



For Immediate Release
January 22, 2021

Media Contact:
Eric Brazer, Deputy Director
(919) 451-1971
eric@shareholdersalliance.org

Gulf of Mexico Commercial Fishermen Help Expand Critical Habitat Protections

Fishing Leaders Celebrate Inclusive Process and Collaboration on National Marine Sanctuary

GALVESTON, TX – The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance released the following statement on this week's publication of the [Final Rule](#) that will expand the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Texas:

We are extremely proud to be part of the inclusive process taken by the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to expand the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. The process demonstrates how fishermen and other stakeholders can collaborate to protect essential fish habitat, and is a model for future such efforts. This approach respected commercial fishermen and the decades of local ecological knowledge we could bring to the discussion. We had a seat at the table and a voice in the process. We were partners.

Knowing that our recommendations had very real impacts on fishing businesses, families, and communities, the advisory panel we participated in took the time to do this right - ensuring that our recommendations were grounded in sound science and explained to the public. It took many years and countless meetings but produced a result that together everyone can be satisfied with – habitat protections that have *tripled* in size can continue to coexist with low impact sustainable hook-and-line fishing as it has for generations.

Sustainable commercial fishing and ocean habitat protections go hand-in-hand. Our businesses depend on healthy fish stocks, and healthy fish stocks depend on

critical habitats. More habitat means more fish, which, along with sustainable commercial fishing access, means American consumers can continue to enjoy their access to the Gulf's natural resources.

###

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance is the largest organization of commercial grouper and snapper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. We represent the interests of commercial fishermen and other stakeholders who want to bring sustainability and accountability to fisheries management, in addition to engaging in a variety of fisheries support and philanthropic endeavors.