination of artificial reef research, monitoring, and management across the five Gulf states through the GSMFC Technical Coordinating Committee's Artificial Reef Subcommittee, including coordination with other regional artificial reef entities on national issues.
- Gulf Artificial Reef Monitoring and Assessment Program (GARMAP) Pilot Study
  - Collecting year-round offshore water quality data to evaluate seasonal conditions on low dissolved oxygen events, with the goal of developing standardized baseline data for artificial reefs across the Gulf.
- Aquatic Nuisance Species
  - Coordination role, focused on information sharing and continuity with the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species.
- More Information: Charlie Robertson, [charlie.robertson@gsmfc.org](mailto:charlie.robertson@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Fisheries Disaster Programs

## Return 'Em Right

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Return 'Em Right - collecting data and monitoring the use of descending devices and other release practices used by Gulf reef fish anglers

- Human dimensions survey: Leads surveys assessing angler awareness, attitudes, and behavior change related to best release practices and descending device use.
- Research: Supports fishery-independent studies evaluating post-release survival and depredation for priority reef fish species affected by barotrauma.
- Monitoring: Coordinates Gulf-wide fishery-dependent data collection (private and for-hire sectors) to document release practices, descending device use, and condition of released reef fish.
- Training and Gear: Free online training paired with gear distribution. Nearly 50,000 Gulf reef fish anglers trained to use descending devices and other release tools.
- More Information: Charlie Robertson, [crobertson@gsmfc.org](mailto:crobertson@gsmfc.org), 228-875-5912



# Southeast Fishery Observer Program Support

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- GSMFC has entered into contract with NOAA Fisheries to provide support staff to the SE Fishery Observer Program
- Nine new employees focused on observer and safety training, quality control of observer data, and data entry.
- SE Shrimp Trawl Observers, SE Shark and Coastal Gillnet Observers, SE Shark Bottom Longline Observers, GoA Reef Fish Observers, Platform Removal Observers
- Hoping this provides an opportunity to understand the capabilities of the observer program and working toward accessing data to improve state stock assessments
- More Information: Gregg Bray, [gbray@gsmfc.org](mailto:gbray@gsmfc.org), Bethany Bell, [bbell@gsmfc.org](mailto:bbell@gsmfc.org) , 228-875-5912



# Questions?

