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Judy Jamison, Exec. Director

Ph: (813) 286-8390

judy.jamison@att.net

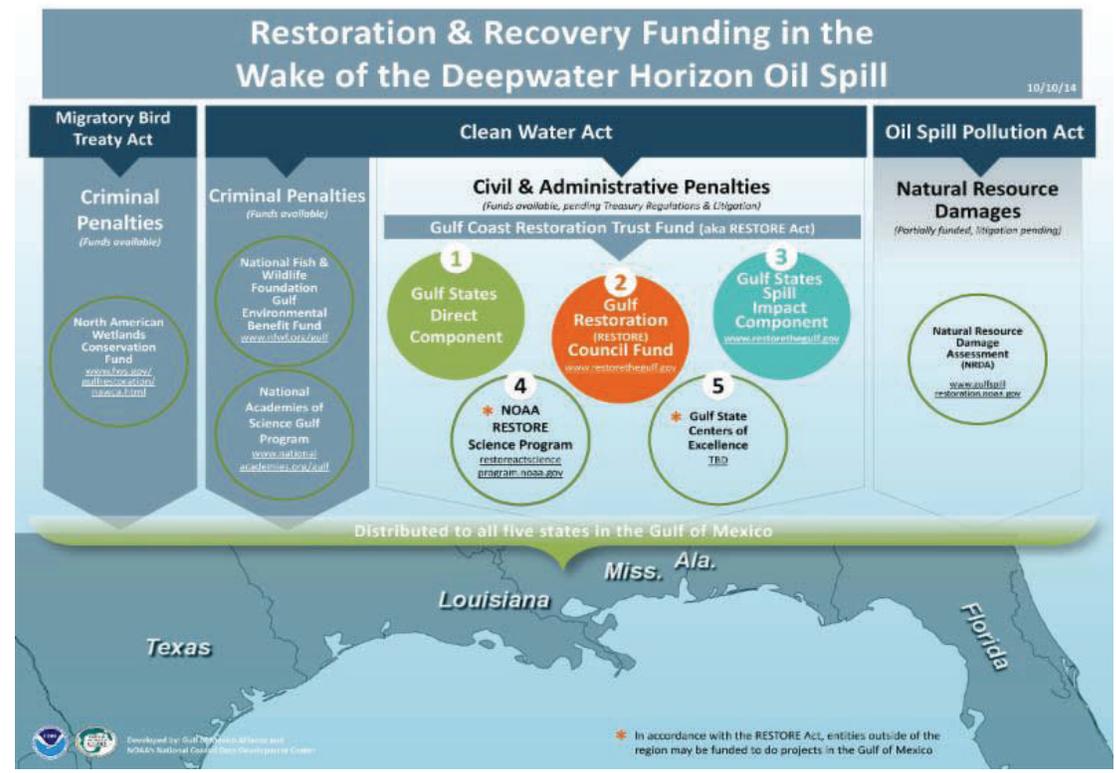
gulfsouthfdn@att.net

www.gulfsouthfoundation.org

Comments Requested for Draft Oil Spill Restoration Plan

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Draft Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement is available for public review and comment through **December 4, 2015**. Eight meetings where the public will be able to provide comments on this draft plan and the proposed settlement with BP will be held. Information can be found at the following site: <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/>

It may be beneficial when providing comments that the “draft” plan is lacking commercial fishing opportunities (item 12). Also it was noted that sturgeon and oysters are listed as important enough to make the list, however there is nothing for crab, shrimp, or social science and most of all cooperative research with the fishing industry.



Foundation Office Relocation

The Foundation office has moved. Please note the new address:

1411 N. Westshore Blvd., Suite 110, Tampa, FL, 33607.

The phone, fax, and staff emails will remain the same.

Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc.

Program Update

“Prediction and Verification of Snapper-Grouper Spawning Aggregation Sites on the Offshore Banks of the Northwestern Gulf of Mexico”

(NA14NMF4270039, GSAFFI #129)

This project aims to predict and verify multi-species spawning aggregations in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. In turn, this will allow consolidation of existing methods and further development of robust fishery dependent and independent data collection methods, designed to evaluate the status of all of the stocks that use multi-species spawning aggregation sites. This will be the first attempt to predict and verify spawning aggregations on the banks of the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. Though they are very likely to exist, no spawning aggregations in this area have been documented. At a minimum, the project will compile and analyze fishery dependent and fishery independent data, expert fisher knowledge, and geomorphological predictions of likely spawning aggregation sites that can be used within this and other subsequent studies. Six sampling cruises have been made to date. Sampling methods include underwater video observation, site mapping, fishery dependent survey, and otolith and reproductive sample collection. Potential courtship behavior of multiple species including spadefish, jacks, sheepshead, scamp, and cubera snapper were documented in various locations throughout the Gulf of Mexico.



Potential horse-eye jack courtship behavior

Photo: Will Heyman

“Examination of Catch and Discards within the Commercial Snapper-Grouper Vertical Hook-and-Line Sector in the South Atlantic United States”

(NA14NMF4270040, GSAFFI #130)

Many species within the snapper-grouper fishery management unit are data poor. As a result, many of the species specific stock assessments have a high level of uncertainty associated with the models, including catch characterization, effort, and quantity of discards. This project reinitiates a fishery observer program within the vertical hook-and-line (bandit rig) sector of the snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic United States to enhance the universe of data that are available to stock assessment scientists. The project will build upon the robust database that includes five years worth of data collected through past federally funded awards.

Through cooperation of Foundation Coordinators and Industry Cooperators, we have solicited the participation of the commercial fishing industry to voluntarily assist in the performance of this project. A GSAFF contracted observer has been placed onboard cooperating vessels to collect a variety of data quantifying the participation, gear, effort, catch, and discards within the fishery. The intent of this project is not to form a standalone dataset, but to augment currently available datasets. With the information derived from this project, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries can better assess the impact of current effort and discards on the data-poor snapper-grouper fishery. The Foundation appreciates the continued cooperation of Industry. This partnership has allowed for the construction of a database that currently includes over 40,000 sampled fish.

To date, Observers have made 24 trips totaling 137 at-sea days of data collection out of ports from North Carolina to northeast Florida. If you are a participant in the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery and would like to participate in our program, please reach out to the Foundation.

(Continued on page 3)

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“Increasing Compliance and Effective Enforcement of Turtle Excluder Devices in the Southeast Shrimp Fishery—A Collaborative NOAA Fisheries/Industry Workshop”

(NA14NMF4270318, GSAFFI #131)

Over the years, several issues have surfaced which have hampered effective and efficient enforcement of TED regulations. The Foundation hosted a workshop at the Golden Nugget Hotel in Biloxi, MS on March 24-25, 2015 to gather industry, federal, and state official perspectives on turtle excluder device (TED) compliance and enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic states. At this two-day meeting, participants received briefings on current regulatory activity/regulations and outreach, discussed issues and concerns currently faced in the fishery, and brainstormed about what the next steps should be to address concerns discussed at the workshop. Specific workshop objectives included: 1) Update participants on outreach currently being conducted by state and federal agencies; 2) Update participants on the achievements of current regulations; 3) Explore options for improving compliance; and 4) Develop action items to improve collaboration between industry and regulators.

The workshop included a full range of industry and state and federal agency participants as well as NGOs. Invited speakers included Foundation Regional Coordinators Gary Graham and Lindsey Parker; John Mitchell, NOAA Fisheries Gear Monitoring Team (GMT); Dale Stevens, GMT; Robert Hoffman, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office; John Williams, Southern Shrimp Alliance; Manny Antonaras, NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement; Jason Brand, US Coast Guard; Brandi Reeder, TX Parks and Wildlife; Chad Hebert, LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries; Scott Bannon, AL Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources; Rick Burris, MS Dept. of Marine Resources; and Rama Shuster, FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Scott McCreary of CONCUR, Inc.

After conclusion of the presentations, open discussions with workshop attendees and presenters were held. The workshop focused on dialog intended to (1) update the group on the different types and frequencies of TED outreach in the southeast; (2) voice industry concerns and articulate ideas for improvement going forward; and (3) identify potential action items and work groups. Recurring themes included: overall TED compliance rates show

improvement in the industry; GMT trainings were seen as a positive aspect of TED management, and a key component in increasing compliance rates; state enforcement partners seek a more robust process for pooling and processing enforcement data; interest in pursuing shared culpability among boat owners, captains, and crew; and experiences with inconsistent guidance from enforcement officers. Feedback from participants has been positive and the Foundation is actively pursuing funding for a follow-up workshop in the future to determine the status of recommendations that resulted from the workshop.

“Shrimp Fishery Turtle Excluder Device/ Bycatch Reduction Device Compliance Outreach Workshops for the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office”

(WC-133F-14-SE-3800, GSAFFI #132)

This program, funded through a contract with NOAA/NMFS, assists with gear compliance and provides new turtle excluder device (TED) and bycatch reduction device (BRD) information to members of the shrimp fishing industry throughout the Southeast region (North Carolina to Texas). The Foundation is responsible for relaying management outcomes and providing educational outreach services to the industry affected by TED/BRD regulations. The Foundation, through its staff and Regional Coordinators (Gary Graham and Captain Lindsey Parker—below), serves as a liaison between the NMFS Southeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division, and the commercial shrimp fishing industry. This program will provide industry with clear and definitive information regarding TED and BRD regulations.

Outreach efforts are on-going. A strong push (over 60 vessels were given courtesy inspections) was made prior to the Texas shrimp opening (July) to ensure vessels were fully up to speed on TED regulations. Coordinators utilize the standardized NMFS TED inspection form while conducting courtesy inspections. This assists industry in understanding the inspection process should a vessel be boarded and provides additional educational information for industry to check their gear to ensure compliance. These activities have built upon the work conducted in our previous and current gear outreach projects. Industry and NMFS have responded positively to the outreach efforts.

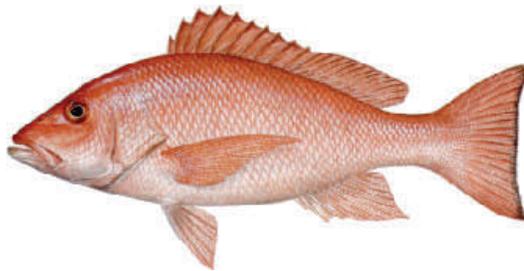
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“Pilot Study for Developing Fisheries-Independent Indices of Abundance for Juvenile Red Snapper in the U.S. South Atlantic”

(NA14NMF4330221, FWC Contract #14342, GSAFFI #133A)

This project constitutes a pilot study to evaluate the utility of trawls and small fish traps in providing fisheries-independent data for juvenile (age 0-1) red snapper and other managed fishes in the U.S. South Atlantic. Surveys have been conducted using a 12.8-m semi-balloon trawl (below left) and Antillean Z-traps (below right) within nearshore waters (10 – 70 m) off central and northeast Florida during late summer/early fall (July – October). Trawl surveys targeted low-relief soft-bottom/shell habitats which are underrepresented in current fisheries-independent surveys in the SA despite having been documented as red snapper nursery habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. Small-mesh fish traps will target low- to high-relief hard bottom and artificial reef habitats not accessible by trawls to investigate whether SA juvenile red snapper are exploiting different habitats from what has been documented in the Gulf. Data from this three-year pilot study will be used to develop recommendations (i.e., sampling gear, sampling design, sampling effort) for a fisheries-independent monitoring survey designed to provide valuable data that can be used in creating indices of abundance and provide missing demographic data on age 0-1 red snapper and other federally-managed species that would complement current monitoring efforts in the SA. The project was funded to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and is currently being run out of the Jacksonville, FL laboratory. The Foundation was contracted to assist with providing cooperative industry participation. Five trawl sampling cruises and 13 trap sampling cruises have been completed to date. Both sampling methods have been successful at collecting juvenile red snapper.



“Cooperative Bottom Long-line Survey to Augment Fisheries Independent Reef Fish Data Collection in the Deepwater Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic United States”

(NA15NMF4270342, GSAFFI #134)

The goal of this project is to prove the utility of an industry led deep-water fisheries independent bottom long-line (BLL) survey for the South Atlantic conducted in close collaboration with the existing fishery independent efforts by the MARMAP (and related) program(s). Bottom long-line sampling will be conducted off the coast of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Golden and blueline tilefish will be the target species for this program. The data will be collected by observers during the course of this project and will augment the work conducted by MARMAP. By collaborating with the MARMAP group, independent fisheries data can be collected over a greater spatial range while being cost effective. In the course of this project, continuation of the collaborative monitoring efforts will be discussed and a plan will be designed for continuation and possible expansion of efforts such as inclusion of additional gears and depth zones. This project will provide immediate information for managers while providing the methodology and template for a long-term BLL survey program for the future. A conference call was held with Foundation staff and collaborators, SC-DNR MARMAP and NMFS SEFSC, to discuss the scheduling of sampling. A planning meeting with all program participants, including industry cooperators, will be held to organize the sampling efforts.

Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition Update

The Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (Coalition) was created by the Foundation in 2011 in conjunction with an award to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (NOAA Award #NA10NMF4770481) to provide support to seafood and tourism stakeholders in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The Coalition, consisting of fishermen, seafood wholesalers and processors, restaurants, chefs, retailers, state marketing executives, tourism, charter boat captains, and Sea Grant, worked on regional and national initiatives to assist seafood marketing efforts amongst the Gulf States with emphasis on working with tourism boards, restaurants, retailers, and chefs. The mission of the Coalition was to become the ultimate marketing support resource for stakeholders to amplify and promote the Gulf region as a whole. The Foundation leveraged the grant funds by collaborating with Gulf States' seafood and tourism marketing boards, to ensure extra valued marketing. We educated consumers about the abundance, variety and taste of Gulf seafood, drove consumption of Gulf seafood and visitation to the Gulf States by participation in events that catered to "seafoodies", media education, online advertising and digital billboards, and building content on the website including unique (underutilized) species information about texture, taste, cooking methods and storage. We provided training for retailers, distributors, chefs, and restaurants about the variety, flavor profile, sustainable, quality seafood in the Gulf to increase sales and perception.

MARKETING INITIATIVES UPDATE —

- The marketing award from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission ended in August 2015.
- Foundation staff is continuing to respond to marketing requests through the website and monitors the Coalition's social media channels. Foundation staff were trained in the intricacies of social media by Zehnder Communications in August. We will continue to post to the social channels to keep exposure for the Coalition.
- The Final Report for the award was approved by Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and hard copies are available by request from the Foundation.

"The Coalition served to educate consumers and buyers of the quality and wholesomeness of our Gulf seafood products at a time when there were many differing perceptions and questions regarding safety."

Chris Nelson, Chairman, Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition, GSAFF Trustee

"Through this Coalition, we've gotten to know each other better and really forged some relationships so that we can cross-promote and work on marketing initiatives together as a region. I think that has been an extremely valuable benefit from having this Coalition."

Chris Blankenship, Coalition Executive Committee, Director of AL Marine Resources Division

Unfortunately the Coalition will be unable to continue its collaborative marketing work due to expiration of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission award and the non-funding of continuation proposals submitted twice to the BP Gulf Tourism and Seafood Promotional Fund and Saltonstall-Kennedy Program. Foundation staff will continue to seek funding to continue this important work.

WEBSITE / SOCIAL MEDIA-

Continue to visit the enhanced Gulf Seafood website! Over 100 recipes can be found on the site with corresponding full-color images. In addition, the ever growing state database of suppliers is presented in the "Find It" tool, which allows users to locate Gulf Seafood near them based on geography, species, and seller-type. Also check out Gulf Coast Seafood on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.

www.EatGulfSeafood.com

www.gulfsouthfoundation.org

facebook.com/gulfcoastseafood

twitter.com/EatGulfSeafood

pinterest.com/eatgulfseafood

instagram.com/eatgulfseafood

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Update



The Council met in New Orleans, LA in August and Galveston, TX in October to discuss some of the following fishery issues:

Red Snapper Allocation - Amendment 28

The Council reviewed and took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 28 which reallocates a portion of the commercial red snapper quota to the recreational sector. The Council's preferred alternative - Alternative 8 - would allocate the increase in allowable harvest due to the recalibration of MRIP catch estimates to the recreational sector. The resulting allocation for 2016 - 2017 would be 48.5% commercial and 51.5% recreational. The Council also took final action on a related framework action to retain a portion of the commercial red snapper quota in 2016 to ensure that the IFQ quota intended for reallocation is not distributed among commercial fishermen before Amendment 28 is implemented.

Gag and Black Grouper Framework Action

The Council took final action on a framework action that considers changing the gag season and recreational minimum size limit, and the black grouper recreational minimum size limit. The minimum recreational size limit for gag and black grouper will increase to 24 inches total length, the opening date of the recreational gag season will change to June 1 to coincide with the opening of the red snapper season, the December 3-31 fixed closed season for gag will be removed. Additionally, the Council asked staff to begin a framework action that looks to increase the commercial minimum size limit for gag to 24 inches total length, in order to be consistent with the proposed recreational minimum size limit. The commercial size limit for black grouper is already 24 inches total length.

Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper - Reef Fish Amendment 39

The Council continued discussions on Amendment 39 which divides the recreational red snapper quota among regions to allow for the creation of different management measures that better suit each area. The Council has selected to sunset this action if implemented after 5 years after implementation. The Council will conduct another round of public hearings throughout the Gulf coast October 19 - November 2. Final action is expected during the January, 2016 Council meeting.

Other Reef Fish

During the October meeting, the Council voted to explore working with a consortium of scientists to assist with stock assessments as a way to enhance the SEDAR process.

Shrimp

The Council reviewed a public hearing draft of Amendment 17A that addresses the October 2016 expiration of the shrimp permit moratorium and maintaining the royal red shrimp endorsement. Public hearings on the amendment will be scheduled in early January. Shrimp Amendment 17B was also discussed. This amendment considers shrimp permit issues such as setting a minimum threshold number of Gulf shrimp vessel permits and whether to create a Gulf shrimp vessel permit reserve pool, specification of optimum yield, and issues about transiting in federal waters.

(Gulf Council Update—August 2015, October 2015)

For more information about Gulf Council activities, please visit www.gulfcouncil.org

Foundation Program Director Frank Helies was recently appointed to the following advisory panels:

Gulf of Mexico:

- Shrimp Advisory Panel
- Data Collection Advisory Panel
- Outreach and Education Technical Committee

South Atlantic:

- Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Update



The Council met in Hilton Head, SC in September 2015. Some of the issues tackled by the Council:

Snapper Grouper Amendment 36—Spawning Special Management Zones (SMZs)

After reviewing both written and public comment received during a second round of public hearings, the Council narrowed their preferred alternatives to five of the 11 SMZs as proposed in amendment: 1) a five square mile area off the coast of North Carolina known as the South Cape Lookout site; 2) a 3.1 square mile area off the coast of Georgetown, South Carolina called "Devil's Hole" or "Georgetown Hole"; 3) a 2.99 square mile artificial reef site off the coast of South Carolina known as Area 51; 4) a 2.99 square mile artificial reef site off the coast of South Carolina known as Area 53; and 5) a one square mile area off the east coast of the Florida Keys referred to as the "Warsaw Hole". Fishing for species in the snapper-grouper fishery management complex and anchoring would be prohibited within the proposed Spawning SMZs. However, fishermen would be allowed to troll for pelagic species such as dolphin, tuna, and billfish in the areas. Restricting bottom fishing is designed to help protect habitat and fish that gather there to spawn, resulting in the production of more eggs and larvae that could help recruitment of juvenile fish. The areas would also help reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality for snapper-grouper species, including speckled hind and Warsaw grouper, two species that have been candidates for listing as threatened under the ESA.

The Council reviewed public input regarding Spawning SMZs that varied from strong support for larger proposed sites to opposition to any designated areas. Council members once again reviewed proposed candidate sites, acknowledging concerns about the need for additional research to document spawning activity, enforcement issues, and impacts of additional restrictions. The Council also discussed the biological benefits shown from protecting spawning areas, including those in the Dry Tortugas and Riley's Hump in the Gulf of Mexico, and recent cooperative research conducted on candidate sites included in the amendment.

In addition to selecting the five proposed Spawning SMZs, the Council included additional alternatives for sunset provisions that would require the areas be reauthorized after a period of time, based on their effectiveness. A System Management Plan is being developed in conjunction with Amendment 36 to address research/monitoring needs, law enforcement, and outreach for any implemented Spawning SMZs. The Council will review the management alternatives again during its December 7-11, 2015 meeting in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. If approved by the Council, Amendment 36 must also be approved by the Secretary of Commerce before measures are implemented, possibly before the end of 2016.

Other Items

The Council continued to address management measures for **blueline tilefish** after receiving a report from its SSC that will allow an increase in the total annual catch limit from the current 53,548 pounds to 224,100 pounds. The Council is developing a framework amendment to allow the increase and also modify the current bag limit of 1 fish/vessel/day May through August and the commercial trip limit. Public hearings on proposed framework measures will be held via webinar in November 2015.

For the first time in management history, the commercial fishery for **dolphin** fish closed in federal waters along the Atlantic coast on June 30, 2015 after meeting its annual catch limit. Amendment 8 to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan, approved by the Council in December 2014, will increase the annual catch limit for dolphin. The Council approved a Control Date of June 30, 2015 for the commercial dolphin fishery. The Council is also considering measures to implement a commercial trip limit for dolphin. Public hearings on a framework amendment will be held via webinar in November.

New measures are also being considered for **hogfish** stocks in the South Atlantic after an assessment identified a Florida Keys/East Florida stock and a Georgia/North Carolina stock. Amendment 37 contains measures to end overfishing for the FL Keys/East Florida stock including increasing size limits, decreasing bag limits, limiting the season for the recreational fishery to two months, and establishing commercial trip limits. Public hearings are currently planned for January/February 2016.

New Publications and Science Seminar Focus on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill's Impact on Fisheries

The Sea Grant Oil Spill Science Outreach Team has released its first oil spill science outreach publications. These publications share the latest science about:

Fisheries Landings and Disasters in the Gulf of Mexico – Learn about historical fisheries landings data within the context of manmade and natural disasters. Explore why this data is important for fisheries management.

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill's Impact on Gulf Seafood – Learn about the results of federal, state and independent seafood testing after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Please follow the link <https://gulfseagrant.wordpress.com/oilspilloutreach/publications> to view and download these outreach publications.

The Oil Spill Outreach Team will also be offering a seminar on fisheries:

Oil Spill Science Seminar: Healthy Gulf Seafood - Nov 18, 2015 in Long Beach, MS

Learn how agencies tested seafood during and after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, how fish and other animals break down oil and other contaminants, and how scientists monitoring seafood to keep consumers safe. This seminar is free and open to all. To register, visit

<http://gulfseagrant.org/oilspilloutreach/presentations/>

The Sea Grant programs in the Gulf of Mexico have partnered with the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) to create an oil spill science outreach program. GoMRI is a \$500 million research program that aims to mitigate the impacts of hydrocarbon pollution and stressors on the marine environment and public health from the spill, as well as improve society's understanding of oil spill issues. GoMRI provides support to the Sea Grant programs of the Gulf of Mexico (Florida, Mississippi-Alabama, Louisiana and Texas). The oil spill science outreach team creates outreach publications and organizes science seminars. They share peer reviewed oil spill science with people whose livelihoods depend on a healthy Gulf. For more information please contact:

Larissa Graham, Oil Spill Science Extension Specialist

Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium

Office: (251) 438-5690, Larissa.Graham@auburn.edu

2015

UPCOMING EVENTS

November

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| 2-5 | Joint Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission / Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Fall Meeting , Renaissance World Golf Village Resort, St. Augustine, FL. |
| 16-19 | National Working Waterfronts and Waterways Symposium , Hilton Tampa Downtown, Tampa, FL. |

December

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| 7-11 | South Atlantic Fishery Management Council , Doubletree by Hilton Oceanfront Hotel, Atlantic Beach, NC. |
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2016

January

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| 25-29 | Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council , Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL. |
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