

Anonymous Voicemail Public Comment Pilot Review



January 2026: Outreach and Education Committee
Gulf Council

Goal



Provide a platform for public comment that:

- allows commentors to remain anonymous;
- allows commentors to provide comment without having to write or submit electronically.



ANONYMOUS

VOICE MAIL
GULF COUNCIL

History



December 2024 - O&E Technical Committee recommended piloting the program for 2025

- Concern that written comment is overlooked and that voicemails would suffer the same problem.
- Concern for staff time necessary to operationalize.

January 2025 - Gulf Council approves anonymous voicemail public comment pilot

- Concern that comments would be low-value.
- Concern that lack of background information on commentors would remove context.
- Concern that people would take advantage of the platform because of the anonymity.

Pilot Details



Launched June 12

Cost: \$58/month

Nearly automated/real-time updates

68 comments received in 2025

- Response rates heavily dependent upon:
 - Issues being considered
 - Council communication pushes

Date	Time	Comment
6/12/2025	9:00 AM	Yeah, my personal belief is that the commercial fisherman that take out these, I guess they wouldn't call them commercial fisherman, but captains, they take out these people in charters are slaying snappers that are barely above legal limit, and they have so many of them it just makes me sick, that they keep so many and that they are allowed to. I just think its too much, and I am hoping they can lower those limits per boat because I think it ruins the fishing ground out there and for the people that go out there by themselves and don't have their captains license and have charters and just want to fish. They go out there and they empty out all these fishing holes pretty quickly. That's all I got. Thanks.
6/12/2025	9:43 AM	Hi possibly make commercial fisherman stay like stay without past 60 miles from shoreline off the Gulf Coast for snappers, reef fish, maybe make the commercial fisherman have a distance close to shore they can use smaller boats, better opportunity for the spot. We need more habitat in the Gulf. I am off the Texas coast, out to Galveston, I'll say that. We need more habitat and drop the Kingfish limit to one per person, maybe one per boat. They're gone. Right now they're gone, they need to come back. Thanks. Good morning council. Hope you are well. Thank you for this opportunity. Just passing on my thoughts for what they are worth, opinion is what you paid for. I'm a long time resident in Florida been a fisherman since before God and water. I have an offshore boat. I spend a lot of time offshore catching Snapper, Grouper and whatever goes along and it's great that there's just long term opportunity to get American Red Snappers particularly this year. However the limit of 2 fishes is kind of ridiculous considering the fact that I have to run somewhere in the area of a minimal of 45 miles to get to those fish up to 90 or a 100 miles and the fuel costs are outrageous for that type of trip and although I'm able to pickup possibly 2 Grouper and 2 Snapper the offset is not adequate. Please consider shortening the season somewhat and allowing more fish per run versus this long season that you've been gracefully gave to us. It's just under consideration, I'm sure you hear thousands of them. Thank you for your time.
6/12/2025	11:38 AM	I am asking that you consider keeping the season open for Snapper and Amberjack for senior citizens over 65. We no longer go out there and beat ourselves to death in tough weather to catch bears, we wait for calm, slick days which are very few of them any more. So it would be very helpful to us in our last few years to have a little season that gives us a chance to still enjoy fishing. It's not like we're depleting the population we just, like I say, we just going out there only on calm days due to the short seasons we have now. You don't have near a million calm days, I went one time last year. So far I've gone one time this year. So I ask that you consider that, sort of like a senior citizen discount like other stores give people. Thank you.
6/12/2025	11:51 AM	Hi, I'd like to mention that we need some kind of a, we need more control on Sand Trap. There is way too many Sand Trap being taken and if we had a limit of 5 that would be great, or even 4, but having pretty much an unlimited amount of harvest is not sustainable or for our Gulf. Thank you.
6/12/2025	3:57 PM	We're starting with good intentions, soon start into a hedge fund investors paradise. Making huge sums of money off of fisherman's backs. With the council's help puts most fishermen out of business and has driven the Red Snapper price out of most peoples budget. These big shareholders have the money which comes power to keep prices high and production low. The new executive order has given the council his marching orders. Management with maximum production. It's want Trump wants and the fishermen can deliver if the council will get out of our way. First we need to double the Red Snapper quota, open all closed fishing areas to fishing. No more BMS observers and triple ports are good enough to keep fishermen stocks well protected. Probably the best thing to do is give it to the state. Let the state handle Red Snappers like they do the recreational fishes. I pay on average to a share which are one of the large shareholders \$75,000 a year and enforced and pay over \$50,000 a year to harass me. The fish are a public resource. They don't belong to anybody. Give them back to the fishermen now.
6/12/2025	5:00 PM	Hello, I'm calling about the Red Grouper, that allotment is going to be given to the fishermen this year 2025. We definitely need those fish. We have just been, they have taken and taken and taken and it is huge and vital to help this industry, for those fish to go back to the fishermen asap, as soon as possible. I mean we have got to have them, the longevity of this industry and for us to stay alive and Hey y'all counsel. Concerned fisherman. We definitely need this grouper quota for sure. We have got to have it, it's a must for us. It's yeah it's a survival thing. Y'all have taken, taken, taken, it's time to give back as soon as you can do it. It will help us out huge. Y'all took our gags, we need our gags back too and red snapper, we need more red snapper quota. You guys got to start helping us out or
6/13/2025	7:02 AM	

What are we Hearing?



- IFQ Reform
 - Opposition/criticism of the program
 - High prices, lack of available allocation
 - Suggestions to reallocate to active fishermen, reduce concentration of shares held by few
- Commercial vs. Recreational conflicts
- Gear and Area-Based Regulations
 - Longline gear
 - Expansion of artificial reefs
 - Nearshore depletion
- Complaints about Enforcement



What Have we Learned?



- Comments are relevant.
- Anonymity does allow for commentors to discuss issues they may otherwise not talk about on record.
 - Not all comments are controversial.
- Need to improve process for reviewing and sharing the data with Council.



Considerations



- Visibility and utility of comments
 - Currently on public comment webpage
 - Could add to Council meeting materials
 - Could summarize during Council meetings
 - Could sort by issue
- Staff time
 - Currently not time intensive
 - Opportunity for AI
- Relevance/Utility of comments
- Lack of commentor context
- Commentors taking advantage of the platform

O&E Tech Comm Recommendations



Motion: The Council should continue to use the anonymous voicemail service

Motion carried with no opposition

- Opportunity to minimize staff burden using AI to create comment summaries and add them to briefing materials for each Council Meeting
- Put more effort to communicating the availability of this service
- Explain how anonymity is guaranteed

O&E Recommendations



- Should we continue to gather public comment via anonymous voicemail?

If so...

- How do we balance increasing visibility/utility of comments with staff time and effort?
 - Is an AI generated comment summary added to Council briefing materials adequate?
 - Should these comments also be incorporated into 'Final Action' comment summaries?