Issue No. 9

NOAA FISHERIES

Southeast Regional Office
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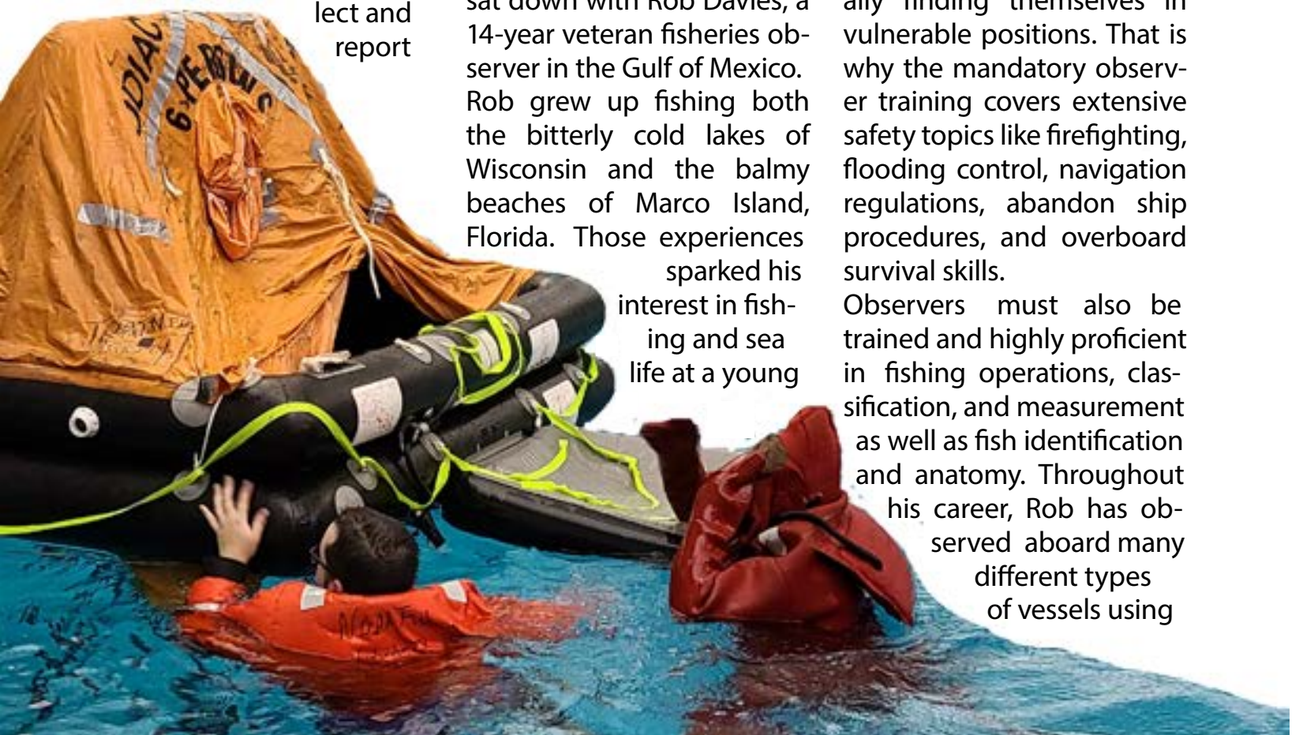
A DAY IN THE LIFE: FISHERIES OBSERVER

NOAA Fishery Biologist Alexandria Taylor talks with Fishery Observer Rob Davies

The role of a fisheries observer is a challenging and important one: to collect and report biological data that will help paint a clearer picture of what is going on in a fishery. Some of the data that observers collect from fish include their length, weight, fin clips for genetic analysis, otoliths (ear bones) for aging, gonads (ovaries and testes) for determining sex and reproductive stage, condition caught, and condition released for determining likelihood of survival. These data are then used by fisheries scientists and managers to inform policy decisions that promote the long-term sustainability of a fishery. Eager to understand more about the job and lifestyle, I sat down with Rob Davies, a 14-year veteran fisheries observer in the Gulf of Mexico.



Rob grew up fishing both the bitterly cold lakes of Wisconsin and the balmy beaches of Marco Island, Florida. Those experiences sparked his interest in fishing and sea life at a young age, and led himto earn his Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology from the University of West Florida in Pensacola. In addition to his college degree, Rob had to complete an intensive three-week long training program in order to be eligible for hire as a fisheries observer. Commercial fishing ranks among the most dangerous jobs in the United States, with long, exhausting stints at-sea, slippery decks, stormy weather, heavy machinery, and dangerous equipment. Fisheries observers are no exception, encountering many of the same hazards as fishermen and occasionally finding themselves in vulnerable positions. That is why the mandatory observer training covers extensive safety topics like firefighting, flooding control, navigation regulations, abandon ship procedures, and overboard survival skills.

Observers must also be trained and highly proficient in fishing operations, classification, and measurement as well as fish identification and anatomy. Throughout his career, Rob has observed aboard many different types of vessels using various kinds of fishing gear to catch their target species, including otter trawl, skimmer trawl, bandit reel, rod and reel, bottom longline, and even spear fishing. He shared with me that, "being able to see all the different gear fishermen use, and how they go about catching these fish, the whole process of it" is actually his favorite part of the job. Another reason Rob loves being an observer is the flexibility of his schedule. He explained, "I like being able to take a month or two off and travel; being able to turn in my report and not have to think about work for a while."

But this perk doesn't come without drawbacks. Rob spends around 200 days at sea each year. Some trips are as short as day trips, while others have lasted as long as 53 consecutive days. When he first started as an observer, he was surprised by the length of time that some fishermen stay at sea for a single trip, especially given the size of most boats and the general accommodations they offer. On average, his trips are around 36 days long and his normal work-day can vary greatly by trip and gear type. "Sometimes we just work nights. Or we will work for 2-3 hours at a time, get some rest, and do it all over again, 24 hours a day, "Davies said.

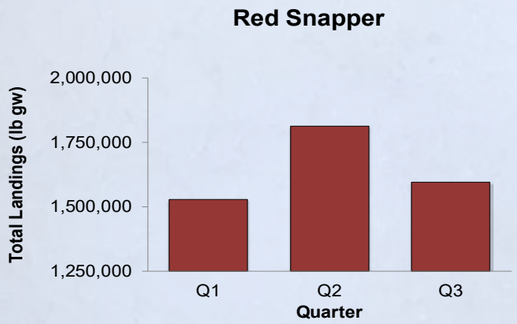
Without observers' around-the-clock effort and dedication, fishery managers would be lacking important fishery data. Fishery observers are the critical link between the fishery and stock assessment scientists and managers, helping to inform management decisions that will promote the long-term sustainability of fisheries. Continued cooperation between fishermen and observers as well as a mutual respect for each other's work is essential for successful fishery management.

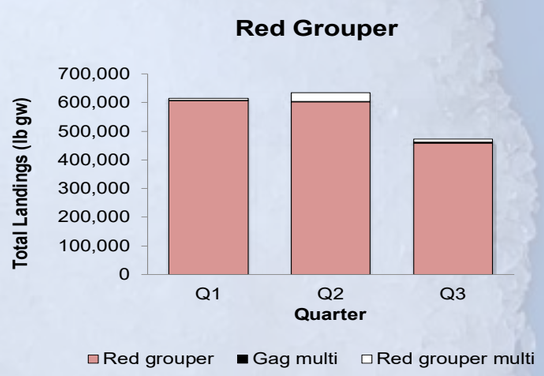
Rob echoed this sentiment, explaining the most valuable skill he has learned during his time observing is "how to live and work with all kinds of different people." But for some, a fishery is not only work, but a way of life passed down from generation to generation. In addition to its rich cultural heritage, fishing provides coastal economies throughout the U.S. with 1.2 million jobs and $165 billion in sales annually. Gulf states in particular rely heavily on healthy fish populations. They are a significant revenue source for the region that nobody wants to see disappear. NOAA's observer program is helping to ensure that they don't, by promoting sustainable fisheries now and for future generations. To learn more, visit the NOAA Fishery Observer Program website.

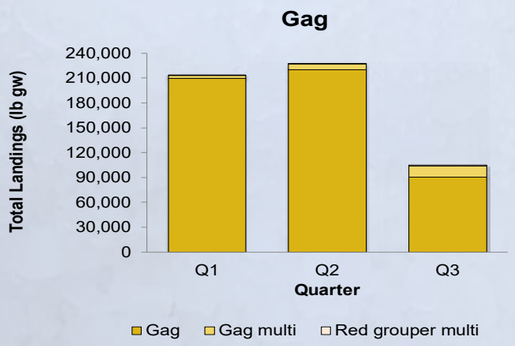
October is National Seafood Month and **YOU** can help to increase the understanding of local and regional seafood marketing practices and to help fill important data gaps. It just takes a few minutes to complete the American Seafood Harvesters Marketing Practices Survey. Researcher's from the University of Maine, USDA and NOAA Fisheries hope that the findings from this Survey will highlight to decision makers the important role that the Commercial fishing sector plays in supporting the nation's domestic food supply and seafood economy.

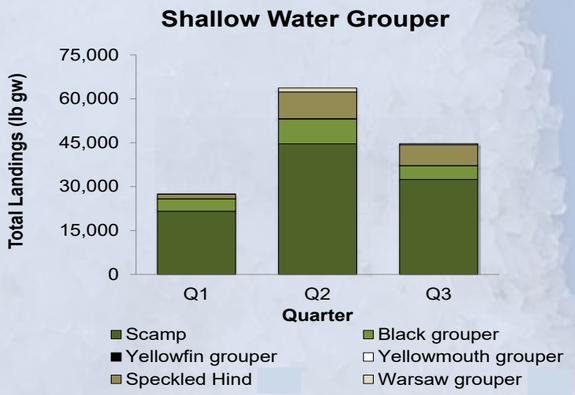
SPECIES LANDINGS BY QUARTER

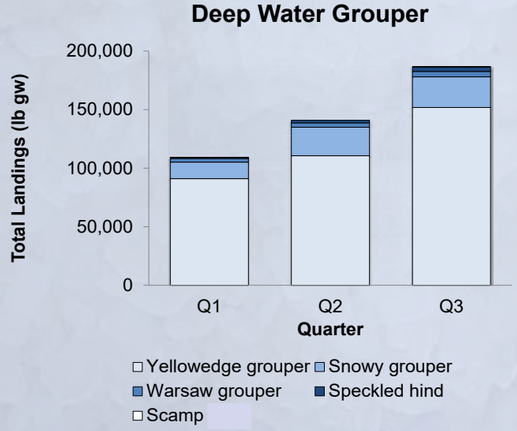
The figures below summarize landings by quarter (Q) from the Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish IFQ programs. All landings are from 2020 and are displayed in pounds gutted weight (lb gw). For landings of multi-use flexibility measures, the landings are attributed to the share category from which the landings were deducted. For example, in the gag grouper figure, fish were landed using primarily gag grouper allocation, then gag grouper multi-use, and finally red-grouper multi-use allocation. The shallow water grouper and deep water grouper figures show how flexibility measures are invoked to land these species under the other share category when the primary share category allocation is exhausted.

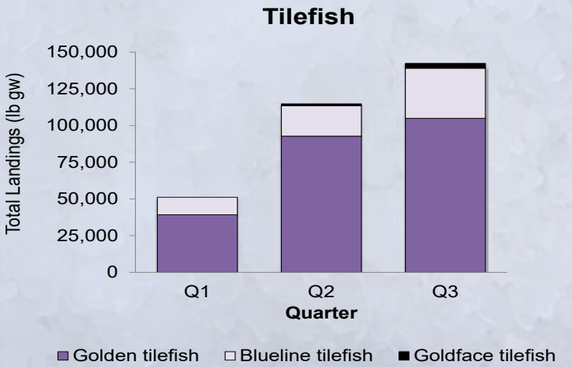






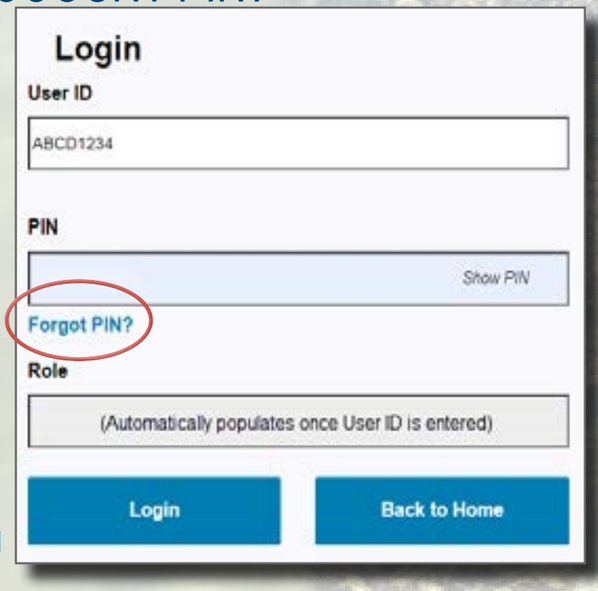






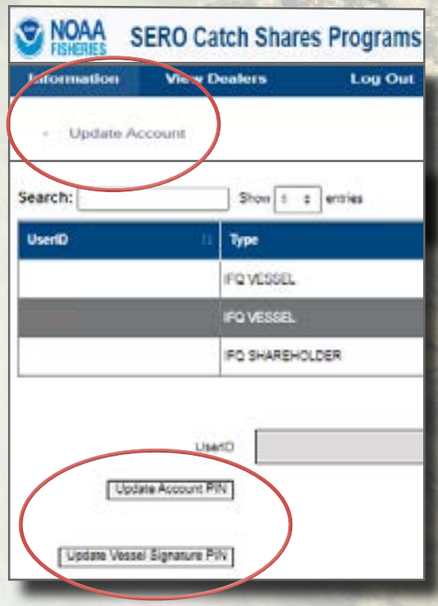
FORGOT YOUR ONLINE ACCOUNT PIN?

- Visit the Southeast Regional Office Catch Shares Program website
- Click "Log In" in the upper right.
- Enter your User ID and leave the PIN box blank.
- Click on "Forgot PIN?" located below the PIN box.
- Enter your User ID again when prompted and you will be provided a temporary PIN.
- Return to the "Log In" page and enter your User ID and temporary PIN.
- Once logged in, you will be prompted to create a new account PIN.



WANT TO CHANGE YOUR PIN?

- Visit the Southeast Regional Office Catch Shares Program website
- Click on "Information" along the top blue banner of the website.
- Select the "Update Account" option from the drop-down menu.
- In the top table, select the row for the account you would like to upadate. Once selected, the row will become dark grey.
- Click the "Update Account PIN" box or "Update Vessel Siganture PIN" box and enter your new PIN twice.
- You can also change your account "Secret Questions" and "Secret Answers" here.



* NOTE: It is a security risk to share your account PIN with others or to use the same PIN* for both account access and vessel signature PIN for landing transactions.

How are Amendments to Fishery Management Plans Made?

** Yellow font indicates opportunities for public input*

Issue Identified

Initial Review
The Council and NOAA Fisheries review new issues and and decide what, if any, managment action to take.

Framework Track
The fastest way to make changes to FMPs that are equipped with a framework procedure. Framework procedures are a standardized way to make management changes that are already included in an FMP.

Full Amendment Track
Used to develop fishery management plans (FMPs) or amendments to FMPs. This track takes the most time and allows for the most public input.

Environmental Assessment / Environmentnal Impact Statement
NOAA Fisheries determines if an FMP would significantly impact the environment. If so, an Environmental Impact Statement, which thoroughly evaluates the impacts of the proposed actions, is required. If not, the Council may choose to skip the scoping process.

Scoping
Identifying issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issue. Council holds workshops to gather suggestions and ideas from public.

Options Paper
Council develops a list of management options and alternatives based on input received during scoping.

Immediate Track
- **Interim Rule -** used to manage fish stocks that are overfished and/ or experiencing overfishing, last for only 180 days, and can be extended for an additional 186 days following an open public comment period.
- **Emergency Rule -** used under emergency situations to address unanticipated events or problems.

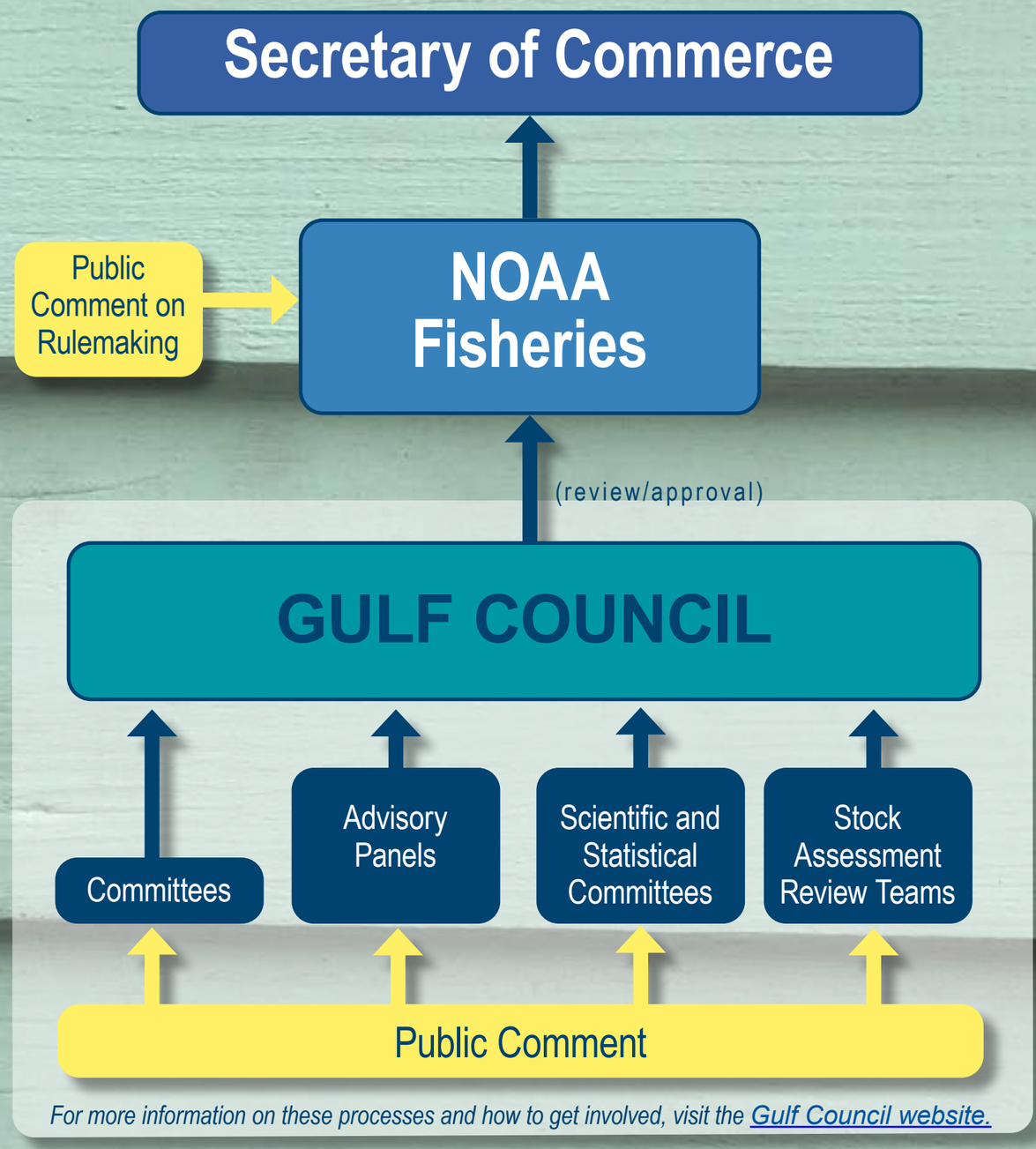
Public Hearing
Public input is solicited and reviewed by Council. Draft options either go back to the drawing board or takes action.

Final Action
Council decides that a framework action or amendment to an FMP is appropriate and submits it to NOAA Fisheries.

Rule Making
Proposed regulations are published in the *Federal Register* with information on how to submit public comments. After the comment period ends, the SOC determines whether or not to implement a framework action, and whether to approve, partially approve, or disapprove a plan amendment after an examination of applicable laws. Final regulations are then published in the *Federal Register*.

Information courtesy of the Gulf Council website

Who is Involved in the Fishery Rulemaking Process?



For more information on these processes and how to get involved, visit the Gulf Council website.

DATES & RESOURCES

IFQ Website

IFQ Shareholders

Permits

Southeast Regional Office
LAPPs Branch

Southeast Region ACL
Monitoring

Electronic Code of
Federal Regulations

Gulf Council

Gulf States Commission

OCT 24 - 27 Gulf Council Meeting
Biloxi, MS

OCT 31 3rd Quarter 2022
Cost Recovery Fee
Paymenet Due

NOV 30 - DEC 1 IFQ Focus Group
Second Meeting
Tampa, FL

JAN 30 - FEB 2 Gulf Council Meeting
New Orleans, LA

Like what you see?
Do you have suggested
topics to feature?

Please send feedback to
NMFS.SER.CatchShare@noaa.gov
or call 866-425-7627 (option 2).