



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Bulletin

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FB17-054

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CONTACT: Frank Helies, 727-824-5305, Frank.Helies@noaa.gov

Request for Comments: Management Issues in the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

KEY MESSAGE:

NOAA Fisheries requests your comments on an amendment and proposed rule for shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). The proposed rule would establish transit provisions for shrimp vessels without a federal permit and specify a minimum threshold number of Gulf moratorium permits and a review panel process when that threshold is close to being met. The amendment also sets management targets for the shrimp fishery. Comments are due by November 3, 2017.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIONS:

- Establish transit provisions for shrimp vessels without a federal permit.
- Specify a minimum threshold number of Gulf shrimp vessel permits and specify a review panel process when the threshold number of shrimp moratorium permits is close to being met.
- Define aggregate maximum sustainable yield and aggregate optimum yield.

Note: The rule does not actively reduce the number of moratorium permits in the fishery.

HOW TO COMMENT:

The comment period is open now through November 3, 2017. We will address all comments specifically directed to either the amendment or the proposed rule in the final rule. You may submit comments by electronic submission or by postal mail. Comments sent by any other method (such as e-mail), to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

FORMAL FEDERAL REGISTER NAME/NUMBER: 82 FR 39733, published August 22, 2017; 82 FR 46205, published October 4, 2017

Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

1. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0040
2. Click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields.
3. Enter or attach your comments.

Mail: Submit written comments to Frank Helies, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Definitions Specific to Amendment 17B:

Transit: means non-stop progression through the area.

Fishing gear appropriately stowed: means trawl doors and nets must be out of the water and the bag straps must be removed from the net.

Moratorium: period during which no new permits will be created.

Threshold: level or value.

Aggregate: all species combined for the fishery.

Maximum sustainable yield: highest possible annual catch that can be sustained over time.

Optimum yield: amount of a managed species that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation.

What transit provisions are addressed in the amendment?

- Transit through federal waters with shrimp on board currently requires a federal commercial Gulf shrimp moratorium permit.
- The transit provisions would allow state-licensed shrimpers to transit from state waters through federal waters to return to state waters and port without a federal permit.
- Vessels would need to be in transit and have fishing gear appropriately stowed.

What is the purpose for setting a minimum threshold number of moratorium permits for the Gulf shrimp fishery?

- The purpose of the threshold is to ensure an adequate number of permits are available to allow the shrimp fishery to achieve optimum yield.

- The number of federal commercial Gulf shrimp moratorium permits has declined, and there is fear that these declines will continue indefinitely until there are not enough permits left to support the fishery.
- Permits are terminated if the permit holder does not renew the permit within one year of the expiration date. A total of 493 Gulf shrimp permits have been terminated since the start of the permit moratorium because they were not renewed.
- Because the permit reduction is passive, the threshold could be reached relatively quickly, after many years, or not at all, depending on the rate of termination.
- The rule would not remove any Gulf shrimp permits. The minimum threshold is only for the purposes of monitoring changes in fishery participation.

What would be the minimum threshold number of moratorium permits?

- The minimum threshold number of valid or renewable Gulf shrimp moratorium permits would be 1,072.
- Based on the current rate of 15 permits terminated per year, this threshold would be reached in about 24 years.

What would happen if / when the threshold is close to being met?

- A review panel would meet when the number of permits reaches 1,175 to review the threshold and details of a reserve pool of permits or other management measures before the threshold is reached.
- The review panel would consist of Shrimp Advisory Panel members, Science and Statistical Committee members, and NOAA Fisheries and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council staff.
- If the number of permits reaches the threshold, any permits that are not renewed within one year of the expiration date on the permit will go into a reserve pool.

What is a reserve pool?

- A reserve pool holds permits that are not renewed within a year of expiration and would otherwise be terminated.
- The review panel would determine how those permits would be re-issued.

What are maximum sustainable yield and optimum yield and why are they being aggregated in this amendment?

- The maximum sustainable yield is the highest possible annual catch that can be sustained over time, by keeping the stock at the level producing maximum growth.

- The optimum yield is the amount of a managed species that will provide the greatest overall benefit to the nation with respect to food production and recreational opportunities and is based on the maximum sustainable yield reduced by any relevant social, economic, or ecological factors.
- Although maximum sustainable yield and optimum yield are currently set for each species, their values for the entire fishery (aggregate) were needed to determine the minimum threshold for permits, since the permits cover all species.

Where can I find more information on Amendment 17B?

- Contact NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office

By Mail: Frank Helies
 NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office
 Sustainable Fisheries Division
 263 13th Avenue South
 St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
By FAX: (727) 824-5308
By Phone: (727) 824-5305

- Amendment 17B may be found online at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Website: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/shrimp/2017/am17b/index.html

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Other contacts:

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