

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

November 2, 2017

**Chad J. Courville
Chairman**

Chad J. Courville
12.7.17

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

The following constitute minutes of the Commission Meeting
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Audio files of the meetings are kept at the
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

2000 Quail Drive

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808

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AGENDA
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

November 2, 2017 - 9:30 AM

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Governor's Address to the Commission - Governor John Bel Edwards
5. Adoption of October 5, 2017 Commission Meeting Minutes
6. Commission Special Announcements / Personal Privilege
7. Enforcement Report, October 2017 - Captain Edward Skena
8. Announcement of the 2017-18 State Duck Stamp Contest Winner - Larry Reynolds, Wildlife Biologist
9. Receive Gulf Council Update - Chris Schieble, Biologist
10. Set March 2018 Commission Meeting Date
11. Receive Public Comments
12. Adjournment

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Thursday, November 2, 2017

The regular meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission was Called to Order at 9:30 AM on November 2, 2017, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Headquarters Building in the Louisiana Room by Chairman Chad J. Courville.

Commissioner Hogan led the Pledge of Allegiance and then Chairman Courville asked everyone to remain standing for a moment of silence remembering the storm victims and the Department staff, including those agents that have been injured.

Chairman Courville asked for the Roll Call. The following Commissioners were present:

Chad Courville
Bill Hogan
Bart Yakupzack
Bobby Samanie
Jerri Smitko
Al Sunseri

Commissioner Pat Manuel was absent from the meeting.

Secretary Jack Montoucet was also present.

For the next agenda item, Governor's Address to the Commission, Chairman Courville asked Secretary Montoucet to do the introduction. Secretary Montoucet stated it was a pleasure to make this introduction of a man that served in the military for 8 years and has served the sportsman's state of Louisiana for 9 years, his friend, Governor John Bel Edwards. Governor Edwards thanked the Secretary for the introduction and the Commission for all the work they do as well as the staff of the Department. He then congratulated Col. Sammy Martin for his recent appointment as head of the Enforcement Division. The Governor stated he has been talking with the Secretary about attending a meeting just to thank the Commission in person. He knew it was tough to be a public servant and the citizens of Louisiana are

very passionate about Louisiana being the Sportsman's Paradise. Being a public servant was hard but striking the right balance between competing interests is what was needed. With Louisiana being the Sportsman's Paradise which is a huge part of the economy and way of life, everyone in Wildlife and Fisheries are ambassadors for the state. Governor Edwards noted there are lots of people that make their living through wildlife and fisheries as well as enjoys recreational activities in Louisiana. Again he thanked everyone for the work being done and even though not everyone agrees all the time, he suggested we should keep talking and working together. Governor Edwards mentioned he and Secretary Montoucet believed that the State of Louisiana was in the best position to manage red snapper. He felt the Department's work should inspire confidence both in the state and outside of the state. Going on, the Governor suggested since the fishery was healthy that the fishermen be allowed to maximize the number of fish to be caught in the number of days allotted. Governor Edwards knew the Commission's red snapper proposal was not acted upon recently but he was okay with that and he felt everyone should keep working on it. Again, the Governor expressed appreciation for the work being done but he wanted to keep working together on the big things. He then commented that if there were any questions for him, to please reach out to him. Finally, Governor Edwards thanked all of the Enforcement officers and for the sacrifices they make and he also wanted to honor their families.

Chairman Courville called for Adoption of October 5, 2017 Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Samanie made a motion to adopt the October 5, 2017 minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Yakupzack. The motion passed with no opposition.

For Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege, Commissioner Yakupzack mentioned that former Col. Winton Vidrine told him this was the first time a Governor visited a Commission Meeting and he thanked Governor Edwards for taking the time to come to the meeting. Commissioner Yakupzack felt a sense of pride noting that when the World Series began a montage of photos were shown and the third photo was of a Louisiana enforcement agent holding a child. He respected the Governor and the Administration for not waiting and sending the enforcement agents over to Texas to help with their flood.

Chairman Courville stated he received a letter from the Cane River Waterway Commission commending the Department and staff, especially Jarrett Thaxton, Jason Corbitt, Patrick Ireland, Brittainey Thaxton and Villis Dowden, for their salvinia work.

The Chairman knew from his work that fighting salvinia was an all day, every day task and this was an aggressive plant. Also, Chairman Courville thanked the Department for the annual youth hunts. He saw from reading articles and comments on the internet that the accolades for the youth hunts were overwhelming. He then offered his personal and sincere thanks and gratitude on behalf of all of the State and the parents of youth for the experience these youths had the prior weekend hunting deer.

Captain Edward Skena began his Enforcement Report for October 2017 by thanking the Governor for visiting and expressing his kind words. For the month of October, there were 8 boating incidents, with 4 injuries and 3 fatalities. Also, there were 683 written citations, 494 written warnings issued and 22 public assists. News Releases discussed related to Region 5 Enforcement office receiving numerous complaints of recreational shrimpers taking over the limit of shrimp from Rockefeller Refuge which resulted in 5 subjects cited for entering the Refuge before legal sunrise, 7 individuals were cited for taking over the daily recreational limit for shrimp, and 1 subject was cited for selling shrimp caught recreationally; the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office contacted the Enforcement Division about a capsized vessel on Lake Salvador and an agent located and rescued 2-17 year old males; and 2 St. Bernard Parish residents were cited for taking oysters from a private lease and failing to have written permission as well as the captain being cited for log book violations. Then Captain Skena noted that Ms. Amethyst Baird from Monroe pled guilty to attempted first degree murder of a police officer, obstruction of justice, illegal possession of a stolen vehicle and illegal possession of a stolen firearm in the shooting of Senior Agent Tyler Wheeler. Mr. Jeremy Gullette also from Monroe was cited for one count of accessory after the fact to attempted first degree murder and was still awaiting trial in the agent's case. Concluding, Captain Skena noted that Agent Wheeler has returned to full time duty and was doing extremely well. Commissioner Hogan commented that Agent Wheeler spoke at a White Tails Unlimited Banquet and he captivated the crowd. He then noted it gave them chills to see him function as he was knowing what he had been through.

Chairman Courville announced the next agenda item, Announcement of the 2017-18 State Duck Stamp Contest Winner would be presented by Mr. Larry Reynolds, Wildlife Biologist. The 30th annual Waterfowl Conservation Stamp contest was held the week prior to this meeting and the winning image would be on the 2018 Louisiana duck stamp. In 1988, the Legislature passed the

Louisiana Waterfowl Conservation Stamp Program for the purpose of raising money for wetland protection, restoration and enhancement of waterfowl important to the state of Louisiana. Since then, nearly \$13 million has been raised. Commissioner Hogan stated he attended a meeting with Mr. Reynolds the previous evening and he was asked if Mr. Reynolds was a full time employee and noted how he was able to communicate and entertain the crowd. Mr. Reynolds thanked Commissioner Hogan for his comments. He continued stating that of the almost \$13 million raised about half of that has been used for habitat acquisition on the WMAs. Last year, \$442,000 was raised from the Waterfowl Stamp Program to which Mr. Reynolds explained how the purchasing of duck stamps was done prior to implementation of Point of Sale in 2000. He then mentioned that in 2010, the duck license and the stamp were decoupled which means that if a hunter wants to hunt he buys a license but if he wants a stamp, he has to pay an extra \$5.50 (resident) or \$25 (non-resident) to get the stamp itself. The money raised from this program was earmarked for work in Louisiana and these works included: acquisition of wetland habitat; maintaining pumps, levees, control structures and habitat management on WMAs; development of wetland habitat on private lands; supports human dimensions' research; and it was used to leverage other grant funds. Mr. Reynolds noted this year there were 15 entries, there were 2 rounds of judging and then the selection of first, second and third place winners. The state of Louisiana was known to have a credible and fair contest due to the selection of judges. The judges included 2 artists, Mr. Murrell Butler and Mr. R. C. Davis, Mr. Jeff Gleason, Migratory Bird Conservation Coordinator for the Gulf of Mexico, Mr. Ellis Guilbeau, current State Chairman for Ducks Unlimited, and Mr. Barry Wilson, Gulf Coast Joint Venture Coordinator for the NAWMP. Third place winner was Mr. Tony Bernard from Lafayette. Second place winner was Mr. Garrett Jacobs from Orlando, Florida for the second year in a row. This year's winner was Mr. Tim Taylor from Mount Arlington, New Jersey who started his career painting Santa Claus's on store windows. Mr. Reynolds added this contest was usually held just prior to the opening of waterfowl season and so he reminded everyone of the upcoming opening dates. (A copy of Mr. Reynolds' presentation is included in the Appendices Section of the Minutes.)

Chairman Courville asked Mr. Chris Schieble, Biologist, to give his agenda item, Receive Gulf Council Update. The fifth Council Meeting of the year was held October 2-5, 2017 in Biloxi, Mississippi and the Council discussed an amendment to modify the sea turtle release gear protocol and a document should be

available for review after their January meeting. The Council decided to develop a policy statement on the use of Barotrauma devices or venting tools on board vessels possessing reef fish. The Council was presented with a draft of Coral Amendment 9 which would consider creating 15 protected areas that were known to have an abundance of corals and/or coral diversity; move actions that would incorporate octocorals (soft corals) into Fishery Management Unit; selected to designate 23 new areas as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) of which 15 were recommended to have associated fishing regulations; and selected a preferred alternative to dredging in all HAPCs. Mr. Schieble showed a table and maps of the areas that were recommended to be HAPCs. Final action was taken by the Council on Amberjack. On the Reef Fish Amendment 41 referencing Charter Boat Management, the Council's preferred alternative would establish a Permit Fishing Quota that would provide shares and allocation and the Council supported the preferred alternative not allowing the transfer of shares but allow the transfer of allocation. On the final action for the Referendum Eligibility Requirements for Charter Boats, the Council decided that the votes would be one per permit. Under Reef Fish Amendment 42, Headboat Management, a motion to establish an Individual Fishing Quota Program failed but the Council chose preferred alternatives that would apportion initial shares based on the year with the highest landings by vessel for each reef fish species during the most recent 5 years and distribute those shares proportionally. In reference to Referendum Eligibility Requirements on Headboats, the Council reviewed the criteria necessary to establish a referendum on federally permitted headboats and defined eligible voters as for-hire federal permit holders whose vessels landed an average of at least 100 reef fish. For the Louisiana Amendment, the Council, at their August meeting, reviewed draft amendments and selected a preferred alternative allowing each state to choose whether to manage its private angling component only or to manage both private and federal-for hire components. The Council added an alternative for full delegation to the Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi Amendments. The draft amendment currently only contains red snapper, but the Department would prefer Greater Amberjack and Grey Triggerfish be included, as well as allow the formula to apportion the catch for each region be inserted and allow the post-season carryover of unharvested fish into the next year. The next Gulf Council Meeting will be held in New Orleans between January 29 - February 1. (A copy of Mr. Schieble's presentation is included in the Appendices Section of the Minutes.)

Chairman Courville asked if the fractional bag limit for amberjack was dead or alive and Mr. Schieble stated final action was taken but other states have expressed interest so it may come up again in a different capacity. Then Chairman Courville asked if Louisiana federally permitted charter boats have the option to decide whether they want in or not or will the 5 Gulf states have to consider that option. Mr. Schieble commented that the individual plans will allow that option be made state by state. Assistant Secretary Patrick Banks added that the overall plan gives the states the ability to make that choice and within each plan, the state chooses whether it will be together or separate. Chairman Courville asked if the comprehensive portion of the plan would be handicapped from moving forward having the federally permitted charter boats in it. Assistant Secretary Banks noted the overarching plan states the different states will or will not have the option. Chairman Courville then asked Mr. Schieble if the best hope was for the 2019 season and he was told that if the needed action was taken at the New Orleans meeting, then the state would be on pace for that to happen. Chairman Courville then stated other options needed to be reviewed for the 2018 season and Assistant Secretary Bank mentioned the Department would present their recommendations for state waters at the January meeting. With the next Council meeting being in New Orleans, Chairman Courville hoped supporters would get out and provide testimony to support the state's plan. Assistant Secretary Banks encouraged all anglers to come to the meeting to see the process and make their voices heard. Chairman Courville suggested adding an item for the December meeting authorizing him to write another letter to the Gulf Council. He then commended the Department for their representation of the fishermen of this State.

Next, Commissioner Yakupzack made a motion to Set the March 2018 Commission Meeting Date on March 1, 2018, seconded by Commissioner Smitko and approved with no opposition.

Chairman Courville then asked for Public Comments. Mr. Al Cassagne, Grand Isle, stated he was concerned with the 2-month female closure for crabs. He learned at the October Crab Task Force meeting that the Commission had voted and accepted their recommendation on the crab closure. The 2-month female closure would be an economic disaster for the fishermen, added Mr. Cassagne. Eighty percent of the crab fishing they do were for female crabs, since male crabs were usually taken from private grounds. He mentioned that the 1-month closure last year devastated the prices, and now with the proposed 2-month

closure, the male crab would have no value. Mr. Cassagne noted that the closure could be longer if an area falls within one of the derelict crab trap closure areas. He felt there was no biological theory behind the closure and Mr. Cassagne wanted to know how this recommendation came about and wondered if there was anything they could do to have it changed. Chairman Courville felt the action was taken based on biological reasons. Mr. Jeff Marx stated they discussed the options with the Crab Task Force over a long period of time and they initially went with the 30-day restriction. At the next Crab Task Force meeting, a lot of participation occurred and further options were revisited which led to the female restriction for 2-months. Mr. Marx added this was not a study, it was management action taken to protect the resource. Chairman Courville asked if the decisions were based on the crab stock assessment and Mr. Marx stated yes, it was based on the low biomass in the blue crab stock. Then Chairman Courville asked when would the next stock assessment happen and he was told at the beginning of 2018. Commissioner Yakupzack thanked Mr. Cassagne for coming to the meeting and noted this issue at the last meeting was contested. He then mentioned that the vote from the Crab Task Force was to switch the regulation from 30 days to the 60-day female closure. Mr. Cassagne noted the 1-month closure was chosen but after only 7 months, it was being changed to a 2-month female closure and wondered how would they know it works. Chairman Courville stated he asked that same question and he was told it was a biological equivalent which was to achieve the goal of improving the crab stock assessment. Commissioner Sunseri suggested Mr. Cassagne attend the Crab Task Force meetings since the Commission had already debated this issue. Mr. Marx stated this proposal was still in the public comment period. Chairman Courville advised Mr. Cassagne to get with Mr. Marx to make sure he understands the process so his comment can be submitted in writing.

There being no further business, Commissioner Smitko made a motion for Adjournment and it was unanimously approved.

APPENDICES



2018 Louisiana Duck Stamp Contest

Louisiana Waterfowl Conservation Stamp Program

- Began in 1988 for the purpose of raising money for wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement.
- Nearly \$13 million since then with about \$442,000 raised last year.
- Licenses and stamps decoupled in 2010:
 - \$430,000 from duck "licenses"
 - \$12,000 from duck "stamps"

How do we spend it?

Earmarked for work in Louisiana:

1. Nearly half has been used for acquisition of wetland habitat.
2. More recently to maintain pumps, levees, control structures, and habitat management on WMAs.
3. Wetland habitat development on private lands through Louisiana Waterfowl Project.
4. Support human dimensions research on hunter-preferred habitat management options.
5. Use to leverage other grant funds (Federal Aid, NAWCA) to do larger habitat projects on WMAs and expand hunting opportunity









Next 3 Weekends

Statewide Goose Season: November 4 - December 3

Coastal Zone Youth Hunt: November 4 - 5

West Zone Youth Hunt: November 4

Coastal and West Zone Duck Season – November 11 - December 3

East Zone Youth Hunt: Nov. 11



East Zone Duck Season: November 18 – December 3





OCTOBER GULF COUNCIL MEETING

Chris Schieble | November 2, 2017

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The Council is continuing to work on;

- Protocol for authorizing sea turtle release gear
 - In the **public hearing draft stage**
 - Document should be available for public review after the January meeting
- Barotrauma devices
 - Council will create a **policy statement**, rather than a full amendment, to recommend the possession of barotrauma devices, or venting tools

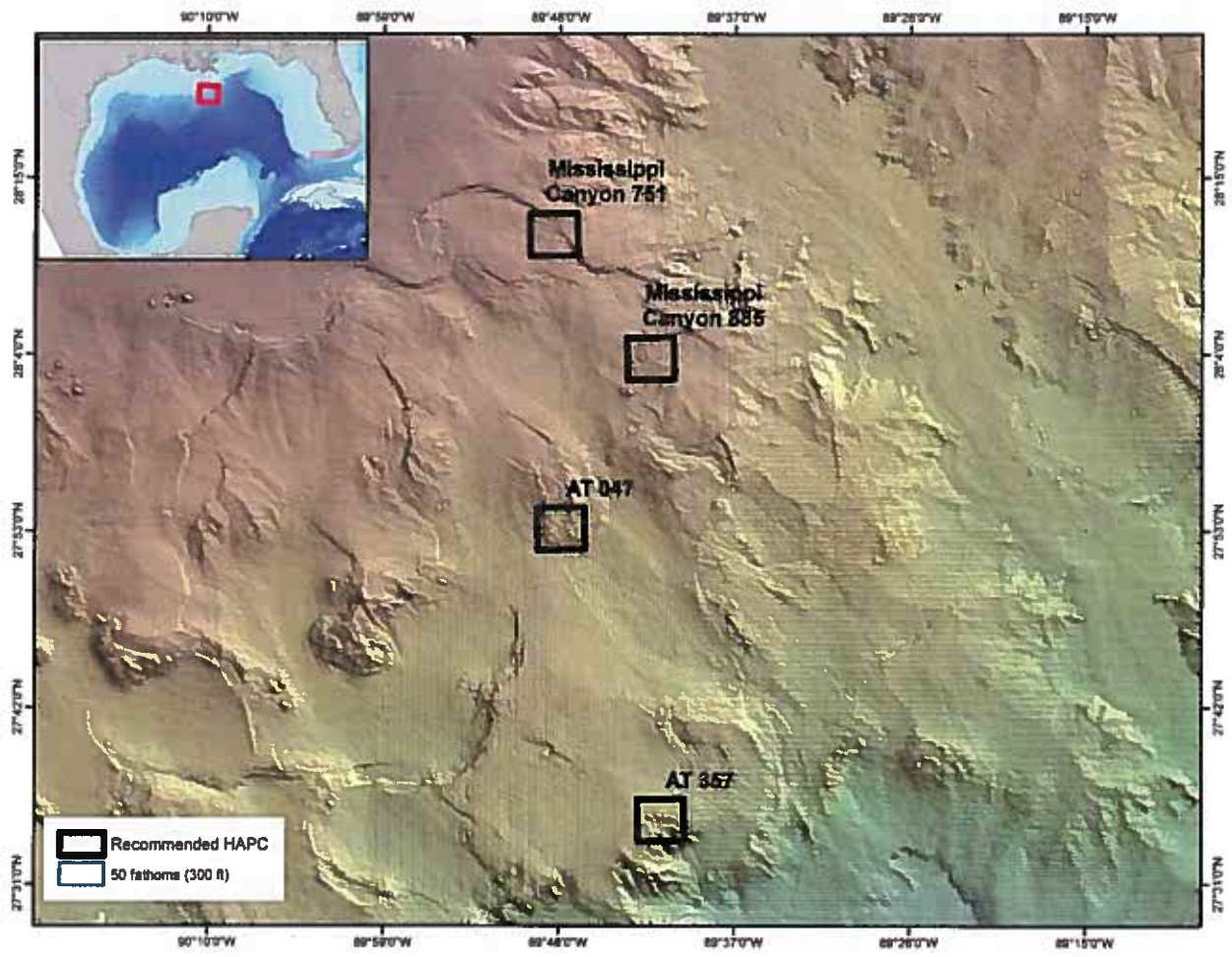
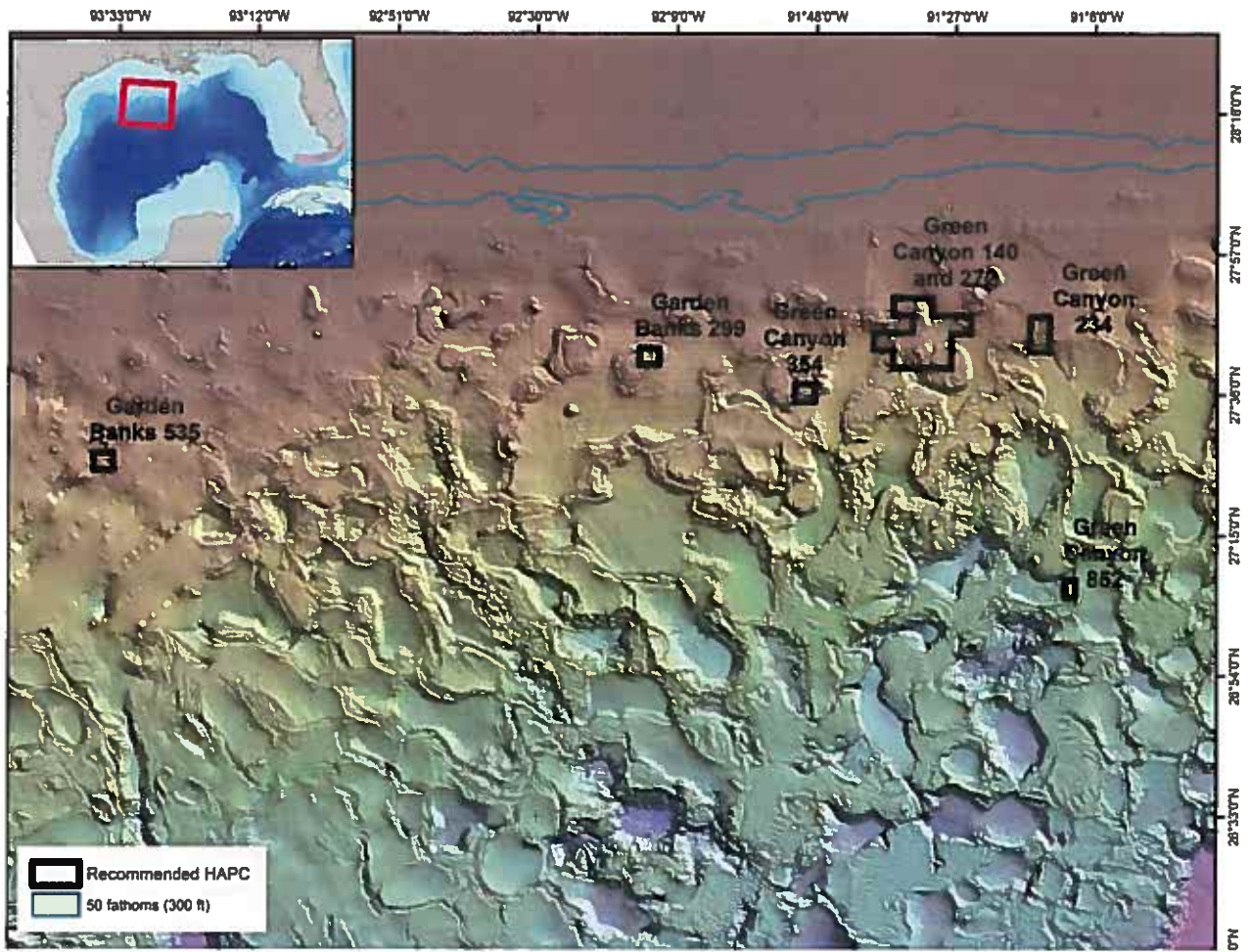


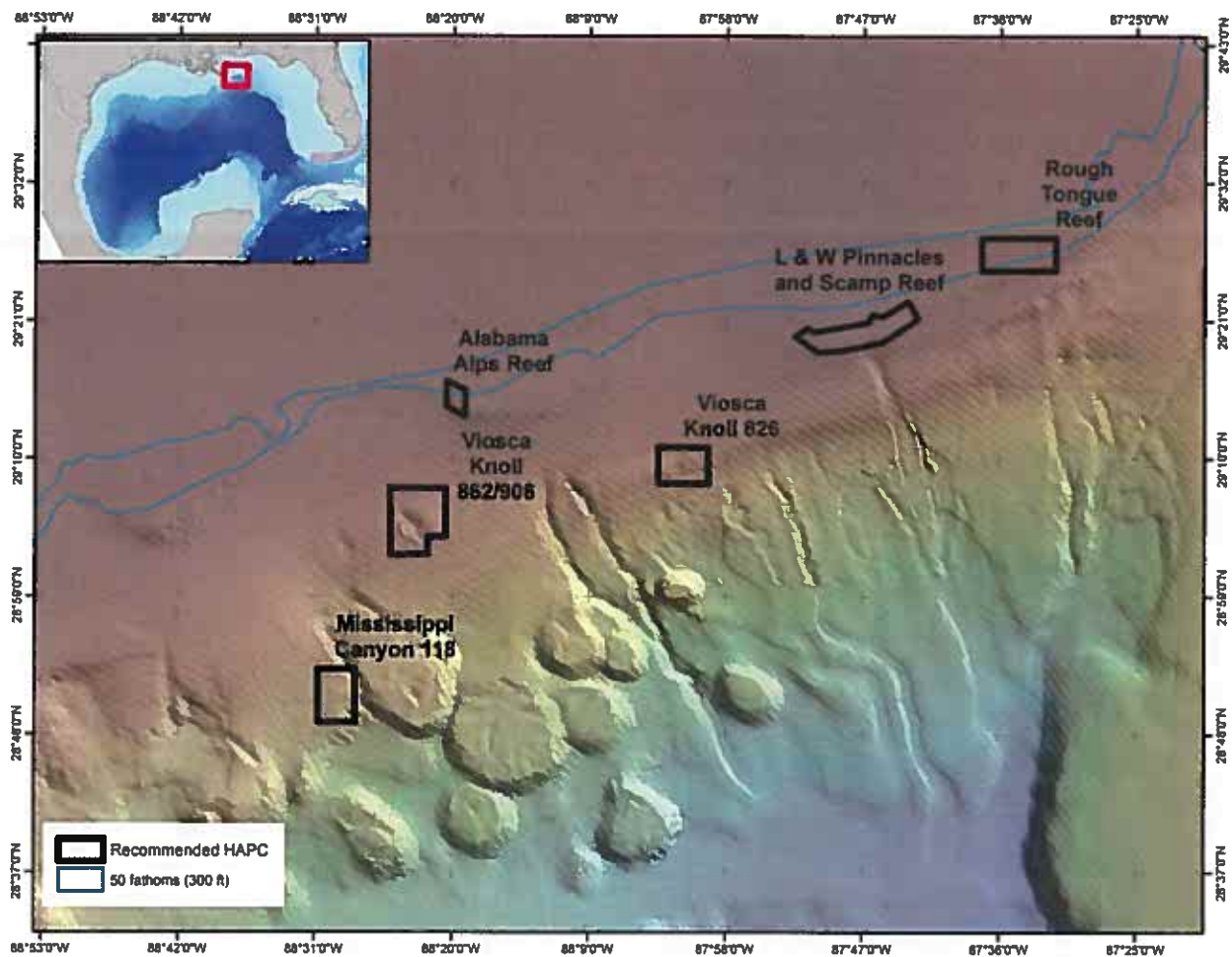
Coral / Habitat Public Hearing Draft of Coral Amendment 9

- This draft considers creating protections for 15 areas in the Gulf that are known to have an abundance of corals and/or coral diversity that makes them unique.
- The Council chose to move Actions that would incorporate octocorals into the Fishery Management Unit
- The Council selected to designate 23 new areas as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern;
- 15 of these areas were recommended to have associated fishing regulations.
- The Council selected a preferred alternative that would prohibit dredging in all existing HAPCs that have fishing regulations.
- The Council plans to host a webinar and in person public hearings, one in Grand Isle.



Site	Area (nm ²)	Depth in fathoms (feet)
Areas that were recommended to be HAPCs		
Northeastern Banks		
Mississippi Canyon 118	11	437-820 (2620-4925)
Viosca Knoll 826	10.3	273-492 (1640-2955)
Viosca Knoll 862/906	18.8	164-383 (980-2300)
Northwest Banks		
AT 047	6.8	437-820 (3280-4925)
AT 357	6.8	437-820 (3280-4925)
Green Canyon 852	3.8	547-820 (2620-4925)
Areas that were recommended to be HAPCs with no fishing regulations		
Garden Banks 299	6.5	219-328 (1310-1970)
Garden Banks 535	6.8	219-328 (1310-1970)
Green Canyon 140 and 272	81.6	164-547 (980-3285)
Green Canyon 234	13.6	219-492 (1310-2955)
Green Canyon 354	6.8	273-547 (1640-3285)
Mississippi Canyon 751	6.8	328-383 (1310-1970)





AMBERJACK FINAL ACTION

In October, the Council voted to:

- Modify the recreational fishing year to be August 1 – July 31
- Open the amberjack season the entire month of May, August, September, and October
- Keep the bag limit at one with a 34-inch minimum fork length



REEF FISH AMENDMENT 41 (CHARTER BOAT MANAGEMENT)

- The Council supported preferred alternatives that would not allow the transfer of shares but would allow the transfer of allocation.
- The Council's current preferred alternative would establish a Permit Fishing Quota program that provides participants with shares and annual allocation.
- The Council selected preferred alternatives that would establish cycles of adaptive management where shares are taken from vessels each year and given back based on catch levels.
- The Council added actions that consider cost recovery for management of the program

REFERENDUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ON CHARTER BOATS **FINAL ACTION**

- The Council reviewed the criteria necessary to establish a referendum on federally permitted charter boats
- Louisiana has 119 vessels qualifying as charter boats (of 1,245 gulf-wide)
- The Council decided that the votes would be one vote per permit.



REEF FISH AMENDMENT 42 (HEADBOAT MANAGEMENT)

- A motion to establish an Individual Fishing Quota Program (IFQ) for headboats failed (7 to 7).
- The Council selected preferred alternatives that would
 - Require program participants to have a Landings History Vessel (LHV) endorsement
 - Apportion initial shares based on the year with the highest landings by vessel for each species (red snapper, greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, gag, and red grouper) during the most recent five years (2011-2015) and distribute those shares proportionally.
- The Council will review another draft of this document at the January meeting.

REFERENDUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ON HEADBOATS **FINAL ACTION**

- The Council reviewed the criteria necessary to establish a referendum on federally permitted headboats
- Louisiana only has two vessels qualifying as headboats.
- The Council selected a preferred alternative that would define eligible voters as for-hire federal permit holders whose vessels landed an annual average of at least 100 fish combined of red snapper, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, red grouper, and gag.
- Each eligible permit will have one vote.



LOUISIANA REEF FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

Old news:

- The Council voted unanimously to delegate some management authority to Louisiana.
- The Council removed the sunset provision
- The Council selected a preferred alternative that would allow each state to choose whether to manage its private angling component only, or to manage both private and federal-for hire components.
- The action to modify size limits was removed from the document. The current size limit of 16-inches will remain.

New news:

- Louisiana added an option for full delegation of the management authority to the state.
- In January, the Council will receive biomass and effort estimates of allocation.



LOUISIANA REEF FISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

No movement on the below issues:

- Additional species (document only contains red snapper)
 - Greater Amberjack
 - Grey Triggerfish
- Formula to apportion the ACL
- Post-season carryover of unharvested fish



QUESTIONS?

