



The Shrimp E-Advocate

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South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council

SAFMC Moves to Amend "Use It or Lose It" Policy

The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) Shrimp Committee passed unanimously a motion for a plan amendment that would remove the "use it or lose it" policy from the current rock shrimp criteria. The full council accepted the amendment, which means it will now go out for public comment.

SSA hopes you will join us in thanking the initiative's supporters, which includes Dr. Roy Crabtree, regional administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Region, the SAFMC Council, and the Shrimp Committee.

History

In 2003, the Rock Shrimp Advisory Panel addressed the potential overfishing of rock shrimp, latent permits, and infrastructure supply issues in the shrimp industry through the creation of a "use it or lose it" policy for rock shrimp permits. The policy requires that permit holders

catch a minimum of 15,000 pounds of rock shrimp in any one year over 48-months in order to remain eligible for a rock shrimp permit.

At the time, 168 boats were eligible to apply for a rock shrimp permit. Of these, only 134 applied for and received a permit. Today, only 61 boats remain eligible to purchase a rock shrimp permit under the "use it or lose it" criteria due to significant changes in the U.S. shrimp industry. An additional 51% reduction in the size of the rock shrimp fishery is unnecessary and the purpose of the "use it or lose it" policy is outdated.

SSA was instrumental to bringing the problem of the rock shrimp policy to the committee's attention. Over the past six months, SSA presented arguments to the Shrimp Committee that support the removal of the "use it or lose it" criteria.

Council Takes Action

The SAFMC Shrimp Committee acknowledged that today's rock shrimp industry is significantly different from the one that existed four years ago and does not require the policy to protect the rock shrimp stocks from overfishing or the industry from overcapitalization. The full council seconded this opinion and proposed a plan amendment that will go out for public comment. The process of passing and implementing a plan amendment is typically around one year.

Assuming the plan amendment is ultimately approved, an unknown number of boats may tentatively lose their rock shrimp permit if their current permit is set to expire before the amendment is implemented. In such cases, the permits will be automatically reinstated if the amendment passes in its current form.

John Williams, Richard Vendetti and Glenn Delaney represented the SSA at the SAFMC meeting in Georgia on March 5-9. For more information on the proposed amendment, please contact the Southern Shrimp Alliance at 727.934.5090.

RED SNAPPER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Federal Court Rules on Red Snapper Management Plan

A federal judge found that a previous rebuilding plan for red snapper set forth by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) violates the Administrative Procedures Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act according to media reports. The ruling orders NMFS to issue a new red snapper rebuilding plan in the next nine months.

The case, filed in 2005 by Ocean Conservancy and the Gulf Restoration Network, deals with a rebuilding plan that is no longer relevant. An interim rule for the U.S. shrimp industry, commercial red snapper fishermen, and recreational fishermen is expected to go into effect shortly and proposed changes to the rebuilding plan are scheduled to be in effect within nine months. The next public hearing on the proposed plan is scheduled for March 26-30, 2007 in Destin, FL.

SSA supports the creation of a management plan that rebuilds the red snapper stock and has been working with officials at NMFS and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council towards this goal. SSA will be attending the public hearing.

History

While the case applies to a plan that is outdated, the underlying issue remains. Red snapper are overfished, meaning that the increasing stock will not reach its historical levels by 2032. This is extremely disappointing to the U.S. shrimp industry, which made significant financial sacrifices and met the stringent goals that the Gulf Council set in 1999 to reduce red snapper mortality due to shrimp nets by 50%.

The most recent Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) red snapper stock assessment, which set forth proposals to manage the overfished red snapper stock, calls for significant reductions in the total allowable catch for the directed fisheries. Unlike the shrimp industry which has been asked to undergo significant changes, the total allowable catch has remained at the same level for more than ten years. The shrimp industry's past and current actions to rebuild the red snapper stocks must be matched by the directed fisheries. The scientific data indicates that elimination of the shrimp industry's bycatch alone

would not end overfishing.

The current Gulf Council proposal also calls for an additional 50%-74% reduction of juvenile red snapper bycatch mortality by 2007. The shrimp industry's bycatch mortality has been reduced already by more than 60% according to scientists at the National Oceans and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s Southeast Bycatch Workshop.

If you have questions about our positions, please call 727.934.5090.