

Gulf of Mexico Oil Disaster Outreach Activities and Seafood Marketing Coalition

GSMFC Contract # DPM-925-027-2011 (#117/121/124/126)

FINAL REPORT



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I. Abstract

The Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (Coalition) was created by the Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. (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.

II. Purpose

Description of Problem:

On April 20, 2010 the British Petroleum (BP) drilling rig Deep Water Horizon exploded in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) approximately 50 miles south of the mouth of the Mississippi River. The site of the explosion is recognized as the location of some of the nation's most productive commercial and recreational pelagic and reef fish fisheries. Seen almost immediately were the catastrophic effects of the explosion that included injured workers and the loss of 11 lives. As the

rig continued to burn, it ultimately lost buoyancy and two days later sank in approximately 5,000 feet of water as significant amounts of oil discharged from the broken wellhead. After three months the well was finally capped.

Among the early recognized impacts of the disaster was the closure of commercial and recreational fishing grounds in both off-shore and near shore/inshore waters for the protection of fishermen and consumers. NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS) instituted the first emergency fishing closure for both the commercial and recreational sectors on May 2, 2010, and the size of the closure ranged from 4.5—36% of Gulf waters. BP began the Vessels of Opportunity (VOO) program to involve fishermen in the cleanup and recoup some of their lost income. The economic impacts to the fishing industry are still being quantified; but it is recognized without a doubt that the demand for Gulf products came to a standstill, resulting in the closure of numerous processors, distributors and wholesale businesses throughout the Gulf region in addition to the direct impacts on fishermen.

Protocols were put in place by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to reopen the closed fishing areas. This process began on July 22, 2010, and the NMFS and FDA continue to sample seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside- and market-based sampling (NMFS, 2010). As fishers were allowed to move back to harvesting, the greatest challenge became marketing Gulf seafood as safe to eat. The commercial fisheries of the Gulf States provide significant jobs, income, and sales impact in the United States.

The Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (Coalition) was created in 2011 through a grant from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission's (GSMFC) Oil Disaster Relief Program. The primary goal was to provide additional layers of support to seafood community stakeholders in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas as they work to advance the sale and consumption of seafood that comes from the Gulf of Mexico. The Coalition provided the framework for coordinating seafood marketing efforts amongst the Gulf States with emphasis on working with tourism boards, restaurants, retailers, and chefs. The mission was to harness the collective intelligence of the States and become the ultimate marketing support resource for the member stakeholders to amplify and promote the Gulf region as a whole.

The 19 member Coalition operated under a specific set of by-laws (Appendix A) and was composed of a mix of key seafood community stakeholders from the southeast, including tourism boards, restaurants, retailers, processors, wholesalers, commercial fishermen, Sea Grant agents, chefs, charter boat fishers, and state seafood marketing executives. Members of the Coalition included either fishermen or organizations that represent a majority of the fishermen and seafood community in the Gulf Coast region, including the Southeastern Fisheries Association, Southern Shrimp Alliance, and American Shrimp Processors Association.

From consumer and industry research conducted in 2011, the Coalition's mission was developed to provide a cohesive vision and overarching initiatives to showcase Gulf seafood, become the ultimate media source for up-to-date information about the Gulf, and increase support for Gulf Coast Seafood.

The largest value produced by the Coalition was the ability to work for the benefit of the entire region. Each Gulf State has its own marketing arm to promote their local seafood. The Coalition worked to combine and collaborate, not compete with, the individual States' efforts for maximum efficiency and impact. For example, retail partnerships organized by the Coalition provided product from multiple states and market that product as Gulf. Additionally, we combined efforts for special events, such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium "Cooking for Solutions", where donated product also comes from multiple states while the overall message remains the same, "Eat Gulf Seafood". The Coalition provided an opportunity for the entire region to benefit from a concerted effort to promote wild harvested Gulf of Mexico seafood.

The main objective of this project was to expediently establish the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (Coalition). The Coalition represented all components of the seafood distribution chain and coordinated efforts of the Gulf States to provide cohesive vision and overarching strategies to "polish the Gulf seafood image" so that consumers again embraced eating Gulf seafood.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate and administer programs addressing Gulf seafood marketing activities;
2. Coordinate and oversee the creation and management of the Coalition; and
3. Development of immediate and long term strategies for Gulf seafood.

III. Approach

Statement of Work:

Coordinate and Administer Gulf Seafood Marketing Activities

- a. Develop and administer contracts deemed necessary by the Coalition and the GSMFC; including review and approval of necessary and related invoices for services rendered under the terms of approved contracts;
- b. Coordinate meetings, including Executive Committee and Coalition meetings;
- c. Provide administrative oversight to the program;
- d. Prepare required reports and approved documents for the Coalition and GSMFC Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to review, no less than semi-annually; and
- e. If requested by the GSMFC, represent the program at public meetings to disseminate program information.

Creation of the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition

Planning Meeting:

A six member Executive Committee, comprised of five Gulf seafood stakeholders (one from each Gulf State) and one Commission Ad Hoc Committee member, were selected for participation on the Executive Committee for the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition. The selection was based on input from the Foundation's Executive Committee and Commission staff.

The Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition Executive Committee Planning Meeting was held April 5-6, 2011, in Tampa, FL. The Executive Committee consisted of Foundation President Mr. Bob Jones, Foundation Vice-President Mr. Mike Voisin, and Foundation Trustees Mr. Chris Nelson, Mr. Patrick Riley, and Mr. Harlon Pearce. Also in attendance were Foundation Marketing Director Ms. Joanne Zaritsky and Foundation staff, Ms. Judy Jamison, Ms. Gwen Hughes and Mr. Frank Helies. Mr. Chris Blankenship and Mr. Ralph Hode with the Commission attended in an advisory capacity.

Discussion topics included: goals of the planning meeting, development of Coalition by-laws, development of coalition objectives and procedures, review of slogans provided by the states, discussion of primary industry needs and selection of Coalition membership.

Membership:

Foundation staff and the Coalition Executive Committee invited seafood stakeholders to represent the sectors as members and alternates of the Coalition. Coalition membership resulted in the following:

- a. 5 State Associations/Processors/Wholesalers/Commercial Fishermen (one from each Gulf State – AL, FL, LA, MS, TX)
- b. 5 State Marketing Executives (one from each Gulf State)
- c. 1 Executive Chef
- d. 1 Retail Grocery Chain
- e. 1 Independent Seafood Market
- f. 1 Restaurant Chain
- g. 1 Sea Grant Representative
- h. 1 Tourism Executive
- i. 1 Charter Boat/For Hire Representative
- j. 1 GSMFC Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee Representative, ODRP
- k. 1 Ex-Officio Member – Disaster Recovery Coordinator for GSMFC

Meetings:

Foundation staff working closely with the Seafood Marketing Director, made meeting arrangements, audited and prepared reimbursements for Coalition members travel, and preparation of meeting Briefing Books; also worked closely with any invited Presenters to ensure their Power Points were provided, etc.

Full Coalition Meetings were held:

- May 23-26, 2011 - New Orleans, LA
- August 3-4, 2011 - New Orleans, LA
- October 19-20, 2011 - New Orleans, LA
- March 11, 2012 - Boston, MA
- October 18-19, 2012 - Point Clear, AL
- March 9, 2013 - Boston, MA
- November 13-14, 2013 - New Orleans, LA
- April 17, 2014 – conference call
- October 15, 2014 - Gulfport, MS
- April 22, 2015 - New Orleans, LA

Executive Committee Meetings were held:

- August 11, 2012 - New Orleans, LA
- August 2, 2013 - New Orleans, LA
- August 19, 2014 – conference call

Development of Marketing Goals:

The marketing strategic plan to showcase Gulf seafood and its hardworking fishermen and communities was presented by The Food Group to the Coalition at the October, 2011 meeting. The three marketing firms chosen by the Coalition worked together to formulate the plan.

Zehnder Communications was the lead firm the Coalition utilized to develop the Gulf Coast Seafood brand and logo. Three designs with various messaging were presented to the Coalition via a webinar/conference call on November 9, 2011. Comments and suggestions were given on the designs and the group voted for the logo shown at the beginning of this report.

Foundation staff worked with Ms. Marie Breaux, Milling Benson Woodward, LLP, with the legal process necessary to trademark the Coalition brand and logo.

Strategic plans were developed and approved by the Coalition for each year of the award.

Marketing Initiatives

Consumer Research:

Foundation staff and the Seafood Marketing Coordinator prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) for in-depth consumer research. After review and approval by the Foundation and Coalition Executive Committees, the RFP was disseminated to research companies and minority vendors. The RFP was placed on the Foundation and Commission's websites, along with RFP websites to ensure wide dissemination. In addition, staff prepared and distributed a response to questions submitted for the RFP on in-depth consumer research.

Staff prepared scoring criteria and summaries of the 10 proposals received in response to the RFP. These were provided to the RFP Review Committee to assist with evaluation of the proposals. The Review Committee met prior to the full Coalition meeting in May, 2011. Four

proposals were selected by the Review Committee and were provided to the Coalition members for review and recommendations. After discussion by members during the Coalition meeting, the Big/New South Research firm was selected to conduct the in-depth consumer research. After selection of the firm, the Coalition selected Coalition members (Mr. Kyle Stevens, Mr. Chris Nelson, Dr. Chuck Adams and Ms. Susan Costello) to assist the Foundation's Seafood Marketing Coordinator in providing guidance to the selected firm, which included review of survey instruments and passing on knowledge about the Gulf seafood industry.

Part of the consumer research involved focus group sessions in several national markets. Ms. Zaritsky and Mr. Helies evaluated the first focus group sessions in Tampa, FL to provide feedback to Big/New South Research regarding the direction stated at the Coalition's first meeting.

BIG Communications was contracted to conduct follow-up consumer research on Gulf seafood in 2014. A conference call was held on June 25, 2014 to review logistics and discuss the first drafts of research tools (online/telephone questionnaire and moderators guides for in-depth interviews). The online/telephone interviews were completed in August 2014. In-depth interviews with restaurants and grocers were completed in September 2014. Additionally, three interviews with distributors were conducted in August 2014 and two in September 2014. Research results were presented at the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting in October 2014 in Gulfport, MS.

Key findings from the 2014 national survey of 1,800 consumers:

- Cost and availability are two primary hurdles
- Freshness is most important trait in choosing seafood - saw growth in sustainability, localness and place of origin
- Taste, flavor and variety are important decision makers
- Those who ate the least seafood, ate shrimp --- those who ate oysters, ate everything
- National trend is toward bolder, more exotic flavors, especially Asian and Latin cuisine
- Only 5% of the nationwide survey state they wouldn't recommend Gulf seafood because of the oil spill.

Key findings of 40 in-depth interviews with distributors, restaurants and retailers:

- Consumers are looking for healthier, easy-to-prepare grocery products and local and seasonal offerings in restaurants
- The Gulf region has a down-home personality, with respondents describing Gulf seafood as flavorful and fresh, with a variety of species
- May industry respondents stated the only barrier to buying more Gulf seafood is there just isn't enough
- Increase consumer preference for wild-caught
- Greater emphasis on high cost being a barrier to all seafood
- Reduced portion sizes in high-end restaurants and retailers
- Awareness of traceability has grown exponentially
- Deeper awareness of sustainability in the industry
- Preference for seafood that is locally available
- Purchasers rely on suppliers for excellence in quality product, time from boat to the table and product uniformity

Request for Qualifications for Public Relations:

Working closely with the Foundation's Seafood Marketing Director, Foundation staff prepared and after review and approval by the Foundation and Coalition Executive Committees, disseminated a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for marketing and public relations services. The Foundation mailed a set of RFQ submissions (27 received) to the RFQ Review Committee which included Coalition Chairman Mike Voisin, Vice-Chairman Chris Nelson, Mr. Ralph Hode and Mr. Harlon Pearce for their review. Ms. Zaritsky and staff provided score sheets for each submission to the Committee and a Webinar meeting was held on July 25 with the RFQ Review Committee, Foundation Seafood Marketing Director and Foundation staff for review of the RFQ submissions. During the meeting, a spreadsheet was utilized to tabulate the RFQ scores; as a result of this meeting, five firms were selected to present their proposals at the August, 2011 Coalition meeting. Presentations by the five firms were carried out at the August meeting and as a result, the Coalition felt it would be beneficial to select three firms to carry out the marketing and public relations activities. The firms selected included: The Food Group would be the lead firm; Edelman and Zehnder would provide additional services as directed by the Coalition; all firms worked closely with the Seafood Marketing Director, Foundation staff and the Coalition.

Alabama Governor's Mansion Event:

Working closely with Foundation staff and Edelman, Ms. Zaritsky held conference calls to coordinate the media event for the 2011 Great American Seafood Cook Off winner Alabama Chef Jim Smith.

A media event was conducted on October 13 at 10:00 am – noon with Chef Jim Smith and St. Martin High School 4-H Cooking Team. The strategy for this event was to build visibility for Gulf Coast seafood, the Great American Seafood Cook-off and Chef Jim Smith, winner of the Cook-off. This was accomplished by generating awareness of the "Aspiring Chefs" with high school winners of the 4-H Great American Cook-off, receiving hands-on cooking session with the 2011 "King of Seafood" and executive chef for the Governor of Alabama at the Governor's Mansion.

Smithsonian Institution "Demystifying Seafood":

The Foundation was a sponsor for the "Demystifying Seafood" event held June 8-9, 2011 at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC. Ms. Zaritsky, with assistance from Foundation staff, coordinated with Gulf Chefs, Coalition and Ad Hoc Committee members who attended; provided logos and descriptions of Gulf seafood products to include in chefs recipes; wrote and distributed media talking points for chefs; wrote an essay for the Smithsonian website; and assisted Coalition members, Mr. Mike Voisin and Mr. Patrick Riley, with preparations for their participation as speakers on two industry panels.

Marketing Firm Activities:

Edelman:

Edelman was responsible for the media relations activities for the Coalition. Outreach was conducted on a variety of topics and events to national, local, regional, business, online, and trade publications. The agency introduced the Coalition to media and worked with them

throughout the award period to develop story angles resulting in positive pieces for the Coalition (Appendix B).

Media Crisis Plan / Crisis Communications

Edelman was responsible for creating the Media Crisis Plan for use by Coalition members. The Plan contained important talking points and strategies to use when discussing potentially negative topics with the media.

While the plan was presented and in the process of being approved, a crisis created waves in the Gulf region and the plan was immediately activated. Al Jazeera printed an article regarding deformities in Gulf Coast seafood prior to the second anniversary of the oil spill. The reporter interviewed local researchers and scientists who all agreed that the deformities were caused by the oil spill. The information was false and had the potential to be damaging to the industry. The Associated Press (AP) immediately got wind of the article and distributed their spin of the same news angle. More than 800 local newspapers re-printed the AP and AL Jazeera articles. Additionally, Coalition members had mentioned that they received calls from other media outlets such as *Wall Street Journal*. Edelman immediately scheduled a call with the Coalition to discuss a reactive approach.

Tactics used to conquer the inaccurate and false articles:

- Researchers outreach – Edelman reached out to the researchers who were quoted in the piece to determine why and what information was provided to Al Jazeera, as well as inform them that their quotes could be damaging to their hometown industry. Edelman was able to help a researcher understand the situation therefore resulting in a future relationship.
- State of the Gulf “Op-ed” – Edelman drafted an op-ed on behalf of Mike Voisin that addressed the recent false articles that were published. The op-ed assured readers that the Gulf Coast has bounced back from the oil spill. Tourism was up and the seafood was safe and ready to enjoy. The op-ed was distributed to the Gulf States and national media outlets. It was picked up in all five states.
- Pro-active outreach – To get ahead of the articles, Edelman reached out to national publications to determine if they were planning on any articles surrounding the Gulf. The team reached out to AP, Reuters, Huffington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, CNN, etc. Edelman spoke to a second AP reporter who was in the process of writing a more balanced piece about Gulf Coast Seafood. Huffington Post was in the process of writing a similar piece to the Al Jazeera, but did not end up distributing because of the conflicting messages that were out in the public – Gulf Seafood is not safe vs. Gulf Seafood is safe.

Additionally, Edelman counseled and assisted with other media crises including:

- Oyster reef contamination (LA)
- Delay in shrimp openings (AL)
- Misinformation and misrepresentation of research
- *Men’s Journal* false information
- Zooplankton
- NRDA vs. FDA

- FDA Allowed Unsafe Seafood Onto Market After BP Oil Spill Disaster
- BP settlement
- Safety of Gulf seafood in the *Houston Chronicle*

Edelman coordinated a conference call with the Gulf Oyster Industry Council chairman and vice-chairman and Ms. Zaritsky regarding a swimmer dying in Florida due to *Vibrio vulnificus*. Edelman prepared an informational packet on crisis messaging for the industry. In addition, Edelman coordinated media interviews with Mr. Chris Nelson regarding status of oyster industry.

Media Monitoring

Edelman monitored online, broadcast and print media outlets on a daily basis and compiled a weekly media monitoring report. The report contained positive, neutral and negative coverage about Gulf Coast seafood. It was useful to determine story angles or upcoming issues or crisis.

Press Releases

Edelman composed and distributed the following press releases during the award period:

- Alabama Governor's 4-H Cooking event
- December Holiday Recipes
- Valentine's Day Recipes
- Gulf Coast photo tour
- IBSS pre-Launch
- IBSS Launch post-show
- October Seafood Month
- National Seafood Month
- "Find it" app
- Retail promotions
 - o Hannaford Grocery Partnership
 - o Wegman's Partnership
 - o Hy-Vee Partnership
 - o Wintzell's Oyster House Promotion
- Shrimp season
- "Survey Findings"

Media Familiarization (FAM) Tours

Edelman coordinated a tour for media in Alabama on October 1-3, 2012. The tour included chefs from participating Gulf States preparing seafood dishes for the media, boat tour of the Gulf, processing plant tour, visit to a retail market, meals at local restaurants, and roundtable discussions with media, FDA, NOAA, state marketing executives, Coalition members, and state chefs.

In December 2012, Edelman coordinated a New York City media tour with Coalition member Chef Brian Landry and Ms. Zaritsky. The team met with a total of 17 influential media, secured interest for a remote interview/placement from another six writers, reconnected with a Gulf

seafood advocate from the media, and created what will likely be a long-term relationship with an extremely influential chef.

A FAM Tour / Brand Recovery event was held May 6-8, 2013 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Instead of waiting for potentially negative stories to land that require a reactive strategy, Edelman recommended developing and implementing a proactive approach that provides the Coalition with a platform to tell its own story and educate influencers. This represented a shift in the media relations strategy defined by the Coalition – from a purely marketing communications strategy of “Eat Gulf Seafood” to one that proactively educated and openly discussed the health of the Gulf, environmental issues, sustainability and species education. Fourteen media attended the tour.

Edelman, with assistance from the Louisiana Seafood Marketing and Promotion Board and Mississippi Department of Natural Resources, held a Blogger FAM tour for five prominent food bloggers and two local writers from Mississippi. The FAM tour included a welcome dinner, shrimp boat tour, processing plant tour, roundtable discussion with industry, and many Gulf seafood meals.

Ms. Zaritsky and Chef Landry met with nine media outlets, including Cosmopolitan, Food & Wine, Good Housekeeping and Food Republic, during the NYC media tour on February 23-26, 2015 to discuss the benefits of Gulf Seafood, sustainability, and the Coalition and Chef as a resource for articles and the upcoming shrimp season. Chef Landry prepared shrimp etouffee for editors of Every Day with Rachel Ray and Meredith Publications. Media were also gifted a jar of pickled shrimp and the shrimp infographics. From the media tour, Food Republic an online food channel requested four recipes from the Coalition website.

Matte Releases

A matte release for nationwide small markets to reach consumers in “B” and “C” towns where ongoing outreach to their papers would not be justified by a single placement was developed. The matte release resided in a “bank” available to editors in the small towns who will use the article in their paper. The topic of the release was “Grilling with Shrimp.” It was distributed in April 2013 to newspapers and online websites. The release has garnered more than 637 placements, 46 million impressions and over \$175,000 in publicity value to date. The Fall entertainment matte release was distributed on September 6, 2013 with 450 placements and resulted in 37 million impressions.

A summer grilling matte release was distributed and reached over 1.7 million readers.

“Add seafood to your family’s dinner” matt release was posted and reached over 48 million impressions.

In January 2015, “Spice up Dinner with Shrimp” matt release was posted with 1,351 placements and 170 million impressions at an add value of \$70K and PR value of \$212k.

Other Initiatives

Edelman created “Fact Sheets” for distribution in media kits and for the website.

Edelman coordinated a PR Summit on January 25, 2013 in New Orleans, LA with agencies that handle public relations for the Gulf States. The Summit was to coordinate on-going and future efforts with media.

An oyster fact sheet was completed and was included in the resource kits.

Ms. Zaritsky attended Edelman's "New Traditions in America's Kitchen" webinar. The webinar was to present the results of a shopper survey. Results stated that 52% of the 500 people surveyed share the grocery shopping with spouses. Taste is most important when choosing foods to purchase. Seventy three percent prefer local product, 90% prefer food that has limited processing, and 1/3 are cooking more at home than in previous years. The media that moms use for cooking ideas the most are: 45% Pinterest, 37% cooking apps, 35% food blogs, 25% follow brands on social media, 21% post food related topics on social media, and 17% follow personalities on Twitter.

Six e-How videos were produced with Chef Brian Landry to be available on the e-How search database for preparing Gulf seafood.

Edelman coordinated a *Food Safety News* article for the Gulf Seafood Trace program and the partnership with the Coalition.

Edelman produced a Vibriosis Response Toolkit for the Coalition and interested parties.

Edelman coordinated the donation of seafood to *Eating Well* magazine for an article which included an interview with Chef Landry.

Edelman coordinated Chef Timineri and the Florida Department of Agriculture's segment on The Daily Buzz. The segment reached 155 US cities with 1.8 million impressions.

Edelman continued work with *Southern Living* including a southern food article for June and Gulf oyster article for December. Ms. Zaritsky provided the states with the opportunity to share the cost of a discount of over 90% full page *Southern Living* ad to promote the "Find It" app. Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and the Gulf Oyster Industry Council purchased the ad for all the Gulf States.

Edelman developed and completed a Bloggers recipe sweepstakes. The Contest was in the month of December 2014 with 277 recipe submissions.

The Food Group:

The Food Group was the lead agency on the following items: creation of the public website (www.eatgulfseafood.com); search engine marketing campaign; file sharing website culinary program; and the International Boston Seafood Show. Additionally, they took the lead for the following foodservice programs: Monterey Bay Cooking for Solutions; Joe's Crab Shack Summer Program; FirstSource Retail Event; Hy-Vee Program; HEB Program; Night at Nordstrom and FirstSource Food Service Event. Their activities included integration of all teams; managed status meetings; performed as the main contact for all vendors/partners; and relationship/partnership builder (Appendix C).

Eat Gulf Seafood Website

The Food Group was responsible for construction of the Coalition's website wireframe, www.eatgulfseafood.com. Work on the website included registration information, event e-blast, chef page, share button, and the interactive species chart. Additionally, Ms. Zaritsky worked with The Food Group and Zehnder on website privacy statements for use of video and photography.

A proposal for Search Engine Marketing was provided to the Executive Committee and approved. After receiving the Search Engine Marketing report for the first two months, Ms. Zaritsky, with the direction of the EC, redirected The Food Group to work on making the website more robust, since the "bounce" rate is very high and the users that visit the site more than likely do not return.

The website was ultimately redesigned by Zehnder.

Retail Partnerships

The Food Group contacted major retail and restaurant companies for partnership opportunities via e-mail and telephone. The Food Group and Ms. Zaritsky worked with Gulf Seafood Trace to require all retail/foodservice buyers who participate in our retail/foodservice programs to have the products in the promotion trace back to the dock or trip ticket.

Partnerships included:

- H-E-B - shrimp and mango skewer sampling in 53 stores.
- Inland Seafood - unfortunately, logistics weren't conducive to the partnership and it was cancelled.
- Kroger Atlanta Division - cancelled the proposed partnership due to not wanting to participate in the Gulf Trace Program.
- Rouses Supermarkets - May 9 – June 6, 2013 in 38 stores throughout Louisiana and Mississippi. Gulf Coast Seafood Gumbo was served at their key stores. The promotion was executed with Chefs USA and included Nobilo, a wine partner.
- Wegmans - 84 stores in New England. The promotion included Gulf shrimp, grouper, snapper, and blue crab. February 6 – March 15, 2015
- Belle Foods - July 3-9, 2013 in 57 stores throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida. The promotion included custom POS and store samplings of Gulf Coast Creole BBQ Shrimp. However, Belle Foods declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy. As required by the LOA, the Coalition did not pay for the promotion.
- Schnucks
- Fresh Direct
- Bonefish
- WinCo - a partnership with Win Co Supermarkets (93 stores on the west coast) over Memorial Day weekend resulted in a 79% increase in Gulf shrimp sales.
- Hannaford Brothers Supermarkets - 185 stores in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont. Also NFL Super Bowl in February 2015.
- Fairway - this is a small retailer in New York.
- Publix
- Market Basket - Thanksgiving 2014

- Schnucks - November 2014
- Roche Bros. - November 2014
- Hy-Vee - March 11, 2015
- New South Restaurants - included table tents, window clings, billboard, radio advertisements, and Gulf oyster menu item.
- Wintzell's - included table tents, posters, server buttons and server incentive contest.

Resource Kit

The Foundation is working with The Food Group on the elements for a Resource Guide for retailers and restaurants.

The Resource Kit for retailers and restaurants was completed. The guide includes species seasonality chart (includes species, seasons, flavor, texture, cooking and similar species), counter card, door cling, ice pick, small logo cling, 10 recipe cards, and in-store training guide.

The Resource Kit for retailers and restaurants was completed during the previous reporting period. The Resource Guide and POS material were printed for the promotions and the materials are available through the website. The guide includes species seasonality chart (includes species, seasons, flavor, texture, cooking and similar species), counter card, door cling, ice pick, small logo cling, 10 recipe cards, and in-store training guide.

Other Initiatives

Meetings with seven foodservice companies are scheduled for the Night at Nordstrom event.

The Coalition participated in the Niketown event on May 20, 2013 - an exclusive event held during the National Restaurant Associations trade show. The Food Group and Ms. Zaritsky networked with key foodservice decision makers, along with providing samples of Gulf Coast seafood. Oysters, blue crab and shrimp with flan corn bread were served.

The Coalition participated in the First Source Foodservice Event in June 2013. It was held for large foodservice volume buyers from organizations that purchase a minimum of \$2M worth of seafood per year. The event featured thirty buyers. Ms. Zaritsky reached out to the States to provide brochures and swag for the event. The Food Group chef reworked the unity salad. Mr. Kyle Kraus attended the event. Fifteen retailers wanted to meet one-on-one with him after his presentation. The Food Group is following up with retailers for customized programs.

The Food Group developed the species seasonality posters.

The Food Group and Ms. Zaritsky worked on a commercial fisherman video series.

The Food Group coordinated and produced cutting board premiums that featured the Gulf Seafood logo. The premiums were sent to retail partners and the Foundation for distribution.

Zehnder:

Zehnder was primarily responsible for the creative components of marketing activities (Appendix D).

Creative

Zehnder worked on the Seafood Business print advertisement, banner stand and sticker design for the IBSS, and creative design for the Coalition website.

A photo / video tour was conducted to highlight Gulf Coast Seafood. They visited port cities and restaurants in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida and documented their experiences through photographs and video. The edited video was used as the “Pump” video during the IBSS launch. visited the following Gulf Coast Seafood related events supplying material and photos for our Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook pages:

- New Orleans Oyster Festival - New Orleans, LA 6/2/12 – 6/3/12
- Hangout Festival - Gulf Shores, AL 5/18/12 – 5/20/12

Zehnder handled the cooperative *Seafood Business* magazine advertisements for February and March of 2013.

A quarterly e-mail blast called “The Catch” was developed to highlight recipes, the States, and interesting information about the Gulf Coast.

At the request of the Coalition, Zehnder produced and distributed an education print piece “Net Results” for the Coalition. This brochure outlined the successes of the Coalition.

A campaign to honor the “World’s Top 100 Seafood Bloggers” was completed. Winners received a “badge” to post on their website.

A new ad was designed for *Seafood Business* magazine. Payment for the advertisement was divided among the five Gulf States and the Foundation.

Zehnder created Gulf seafood table cloths for use at trade events.

A quarterly e-mail blast called “The Catch” was distributed in September 2014 and March 2015 to highlight recipes, the States, and interesting information about the Gulf Coast.

Zehnder assisted with the placement of an ad promoting the “Find It” app in Southern Living magazine’s January 2015 issue and Guy Harvey magazine.

Social Media

This included the creation and maintenance of the “Gulf Coast Seafood” Facebook page and Twitter account. Pinterest and Instagram accounts

Zehnder coordinated a 10 lb. Gulf Shrimp Giveaway through Facebook and Twitter. The shrimp were donated by the Florida Department of Agriculture. The contest garnered 1,104 entries and 484 new Facebook “likes” since its launch.

Zehnder coordinated two social media giveaways. One for Alabama blue crab and a cookbook and the other for Mississippi shrimp. Both were successfully completed.

Zehnder completed a Virtual Road Trip tour through social media in April – May, 2013.

A Mystery Gumbo Pot social media contest was held during the first two weeks of December 2015 which garnered 1,482 entries.

Website

Zehnder took the lead in purchasing the domain name for the website and ultimately took over responsibilities for the Coalition website.

Zehnder conducted a card sort and public questionnaire to improve the website.

Find It Application

The “Find Gulf Coast Seafood” mobile application design was approved and an Executive Committee conference/web call was held for final approval. Ms. Zaritsky spoke with Zehnder to encourage the States to include the addresses of supermarkets that sell Gulf seafood. All of the States’ databases were loaded for the app.

Promotion of the “Find It” mobile application for Apple and Android was completed with minimal promotions due to limited funds.

Video Vignettes

Six video vignettes were created to place on the website and share on social channels. They featured Tony Reisinger; Chris Hastings; Duke Bardwell; John Folsie and Bob Baumhower; Martha Foose and John Currence; and Tucker FitzHugh and Martie Duncan. The videos are available for viewing on the website and You Tube.

International Boston Seafood Show:

The International Boston Seafood Show (IBSS), which took place March 11-13, 2012 in the Boston Convention Center, Boston, Massachusetts, was chosen as the official launch event for the Coalition. Due to the event’s enormous size (over 980 exhibitors and 18,000 plus buyers and sellers from all over the world), it presented an excellent opportunity to increase awareness of the tremendous seafood produced from the Gulf of Mexico.

The Coalition sponsored a breakfast reception for approximately 125 guests including seafood buyers from prominent retailers and restaurants on March 12, 2012. Coalition members shared information about on-going marketing efforts and guests were treated to Gulf Seafood Stuffed Breakfast Crepes with Mornay Sauce, a recipe that was created for the event.

The Coalition unveiled its new website—www.eatgulfseafood.com—at the reception that launched to the public shortly after the reception. The site will be the official Gulf Coast source for consumers, media, seafood buyers and Gulf enthusiasts. The website includes: Gulf news, information about the Coalition, Gulf tourism, recipes, Gulf species, where to buy/find Gulf Seafood products, seafood safety, press announcements, and recipes. The site features information from all five Gulf States and links to each state’s seafood marketing organization.

The Coalition closed its launch day with a panel, *Development of a Regional Seafood Marketing Coalition, the Gulf of Mexico Experience*. Coalition members shared results from the consumer survey on seafood buying patterns. Speakers included: Mr. Chris Nelson - Bon Secour Fisheries;

Ms. Joanne Zaritsky - Foundation; Mr. Mike Voisin - Motivaitit Seafood; Mr. Patrick Riley - Western Seafood Company Inc.; Mr. Robert Novotny - Bonefish Grill; and Mr. Andy Furner - Trace Register LLC.

Gulf Coast Seafood promotional giveaways were developed and printed by Zehnder for the show and included hats, stickers, lapel pins, and coasters with bottle openers.

The State Marketing Executives, Chairman Mr. Chris Nelson and Ms. Zaritsky participated in the conference session “How the Gulf States Can Help You Sell More Gulf Coast Seafood” on March 11, 2013.

Mr. Helies, Mr. Harlon Pearce, and Mr. Robert Champion attended the National Seafood Marketing Coalition luncheon on March 11, 2013 during the show. Mr. Pearce provided an update on the Coalition to attendees.

Ms. Zaritsky and The Food Group met with nine retailers at the show in 2013. The Food Group and Ms. Zaritsky worked on custom programs for each retailer. Additionally, Ms. Zaritsky met with various media outlets while at the show.

On March 13, 2013, Mr. Robert Novotny (Inland Seafood), Mr. Harlon Pearce (Coalition member), Mr. Kyle Kraus (The Food Group), Ms. Zaritsky and representatives from Gulf Trace and Trace Register met in Boston to decide how to handle the Inland Seafood pilot promotion. The group decided not to go forward with the salespersons’ incentive program. The Coalition will work with large retail and restaurant chains that would like to have customized Gulf Coast Seafood promotions.

Ms. Zaritsky attended the Seafood Expo North America in Boston, MA on March 16-18, 2014. She presented information about the Coalition during the *Gulf seafood TODAY: Marketing, Traceability, and Sustainability* session on Sunday March 16 at the Expo. Also, on the panel were Mr. Alex Miller (GSMFC), Ms. Julianna Mullen (Audubon Institute), and Ms. Karen Profita (LA Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board).

Edelman secured 11 media appointments at the Seafood Expo North America in Boston in March 2014.

The Food Group met with Wegmans, Publix, Winco, Associated Grocers, Darden, Cheddar’s, Hard Rock Café, Ignite Group, Legal Seafood, Fairway Markets, Ahold, and Whole Foods during the 2014 Seafood Expo North America in Boston.

Events:

Night at Nordstrom: May 7, 2012 - An exclusive event held during the National Restaurant Show in Chicago, IL with 700-800 pre-qualified purchasing decision makers from targeted top chains, hotels and chain feeders. Final attendance reached 828 key foodservice industry professionals. One-on-one conversations between Ms. Zaritsky and key attendees occurred. The event increased awareness of the Coalition through promotional materials and one on-ones. Specifically, Ms. Zaritsky spoke with representatives from McAllister’s Restaurant, Beef O’Brady Restaurants, Bayou Baratavia Foods, The Good Foodie, and Dickie Breenan regarding Gulf Coast seafood promotions.

Monterey Bay Aquarium: Cooking for Solutions

- May 18-20, 2012 - Seafood products were provided in-kind for their Meet the Chef's Reception, Friday Night Gala, and Saturday Salute to the Gulf Coast Breakfast. Seventy-five chefs were in attendance, along with media and a target audience of "Seafoodies". Ms. Zaritsky attended and handled seafood donations, requested Coalition member attendance, media guide, and chef resources fliers.
- The Gulf States agreed to donate product for Monterey Bay Aquarium's "Cooking for Solutions" events held on May 16-18, 2013. Celebrity chefs used Gulf shrimp and oysters. Ms. Zaritsky spoke with the LA Times, USA Today and other media while at the event. Chefs Art Smith, Lorena Garcia and Nathan Lyon did an excellent job promoting Gulf product.
- Ms. Zaritsky promoted Gulf seafood at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Cooking For Solutions events in May 2014. Gulf shrimp was served by three celebrity chefs during the events.

New York City Media Tour - Members of the Coalition, Coalition Chairman Mr. Mike Voisin, Ms. Zaritsky, Chef Randy Evans and Chef Brian Landry, traveled to New York City May 22 – May 24 to conduct backgrounding sessions with national media. The purpose of the trip was to build visibility for Gulf Coast Seafood Coalition among New York City based national consumer, business and trade media; position the Gulf Coast Seafood Coalition and the website www.eatgulfseafood.com as the official source for Gulf Coast news; and work with media to encourage consumers / readers to request, purchase and eat more Gulf Coast seafood. Edelman scheduled one-on-one backgrounding sessions with eight national consumer and business publications such as Bloomberg / BusinessWeek and scheduled two cooking demonstrations on the national morning shows "Wake up with AI" and "Your Weather Today" with Chef Brian Landry.

First Source: Retail Seafood Buyer Event on June 5-7, 2012 - A hosted-buyer event for the retail seafood industry. Combining exclusive product presentations, product tastings, and private, one-on-one meetings with key buyers, such as: Wegman's, Supervalu, Price Chopper, Save a Lot, Sobey's, and Weis Markets. Ms. Zaritsky attended with retail buyers at the event in Miami, FL. The event showcased Gulf Coast Seafood to buyers and let them know that the Coalition can provide them with promotional support and materials to help increase sales for Gulf Coast Seafood. The team encouraged sampling, recipes, custom POS, and employee contests to add excitement about Gulf Coast Seafood to seafood retail counters and increase sales. The Coalition enjoyed 8 scheduled meetings, 2 ad hoc meetings and successfully networked with almost every buyer of Gulf Coast seafood in attendance.

Ms. Zaritsky manned a table and served Gulf seafood at the Niketown VIP event during the National Restaurant Show in May 2014 in Chicago, IL.

Miscellaneous Marketing Activities:

Bi-weekly conference calls with the Coalition State Marketing Executives and Foundation staff were held to discuss partnerships, state activities and Coalition activities. Summaries of these calls were prepared by Ms. Zaritsky.

Ms. Zaritsky conducted bi-weekly Gulf Integrated Status conference calls with the three marketing firms.

Ms. Zaritsky was interviewed by multiple media outlets: Seafood News regarding Hy-Vee retail program; freelance media member about women in seafood and social media; Louisiana Seafood News; Intrafish; and freelance media member to discuss seafood available from the Gulf. Progress Grocers, The Passionate Foodie, Perishable News, Food Manufacturing, QSR Magazine, Seafood Business, Seafood News, Grocery Headquarters, Upstart, Ask Men, Plate Magazine, Quick Frozen Foods Magazine, Food Arts, Huffington Post, Examiner, Food Processing & Wellness Foods magazine, momtrends, Health Magazine, Weight watchers, Shape, Redbook, Texas Monthly, LA Times, USA Today, Louisiana News, Times Free Press, Gulf Seafood Institute, Supermarket News, Marketing News, and The Daily Beast.

Ms. Zaritsky was interviewed and provided an overview of the Foundation and Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition to WBHM-FM/WSGN-FM, a NPR radio station in Birmingham, AL.

Working closely with the LA Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board on events being held in conjunction with the anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, on April 19, 2011, Ms. Zaritsky provided a summary of the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition during the Louisiana Seafood Stakeholders Summit and attended the American Culinary Federation Panel - The Gulf Coast, A Year Later.

Ms. Zaritsky attended the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission's first meeting held on June 24, 2011 in Mobile, AL, where she provided an overview of the Foundation's Seafood Marketing Program and outlined the Goals and Objectives of the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition. Ms. Zaritsky indicated that the Foundation and Coalition support the Commission's marketing efforts and are available for any assistance they can provide.

Ms. Zaritsky had a conference call on August 10, 2011 with Ms. Bethany Walton the Alabama Sea Grant Coordinator, relating to Alabama Market Maker.

Ms. Zaritsky discussed how the Coalition was set-up, including by-laws and procedures with the Director of the Alabama Marketing Commission Mr. Pete Barber and his assistant Ms. Barbara Estes to provide assistance with setting up said Commission.

Ms. Zaritsky was interviewed in September 2011 by the Mississippi Press Register and Well Magazine, where she provided a summary of the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition and Foundation's Marketing Program.

On September 28, 2011 Ms. Zaritsky attended the Tennessee Aquarium chef cook-off with Mr. Alton Brown, Celebrity Chef. The event highlighted the aquarium's new sustainable seafood program called "Serve & Protect". Mr. Brown is encouraging consumers and chefs to enjoy domestic seafood, while promoting eating a variety of seafood.

Ms. Zaritsky participated in a webinar for Monterey Bay's Seafood Watch program updates on October 12, 2012. "The Spirit of the Gulf" – Ms. Zaritsky assisted the States and BP to promote this event during the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, England.

Ms. Zaritsky worked with LA, MS, AL and FL to combine their efforts for a booth at the Inland Seafood Show in September. LA and FL did not have product at the event. AL and MS brought oysters and shrimp, respectively.

Ms. Zaritsky worked with the Mississippi Restaurant Association and The Focus Group for the “Shrimp Has A Tale” promotion. The Coalition is supporting these efforts through social media.

Ms. Zaritsky met with Seminole Gaming in Tampa, FL on January 15, 2013 to discuss a Gulf Coast seafood promotion at their high-end restaurants.

Ms. Zaritsky attended and presented to the Gulf Oyster Industry Council during meetings in Washington, DC on January 28 - February 1, 2013.

Ms. Zaritsky met with *Food Art Magazine* publisher and editor in Panama City Beach, FL to discuss the Coalition on February 16, 2013.

Ms. Zaritsky also assisted the Gulf States, contracted agencies, and Coalition members (particularly the chefs) with a variety of Gulf Seafood related events and promotions. These activities included general assistance, networking, interviewing, and acquiring donated product. Examples are the NOAA Fish Fry, 2012 Don’t Be Cruel BBQ Duel, 2013 Super Bowl, and 2013 SEC Men’s Basketball Tournament.

Ms. Zaritsky presented an update on marketing activities to the Mississippi Restaurant Association on July 10, 2013.

Ms. Zaritsky spoke with Mr. David Nelson regarding a possible partnership with Red Diamond Foodservice. This may become a similar program to the pilot we tried conduct with Inland last year.

Ms. Zaritsky reached out to Mr. Ewell Smith and Mr. Harlon Pearce to change the Gulf Seafood Institute (GSI) mission on the previous “Louisiana Seafood News” site that lists GSI as the host.

The Executive Committee approved a “no cost” summer promotion with Samuel Adams beer. Point of sale materials were developed and included both the Coalition and Foundation logos. Ms. Zaritsky worked with Zehnder and Edelman to reach out to Gulf Coast Seafoodies about the program. The program lasted from June 1 – July 31, 2013. Some of the Gulf Coast Seafood recipes were included on their site.

Ms. Zaritsky was a judge at the Mississippi Seafood Cook-off in Biloxi, MS in May 2014.

Ms. Zaritsky staffed the Coalition booth that highlighted the Gulf States, Gulf Seafood Trace, and Audubon G.U.L.F. program at the NOAA Fish Fry in June 2014.

Ms. Zaritsky presented the development and success of the Coalition to the New England seafood industry via webinar in June 2014.

Ms. Zaritsky was a judge at the Great American 4-H Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans, LA on August 3, 2014.

Ms. Zaritsky attended the congressional staff tour in Gulfport, MS and New Orleans, LA in August 2014.

Ms. Zaritsky staffed a booth at the Inland Seafood event in September in Atlanta, GA. Material was distributed from the Coalition, states who supplied brochures, Gulf Seafood Trace, and Audubon G.U.L.F. program.

Ms. Zaritsky, Mr. Nelson and Mr. Al Sunseri wrote an article for Florida Restaurant and Hospitality Association's September magazine.

Ms. Zaritsky and Ms. Hughes worked with the states to cooperatively fund a full-page ad in Southern Living Magazine in June 2014 when they highlighted summer recipes and Gulf and South Atlantic seafood.

Ms. Zaritsky provided insight to Data Research, LLC regarding the oyster market and opportunities for the industry. The research was for a Walton Family grant.

Ms. Zaritsky worked with Sea Grant, Dauphin Island Tourism Board for the "Science, Seafood and Celebrity" events and James Beard Dinner on Dauphin Island in November 2014. Ms. Hughes handled the sponsorship.

Ms. Zaritsky, Mr. Nelson, and Mr. Sunseri wrote an article for the Florida Restaurant and Hospitality Association's September 2014 magazine.

Ms. Zaritsky and Ms. Hughes worked with Guy Harvey Magazine for two ads and Ms. Zaritsky moderated a session during their symposium.

Ms. Zaritsky, Ms. Jamison and Mr. Blankenship attended the Guy Harvey Symposium November 13-15, 2015 in Tampa, FL. Coalition member Mr. Chris Blankenship moderated the panel discussion about the Restore Act. A table provided literature from Gulf States, Gulf Seafood Trace, Coalition, Foundation and Audubon Sustainability program.

Ms. Zaritsky assisted Associated Wholesale Grocers with state contacts to participation in their food show.

Ms. Zaritsky provided 4-H with contacts to include Alabama in next year's 4-H Great American Seafood Cook-off.

Ms. Zaritsky reached out to states regarding a possible national television series about fishermen.

Ms. Zaritsky presented the Coalition update at the Gulf Oyster Industry Council (GOIC) meeting on January 20, 2015 in Washington, DC. She attended meetings in DC with GOIC and Gulf Seafood Institute (GSI) on January 20-22, 2015.

Ms. Zaritsky attended NFI's Global Marketing Conference on January 25-29, 2015. The conference provided status of all seafood species and expectations for 2015, along with retail and foodservice outlook.

The Administrative Assistant was responsible for receptionist/clerical duties, word processing, filing correspondence, dissemination of materials to industry (final reports, press releases, newsletters). She was also responsible for creating and organizing meeting files, processing invoices and maintaining cooperative program files.

The Foundation has contracted with an individual specifically for this project. The Foundation's contracted Seafood Marketing Director had overall responsibility of the technical aspects of this project and coordinated performance of project activities with Foundation staff, the GSMFC and its Ad Hoc Advisory Committee. She also coordinated all marketing efforts recommended by the Coalition, and prepared, with the assistance of the Program Director, progress and final reports concerning project performance. In addition, she worked with Sea Grant, restaurants, retailers, industry stakeholders and non-governmental organizations.

IV. Findings

The overall results of specific marketing initiatives are included in the agency final reports located in Appendices B-D.

V. Evaluation

Extent to which project goals were attained:

In 2011, when the Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation received a five year grant to help consumers feel comfortable with eating Gulf seafood and retailers/restaurants put Gulf seafood in their stores and restaurants, the Gulf industry didn't know the state of the general public and buying industry. This program was the first regional Coalition that was developed, not at a time of tremendous growth and positive perceptions, but at the worst time in the history of Gulf seafood. It was through the vision of key industry leaders, Bob Jones, Mike Voisin, Chris Nelson, Chris Blankenship, Harlon Pearce, Corky Perret, Patrick Riley and Ralph Hode that a long-term plan was developed to bring Gulf seafood back to at least where it was before the oil spill. The leaders put together a team of stakeholders who never viewed the Coalition as what can it do for me, but as what can we do for the Gulf seafood community. Below is a list of key accomplishments:

- The oil spill negatively affected the eating habits of 38% of the public right after the oil spill to now only 5% not willing to recommend Gulf seafood to their friends because of the oil spill.
- Partnerships with 14 retail/restaurant chains in thirty-one states with increase of sales on average 153% during promotion period.
- Produced fourteen videos highlighting the wonders of Gulf seafood, our commercial fishermen and how to easily cook Gulf seafood.
- Produced a mobile smartphone application to help consumers find where Gulf seafood is sold and easily pull up recipes while at the market. There were over 107,000 sessions on the app.

- Developed and enhanced the www.eatgulfseafood.com website. Increased visitors to 66,000 reaching 3.5 million people by the last year.
- Produced quarterly e-mail marketing newsletters that went to over 2,200 people to support the Gulf state marketing efforts.
- Major emphasis on social media to allow supporters of Gulf seafood to “shout out” about their love for the Gulf and to respond to those who were still not comfortable with the safety of Gulf seafood. Social media posts and ad placements provided for over 6.6 million impressions and 50k Facebook likes.
- Worked with media and bloggers to provide consistent messaging about Gulf seafood. Media placement throughout the country accounted for 1.1 billion impressions, \$2 million in advertising value and \$4.8 million in public relations value.

1. What benefits (if any) did the program provide stakeholders in the southeast?

All Gulf seafood state agencies, GSMFC, FDA and NOAA worked together to educate consumers and industry buyers about the safety of Gulf seafood. This was an excellent example of stakeholders combining their expertise to save an industry. The Coalition provided pride for being in the Gulf seafood industry. Our final research told us that Gulf seafood is the clear preference for restaurants, retailers and distributors in the South and Southeast. With the hard work of the five Gulf States, Coalition and GSMFC’s Gulf Seafood Trace program, stakeholders were able to get their product back into restaurants and in the seafood counter at supermarkets and retail seafood stores. Gulf Seafood, in particular, Gulf shrimp was no longer a commodity. Gulf shrimp was the number one specie that consumers think of when asked what seafood comes from the Gulf.

2. Did we accomplish our goals stated in the beginning of the program?

As you can see below the Coalition had a plan in place from the beginning to be frugal with funds, partner with the states and groups who also wanted to help the Gulf seafood community and achieve our one simple goal “to expanding market share for wild seafood products from the Gulf of Mexico.” The results in this report provide proof that we accomplished our goal with added benefits that will benefit the Gulf seafood industry for years to come.

- The Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition (Coalition) was formed by the Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. as a result of a grant from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) (NOAA Award #NA10NMF4770481). Representing all components of the seafood distribution chain, including commercial fishermen, processors, wholesalers, associations, sea grant, tourism boards, restaurants, retailers, chefs and charter boat sectors, the Coalition was established to coordinate all efforts and provide a cohesive vision and overarching strategy to showcase Gulf Coast Seafood. Strategies focused on expanding global market share for wild seafood from the Gulf of Mexico.
- The Coalition developed their mission, goal and strategies in Year 1. Each year the Coalition reviewed successes and future trends to develop efficient and effective tactics. The mission of the Coalition was to harness the collective intelligence of the States and

become the ultimate resource of marketing and public relations support for the member stakeholders to amplify and promote the Gulf region as a whole. The goal was simply to expanding market share for wild seafood products from the Gulf of Mexico. To accomplish the goal, the Coalition put four strategies in place.

STRATEGY 1: Provide cohesive vision and overarching initiatives to showcase Gulf of Mexico seafood.

Retail/Foodservice Tactics:

- Foster relationships and programs with trade at events such as; International Boston Seafood Show and National Restaurant Show
- Custom programs for retail grocery stores and restaurants – when possible include sales contests, POS material, in-store sampling, staff training, social media support and cross promotions with complementary products, such as beer, wine, or hot sauce
- Foodservice and retail website pages maintained with staff training tools, seafood facts, educational material and database of suppliers
- Interviews with trade media
- With Gulf State donation support, continue sponsoring chefs by donating seafood for their sample serving stations

Consumer Tactics:

- Post events on the website from the five-state agency seafood marketing organizations, Chambers of Commerce, charter boat industry, tourism boards and regional organizations
- Maintain social and digital media to continue and increase excitement and brand awareness of Gulf Coast Seafood, through Pinterest, contests, event postings
- Retail and foodservice custom programs for seafoodies to buy Gulf Coast Seafood
- Consumer media talking/writing about Gulf Coast Seafood
- Coordinate with states to participate in national consumer events to educate audiences about the availability and quality of Gulf Coast Seafood. Events included NOAA Fish Fry and Monterey Bay Cooking for Solutions Sustainable Event
- Maintain the smartphone “Where to Find” Applications
- Maintain “Honor Top 100 Worldwide Seafood Food Bloggers” program
- Continue E-mail marketing program – “The Catch”

STRATEGY 2: Become the media source for up-to-date, factual information about Gulf Coast Seafood.

Tactics:

- Ongoing business, trade and consumer outreach to foster relationships with influences to ensure advocacy
- Media monitoring
 - Matt release stories for weekly newspapers
 - Crisis management
 - Maintain and Enhance Media and News Pages on Website

STRATEGY 3: Develop proposals for continual funding initiatives of the Coalition past the proposed project period.

Tactics:

- Meet with companies and organizations that have a vested interest in the success of the Gulf Coast seafood community.
- GSMFC and other Government Funded Organizations
- Meet with local communities and States for partnerships with Restore Act Funds
- Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economy of the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 (Restore Act)
- Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through partnerships with States
- National Seafood Marketing Coalition
- Marine Well Containment

STRATEGY 4: Incorporate other GSMFC oil disaster recovery program initiatives into the Gulf Seafood Marketing Coalition's program, including traceability, sustainability, fisheries management strategies, direct marketing to consumers and Gulf Fish Watch.

Tactics:

- Include Gulf Seafood Trace in all retail/foodservice partnerships
- Incorporate GSMFC sustainable program, along with NOAA's Fishwatch on website

3. What are recommended next steps to ensure the progress made is preserved?

The one strategy that we were unable to fulfill was locating continual funding. The success of the program, all Gulf seafood being sold at premium prices and consumer demand higher than before the oil spill proved that our program, in conjunction of the work of the GSMFC and the states, was exemplary. The groups we met with to help fund the preservation of the Coalition were unable to provide funding. Therefore, the assets have been preserved for the States to use when needed.

With wholesalers and fishermen already paying license fees to the states, it is not feasible to add another fee. The federal government provided the initial funding, but didn't see the need to continue the program. The States have excellent marketing programs and will continue promoting their states' seafood.

Concluding thought from Chris Blankenship at the last meeting, "The last thing I want to say, is when we first put the Coalition together four years ago, one of the biggest benefits to me is that we all had a chance to know each other and work together; whereas before, we're doing our stuff in Alabama and Louisiana's doing their thing and Florida's doing their thing, I would have heard the names or I might know who the people are but never really had a good relationship with them where I felt we could cooperate and work on things together. So through this Coalition, if nothing else, we've gotten to know each other better and really forged some relationships so that we can cross-promote different things and work on stuff together. I think that has been an extremely valuable benefit from having this coalition."

Dissemination of project results:

Copies of this project's Final Report will be published and distributed to various federal and state fishery agencies, university extension/Sea Grant offices, and industry associations. In addition, PDF copies of the final report will be made available for download from the Foundation's website under Foundation Research.

Summary reports of the project's findings will be published in the "Gulf and South Atlantic News," a publication of the Gulf & South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. This newsletter is distributed to organizations and individuals throughout the region. An electronic version of this newsletter (PDF) is also included in the regular updates to the Foundation's website (www.gulfsouthfoundation.org).

VI. Literature Cited

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). 2010. Southeast Fishery Bulletin. FB10-066. Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida, July 22, 2010.