

Assessing the Social Value of Gulf of America Fisheries Pilot Expert Survey Results

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Executive Summary

This internal report presents results from a pilot expert survey designed to test a structured approach for assessing the relative social value of selected Gulf of America fisheries. The pilot was intended to evaluate the survey instrument and analytical framework, not to estimate population-level stakeholder preferences.

Seven respondents with Gulf of America fisheries expertise evaluated 11 species groups across five social value dimensions: heritage and traditions, community identity, subsistence and food security, recreational well-being, and teaching and knowledge. Responses were scored on a four-point scale from 0 (none) to 3 (high). For each species group, mean scores across the five dimensions were summed to produce a cumulative social value score ranging from 0 to 15.

Pilot descriptive results showed variation in cumulative expert-rated social-value scores across the 11 species groups. Red Drum and Shallow Water Reef Fish received the highest cumulative scores, while several specialized offshore fisheries received lower scores and higher rates of missing or “Don’t Know” responses.

Gulf Shrimp ranked highly on heritage and community identity, indicating strong historical and cultural importance. At the same time, expert comments suggest that these strengths coexist with major challenges, including increased competition from imports and the decline of traditional working waterfronts, which have contributed to a significant decline in the fishery.

A key finding from the pilot is that respondent uncertainty is itself informative. "Don't Know" and blank responses were treated as missing values in score calculations, but they also served as indicators of respondent familiarity with a fishery. Specialized fisheries such as Gulf Menhaden and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Sharks had relatively high rates of missing responses, suggesting that future applications of the study will need to broaden respondent expertise before drawing stronger conclusions.

The principal value of this pilot effort is methodological. It illustrates how a structured expert-elicitation instrument can generate transparent descriptive summaries of social value, respondent variation, and missing responses across fishery groups. The pilot helped identify strengths of the survey, limitations of the current results, and improvements for a larger future application.

1. Background and Purpose

Marine fisheries provide social benefits that extend beyond direct economic output. Fisheries can support cultural continuity, reinforce community identity, contribute to food security, create recreational opportunities, and transfer local ecological knowledge across generations. These dimensions of value are relevant to fisheries management because they help explain how fishing resources contribute to community well-being in ways not captured by biological or economic indicators alone.

This pilot study evaluated whether a structured expert-elicitation approach could be used to assess the relative social value of major Gulf of America fisheries. The approach was considered desirable because it offered an efficient means of obtaining expert input without requiring an information-collection process expected to trigger Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requirements. Avoiding this process was important because currently, developing and obtaining approval for a PRA information-collection package can take two or more years.

The specific objectives were to:

- Develop and test a standardized survey instrument across multiple fisheries.
- Evaluate whether the resulting scores differentiated fisheries in meaningful ways.
- Measure respondent agreement and uncertainty.

- Identify methodological strengths, limitations, and priorities for future refinement.

Because this was a pilot application, the results should be interpreted as preliminary indicators of expert judgment rather than definitive measures of public values.

2. Methods

2.1 Survey design

The survey asked respondents to evaluate 11 species groups across five dimensions of social value:

- Heritage and traditions
- Community identity
- Subsistence and food security
- Recreational well-being
- Teaching and knowledge

The five dimensions were developed through a review of existing social-dimension frameworks in the fisheries and related literature. The lead researcher synthesized these frameworks into five dimensions intended to provide relatively comprehensive coverage of the major forms of social value associated with fisheries. The concepts and definitions were then discussed with NOAA social-science colleagues and refined until agreement was reached on a reasonable set of dimensions for use in the pilot study.

As shown in Appendix C, experts were asked to rate each species group on each social-value dimension using a four-point Likert-type scale:

- 0 = None
- 1 = Low
- 2 = Medium
- 3 = High

2.2 Respondents

Fifteen internal experts from NOAA and the Gulf Council with recognized expertise in Gulf of America fisheries were asked to complete the pilot survey and seven responded. The purpose of the pilot sample was to test the survey instrument and analytical approach, rather than to represent the full range of stakeholder views in the region.

2.3 Scoring and analysis

Responses of None, Low, Medium, and High were coded as 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. “Don’t Know” responses and blank items were treated as missing because they did not represent an assessment of social value. No respondents selected None in the pilot dataset. For each species group, mean scores were calculated for each of the five social-value dimensions using valid numeric ratings. The five dimension-specific means were then summed to produce a descriptive cumulative expert-rated social-value index with a possible range of 0 to 15.

The analysis was designed to be descriptive and illustrative rather than to support population-level statistical inference. Results are presented as dimension-specific mean ratings, cumulative descriptive scores, valid response counts, missing-response rates, and qualitative comment summaries.

The survey also asked respondents to identify the primary species within each species group, where applicable, that informed their ratings. Respondents were also given the option to provide comments explaining their ratings for each species group and social-value dimension. Qualitative responses were reviewed and thematically summarized using the NOAA Workspace Gemini Account (which is a secure, enterprise-grade version of Gemini) to support interpretation of the quantitative results. All AI-assisted summaries were reviewed by the lead researcher.

2.4 Missing responses and uncertainty

Responses marked as “Don’t Know” or left blank were treated as missing values and excluded from calculation of category means. “Don’t Know” indicated insufficient familiarity to assign a score; blank items may have reflected nonresponse or an unrecorded reason. For this pilot, both

were summarized together as missing responses. Missing-response patterns may provide a useful indication of respondent familiarity and confidence, but they should be interpreted cautiously.

2.5 Interpretive summary

The interpretive summaries in Table 1 provide a concise description of broad patterns in cumulative score and missing responses. Because the survey was exploratory and the sample size was small, these summaries are not formal statistical classifications or population-level classes. They are included to illustrate how results from a larger application might be synthesized for interpretation. With a larger sample and more complete ratings, future applications could estimate variation in expert judgments more reliably and use appropriate statistical analyses to identify meaningful and statistically distinguishable differences in social-value ratings across species groups.

3. Results

3.1 Cross-fishery patterns

Table 1 illustrates how cumulative expert-rated social-value scores and missing-response rates can be summarized across the 11 species groups. The pilot results showed an apparent gradient in panel ratings across groups. Fisheries characterized in respondent comments as having broad public access, widespread recreational participation, and recognizable community connections generally received higher cumulative scores. Fisheries described as requiring greater offshore range, specialized equipment, or narrower sector-specific knowledge generally received lower cumulative scores and higher rates of missing responses. These patterns are descriptive and should not be interpreted as definitive rankings of fisheries or estimates of population-level social value.

Table 1: Cumulative Scores, Response Availability, and Interpretive Summary by Species Group

Species group*	Cumulative score	Valid ratings (of 35)	Missing responses (%)	Interpretive summary	Primary social driver or interpretation
Red Drum	12.333	29	17%	Tier 1: Core Social/Recreational Anchor	Recreational / Identity
Shallow Water Reef Fish	12.000	29	17%	Tier 1: Core Subsistence Anchor	Subsistence / Recreation
Coastal Pelagics	11.333	30	14%	Tier 2: General Access / Tournament	Recreational Well-Being
Gulf Shrimp	11.167	24	31%	Tier 2: Historical Legacy / Commercial	Heritage / Identity
Gulf Menhaden	10.500	13	63%	Tier 2: Industrial / Bait Engine	Subsistence / Bait
Gulf Spiny Lobster	10.083	19	46%	Tier 2: Localized Cultural Anchor	Recreational (Mini-Season)
HMS Tunas/Billfish	9.750	22	37%	Tier 2: Specialized Prestige	Recreational / Charter
HMS Swordfish	9.333	19	46%	Tier 3: Niche Recreational	Recreational / Tournaments
HMS Sharks	8.667	12	66%	Tier 3: High Conflict / Depredation	High Uncertainty
Gulf Dolphin / Wahoo	8.050	24	31%	Tier 3: Distance-Restricted Pelagic	Recreational Well-Being
Deepwater Bottomfish	7.800	19	46%	Tier 3: Specialized Commercial	Teaching (Commercial)

Note: Cumulative scores are the sum of five dimension-specific means calculated from valid numeric ratings. Valid ratings indicate the number of scored responses out of 35 possible responses (seven respondents by five dimensions). Missing-response percentages reflect the share of possible observations not scored because respondents selected “Don’t Know” or left the item blank. Effective sample size therefore varied across fisheries and categories.

* See Appendix B for full list of species in each species group.

3.2 Highest-ranked fisheries

Red drum received the highest cumulative expert-rated social-value score in the pilot. Respondent ratings and comments suggest that the group was widely viewed as socially important because of recreational participation and perceived cultural and community significance.

Shallow water reef fish received the second-highest cumulative score and had relatively low missing-values. Respondents indicated value across multiple dimensions rather than a single dominant factor, suggesting that the group may be important to a range of users and communities.

Coastal pelagics also received a relatively high cumulative score. Respondent comments identified recreational well-being, tournament participation, and seasonal recreational use as important contributors to the score assigned by this pilot panel.

3.3 Historically important fishery

Gulf shrimp ranked among the top four species groups despite substantial numbers of missing-values in some categories. Heritage and community identity scores were especially high, indicating that this fishery continues to carry strong social meaning even where recreational relevance is limited or unevenly understood.

At the same time, the expert comments suggest that this high historical and cultural significance coexists with major contemporary pressures. Respondents noted increased competition from imports and the decline of traditional working waterfronts, indicating that strong social value can persist even as the underlying fishery faces substantial long-term contraction.

This distinction is important for interpretation. A fishery may retain enduring social importance even when participation is more concentrated in harvesting communities or historically rooted commercial sectors, and even when those sectors are under stress.

3.4 Specialized and localized fisheries

Several fisheries received mid-range cumulative scores but were accompanied by relatively high levels of uncertainty. Gulf menhaden and Gulf spiny lobster illustrate two different patterns: the first appears to have socially important but sector-specific roles, while the second appears to have meaningful but geographically concentrated value.

HMS Tunas/Billfish and HMS Swordfish were rated as socially important within specialized offshore recreational contexts, including charter and tournament activity. However, their scores may reflect the narrower population able to access these fisheries, as well as lower respondent familiarity outside those sectors.

3.5 Lower-ranked fisheries and uncertainty

HMS Sharks, Gulf Dolphin / Wahoo, and Deepwater Bottomfish received the lowest cumulative scores in this pilot panel. These results should not be interpreted as evidence that the fisheries lack social value; rather, they may reflect narrower participation, greater access constraints, limited respondent familiarity, or some combination of those factors.

HMS Sharks had the highest proportion of missing responses in the pilot, which substantially limits confidence in interpretation. Gulf Dolphin / Wahoo and Deepwater Bottomfish also appear to be affected by distance from shore, vessel requirements, and other barriers that may reduce both participation and respondent confidence in scoring.

4. Discussion

4.1 Accessibility and participation

One apparent pattern in the pilot is an association between accessibility and expert-rated social value. Fishery groups described as broadly reachable by a range of participants, especially inshore and nearshore fisheries, generally received higher cumulative scores and lower rates of missing responses.

This pattern may reflect several overlapping factors, including broader recreational participation, more visible community presence, intergenerational experience, and greater familiarity among respondents. A larger study would be needed to determine whether these factors consistently explain differences in expert-rated social value.

4.2 Historical and cultural continuity

The Gulf Shrimp result shows that social value is not limited to the most publicly accessible fisheries. Respondents assigned very high heritage and community identity value to shrimp,

indicating that long-term cultural significance can remain strong even where participation is concentrated in a smaller or more specialized sector.

However, the expert comments also indicate that this cultural importance now coexists with major structural challenges, including increased competition from imports and the decline of traditional working waterfronts. This suggests that social value and fishery condition may move on different trajectories, with cultural significance remaining high even as the fishery itself contracts.

This distinction is important for interpretation. Social importance may reflect continuity, symbolism, and community history as much as the breadth of current day-to-day participation.

4.3 Interpreting uncertainty

The pilot also demonstrates the value of retaining and reporting missing responses explicitly. Missing responses were more common for several specialized or offshore species groups than for broadly familiar inshore groups. This pattern may reflect differences in respondent familiarity, as well as item interpretation or other forms of nonresponse.

In this context, missing responses may provide a useful indicator of where the current respondent panel is insufficient for confident interpretation. Future survey applications would benefit from broader or more targeted expertise and from separate reporting of “Don’t Know” selections and blank responses.

5. Limitations

This report should be interpreted in light of several limitations:

- The pilot included only seven respondents, which limits precision and generalizability.
- The respondent pool was designed to test the instrument, not to represent the full range of Gulf stakeholders.
- Effective sample size varied substantially across fisheries and categories because missing responses were common in some specialized fisheries.

- Several category scores were based on very small numbers of valid responses; in at least one case, a category standard deviation was undefined because only one respondent provided a score.
- The statistical analyses are exploratory and should not be used to support broad population-level inference.
- Aggregation of species into broad groups may mask within-group variation in social meaning and access.

These limitations do not reduce the value of the pilot as a methodological exercise, but they do constrain how the results should be used in decision-making.

6. Management Relevance

Although exploratory, the pilot illustrates several considerations for future social-value assessments in fisheries management. A larger application could examine whether management actions affecting broadly accessible fisheries have wider social consequences because those fisheries may connect simultaneously to recreation, identity, food security, and local traditions.

Lower pilot scores in specialized fisheries should not be interpreted as evidence of low importance without considering missing responses and respondent familiarity. In some cases, the main pilot finding is not that a fishery is less socially important, but that the current respondent panel was not well positioned to evaluate it confidently.

The survey framework appears promising as a screening and scoping tool. In a larger application, it could help identify where social value may be broad and visible, where it may be localized or sector-specific, and where additional consultation is needed before stronger conclusions are drawn.

7. Next Steps

Future applications of this method would benefit from the following refinements:

- Expand the respondent pool to include a broader range of expertise and regional familiarity.
- Ensure participation by individuals with direct knowledge of specialized offshore fisheries.
- Consider stratifying respondents by sector, geography, or fishery type.

- Retain explicit reporting of “missingness” and uncertainty in all summary products.
- Refine survey prompts where categories may be interpreted differently across fisheries.
- Evaluate whether some species groups should be separated or redefined for future rounds.

A larger application using a more diverse respondent pool would provide a stronger basis for evaluating the stability of the patterns observed in this pilot. The principal contribution of the pilot is methodological: it provides an example of how structured expert ratings, response availability, and qualitative comments can be organized to support future social-value assessment.

Appendix A. Full Species Tables

Total respondents $N = 7$. Maximum possible responses per category = 7.

A1. Red Drum

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	2.667	0.816	1	"Blackened redfish became an iconic menu item in New Orleans."
Community Identity	2.500	0.837	1	Iconic species; "symbol of the CCA, red drum art/bumper stickers frequent."
Subsistence / Food Security	2.000	1.000	2	Important, though federal waters are catch-and-release only.
Recreational Well-Being	3.000	0.000	1	Primary driver; unanimous maximum score and a massive inshore fishery Gulf-wide.
Teaching and Knowledge	2.167	0.983	1	Common component of children's fishing tournaments.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	12.333	—	6	Top Ranked Identity/Recreation Asset (Tier 1)

A2. Shallow Water Reef Fish

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	2.667	0.516	1	Highly sought-after species across both commercial and recreational sectors.
Community Identity	2.667	0.516	1	Vital to specific communities (e.g., Madeira Beach is the "Grouper Capital of the World").
Subsistence / Food Security	1.833	0.983	1	Distant grounds are increasingly accessible due to vessel advances.

Recreational Well-Being	2.833	0.408	1	Primary driver; essential for the recreational and for-hire fleets.
Teaching and Knowledge	2.000	0.707	2	Shared knowledge across commercial and recreational fleets.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	12.000	—	6	Core Consensus Anchor (Tier 1)

A3. Coastal Pelagics

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	2.167	0.753	1	King fish traditions exist, though somewhat affected by net bans.
Community Identity	2.333	0.516	1	Commercial fisheries rely heavily on them alongside recreational sectors.
Subsistence / Food Security	1.833	0.753	1	High ACLs and long seasons make them highly accessible.
Recreational Well-Being	2.667	0.516	1	Primary driver; tournament fishing is very important seasonally.
Teaching and Knowledge	2.333	0.516	1	Many small communities use this species group for teaching.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	11.333	—	5	General Access / Tournament Value (Tier 2)

A4. Gulf Shrimp

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	3.000	0.000	1	Historically, a deeply important fishery across the Gulf (perfect consensus among n=6).
Community Identity	3.000	0.000	1	Unanimous agreement that harvest heavily drives community identity (n=6).

Subsistence / Food Security	2.167	0.753	1	Very important, but faces intense market competition from imports.
Recreational Well-Being	1.000	N/A (n=1)	6	Vastly missing; requires physical effort (cast nets) rather than rod-and-reel leisure. Sample standard deviation is mathematically undefined for n=1.
Teaching and Knowledge	2.000	0.707	2	Knowledge transfer restricted to a specific sector of working waterfronts.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	11.167	—	11	Historical Legacy Sector (Tier 2)

A5. Gulf Menhaden

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	1.500	1.000	3	"Bunker feeds people and industry," but lacks deep local traditions broadly.
Community Identity	1.500	1.000	3	Identity is highly restricted; "Only a few communities have large bunker harvest."
Subsistence / Food Security	2.500	0.707	5	Crucial for the bait industry (n=2).
Recreational Well-Being	2.000	0.000	5	Viewed indirectly as highly important because it is a source of bait for key recreational species (n=2).
Teaching and Knowledge	3.000	N/A (n=1)	6	Insufficient data to generalize. Sample SD mathematically undefined.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	10.500	—	22	Industrial / Bait Engine (Tier 2)

A6. Gulf Spiny Lobster

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	2.250	0.957	3	Very limited footprint in the broader Gulf; highly concentrated in South Florida and the Keys.
Community Identity	2.000	1.155	3	Majority of commercial harvest is isolated to the Florida Keys.
Subsistence / Food Security	2.333	1.155	4	Important source of food where accessible in the Keys (n=3).
Recreational Well-Being	2.000	0.816	3	July mini-season is a massive two-day socioeconomic driver.
Teaching and Knowledge	1.500	0.577	3	Families pass down local knowledge in highly localized areas.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	10.083	—	16	Highly Localized Cultural Anchor (Tier 2)

A7. HMS Tunas/Billfish

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	2.000	0.707	2	Valuable, particularly with Vietnamese longliner adaptations and tournaments.
Community Identity	2.000	0.707	2	Offshore Louisiana relies heavily on tournaments and the charter industry.
Subsistence / Food Security	1.250	0.500	3	High trip costs limit daily subsistence use.
Recreational Well-Being	2.750	0.500	3	Primary driver; essential target for the high-end recreational sector.
Teaching and Knowledge	1.750	0.957	3	Technical capability and specialized vessel technology required.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	9.750	—	13	Specialized Prestige Resource (Tier 2)

A8. HMS Swordfish

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	1.750	0.500	3	Short commercial history; primarily a recreational pursuit.
Community Identity	2.250	0.500	3	Identity tied specifically to communities hosting offshore tournaments.
Subsistence / Food Security	1.333	0.577	4	Highly specialized, truly deep-water species limiting accessibility (n=3).
Recreational Well-Being	2.250	0.500	3	Primary driver; absolute sociocultural importance to a relatively small fleet of participants.
Teaching and Knowledge	1.750	0.957	3	Transfer of highly specialized offshore skills.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	9.333	—	16	Niche Recreational (Tier 3)

A9. HMS Sharks

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	1.667	0.577	4	Brief history in the northern Gulf (n=3).
Community Identity	2.000	0.000	5	Very low familiarity among experts; "not familiar with Gulf shark fisheries" (n=2).
Subsistence / Food Security	1.500	0.707	5	Often reported broadly as "sharks," making species composition poorly understood (n=2).

Recreational Well-Being	2.000	1.000	4	Seen as a major concern or detriment to recreational fishing due to depredation (n=3).
Teaching and Knowledge	1.500	0.707	5	Limited engagement beyond specialized targeting (n=2).
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	8.667	—	23	High Uncertainty / Depredation Conflict (Tier 3)

A10. Gulf Dolphin / Wahoo

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	1.800	0.837	2	Important, but significantly distant from shore.
Community Identity	1.400	0.548	2	Limitations of distance, fuel costs, and vessel capabilities reduce Gulf-wide value.
Subsistence / Food Security	1.250	0.500	3	Market value and limited access reduce subsistence footprints.
Recreational Well-Being	2.200	0.447	2	Highly valued by private fleets capable of reaching them; popular spring target.
Teaching and Knowledge	1.400	0.548	2	Access poses a financial and technical barrier to broader education.
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	8.050	—	11	Distance-Restricted Pelagic (Tier 3)

A11. Deepwater Bottomfish

Category	Mean (0-3)	Sample SD	Missing (Uncertainty)	Expert Comment Summary
Heritage and Traditions	1.500	0.577	3	Probably not historically significant due to extreme depth.

Community Identity	1.500	0.577	3	"Not many communities would identify with these fisheries."
Subsistence / Food Security	1.333	0.577	4	"Often too far out" (n=3).
Recreational Well-Being	1.800	0.837	2	Important for a very small, well-equipped, growing group of offshore anglers.
Teaching and Knowledge	1.667	0.577	4	Financial barriers to entry restrict knowledge transfer (n=3).
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	7.800	—	16	Specialized Commercial/Technical (Tier 3)

Appendix B: List of species groups and included species

Species group	Included species
Coastal Pelagics	Cobia; Mackerels (King, Spanish)
Deepwater Bottomfish	Groupers (Snowy, Warsaw, Yellowedge); Tilefishes (Blueline, Goldface); Wenchman
Gulf Dolphin/Wahoo	Same
Shallow Water Reef Fish	Amberjack (Greater, Lesser); Groupers (Black, Gag, Goliath, Red, Yellowfin, Yellowmouth); Speckled Hind; Hogfish; Almaco Jack; Banded Rudderfish; Scamp; Scup; Snappers (Blackfin, Cubera, Gray, Lane, Mutton, Queen, Red, Silk, Vermillion, Yellowtail); Triggerfish (Gray)
Gulf Menhaden	Same
Red Drum	Same
Gulf Shrimp	Northern Brown, Northern Pink, Northern White, Red Royal
Gulf Spiny Lobster	Same

HMS Swordfish	Same
HMS Tunas/Billfish	bluefin tuna; yellowfin tuna; bigeye tuna; albacore tuna; skipjack tuna; billfish (blue marlin; white marlin; sailfish)
HMS Sharks	Gulf of America smoothhounds complex (smooth dogfish; Gulf smoothhound; Florida smoothhound); blacktip (Gulf of America stock); Atlantic sharpnose (Gulf of America stock); sandbar; finetooth; spinner; bull; great hammerhead; thresher; lemon; blacknose (Gulf of America stock); scalloped hammerhead; tiger; blue; bonnethead (Gulf of America stock); smooth hammerhead; shortfin mako; silky; nurse

Appendix C: QUESTIONNAIRE

Block 1

Southeast Fisheries Social/Cultural Value Expert Scoring Form (Gulf of America region)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This is part of a pilot effort to assess the social and cultural value of fisheries species and species groups in support of the Risk Value Prioritization Framework being developed by the NMFS Leadership Council.

The form is structured to collect expert input in a consistent way across species and criteria. The results will help illustrate how social value can be considered alongside economic value and environmental risk within this framework. Your input, as someone with expertise in these fisheries, is critical to the success of this effort, and all individual survey responses will be kept confidential.

We appreciate you taking the time to thoughtfully consider your responses. If there are any fisheries, species groups, or criteria you do not feel comfortable evaluating, please feel free to leave those items blank. Finally, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions: matthew.mcpherson@noaa.gov

Block 3

Instructions: Please refer to the Criteria and Definitions in the *Sociocultural values of fisheries table* when completing this survey. After all surveys are completed, responses will be aggregated across experts to calculate the final regional social value score for each fishery.

Scoring Guidance: Regional Sociocultural Value

For each criterion, assign one ranking — **None, Low, Medium, or High** — based on the extent to which **one or more species within the group** contribute to the sociocultural value at the regional scale. When assigning scores, consider: Geographic scope across the Gulf region; Number and diversity of communities or user groups involved; Frequency and consistency of recognition or use; Cultural depth or strength of identity linkage; Degree of substitutability (whether other fisheries could easily provide similar social or cultural benefits).

- **None:** No meaningful contribution at the regional scale.
- **Low:** Limited or localized contribution within the Gulf region; relevant to a small number of communities or user groups.
- **Medium:** Meaningful contribution across multiple communities or subregions, but not broadly defining at the regional level.
- **High:** Broad, consistent, and regionally defining contribution; central to identity, tradition, or social function across the region.
- **Don't Know:** Select this if you do not feel you have enough familiarity to assign a score

Block 4

Coastal Pelagics:

Species group includes: Cobia, Mackerels (King, Spanish)

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Comments/Examples (optional)
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 5

Deepwater Bottomfish

Species group includes: Groupers (Snowy, Warsaw, Yellowedge); Tilefishes (Blueline, Goldface); Wenchman

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 6

Gulf Dolphin/Wahoo:

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species names(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species names(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non- commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 7

Shallow Water Reef Fish:

Species group includes: Amberjack (Greater, Lesser); Groupers (Black, Gag, Goliath, Red, Yellowfin, Yellowmouth); Speckled Hind; Hogfish; Almaco Jack; Banded Rudderfish; Scamp; Scup; Snappers (Blackfin, Cubera, Gray, Lane, Mutton, Queen, Red, Silk, Vermillion, Yellowtail); Triggerfish (Gray)

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 8

Gulf Menhaden

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 9

Red Drum

	Ranking					Primary Species (if applicable)	
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 10

Gulf Shrimp

Species group includes: Northern Brown, Northern Pink, Northern White, Red Royal

	Ranking					Primary species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 11

Gulf Spiny Lobster

	Ranking					Primary species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

HMS Swordfish

	Ranking					Primary species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

Block 13

HMS Tunas/Billfish

Species Group Includes: bluefin tuna; yellowfin tuna; bigeye tuna; albacore tuna; skipjack tuna; billfish (blue marlin; white marlin; sailfish)

	Ranking					Primary species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		

HMS Sharks

Species Group includes: Gulf of America smoothhounds complex (smooth dogfish; Gulf smoothhound; Florida smoothhound); blacktip (Gulf of America stock); Atlantic sharpnose (Gulf of America stock); sandbar; finetooth; spinner; bull; great hammerhead; thresher; lemon; blacknose (Gulf of America stock); scalloped hammerhead; tiger; blue; bonnethead (Gulf of America stock); smooth hammerhead; shortfin mako; silky; nurse

	Ranking					Primary species (if applicable)	Click to write Column 3
	None	Low	Medium	High	Don't know	Write species name(s)	Comments/Examples (optional)
Heritage and Traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Community Identity and Connection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Subsistence Use and Food Security	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Recreational Well Being (non-commercial)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Teaching and Knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		