

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

UPDATES FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH SHAREHOLDERS' ALLIANCE



STEWARDSHIP THROUGH LEADERSHIP





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The Shareholders' Alliance Team

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MAITE DUQUELA

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

NANCY GOODHOPE



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LETTER FROM THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Dear Shareholders' Alliance Members,

As we conclude another year, I am proud to reflect on our collective achievements in promoting sustainable fisheries and supporting seafood businesses in the Gulf of Mexico. Our Quota Bank program continues to reduce red snapper discards and support the next generation of commercial reef fish fishermen, while the establishment of the Wayne Werner Memorial Scholarship Fund honors the legacy of a giant in the industry by supporting students in marine science and related fields. None of this would be possible without the steadfast dedication of our members and supporters, whose commitment drives our mission forward.

This year, our Staff and Board - with the help of our members - have taken significant time to reflect on where we've been and where we want to go. We are looking inward to create a bold vision for the organization and the fishery's future, aligning our efforts to address emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. We are excited about what lies ahead and remain committed to strengthening our foundation to better serve the fishing community and marine ecosystems for years to come.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on the core need to advocate for science-based management and conservation, ensuring that our fisheries are sustainably managed for today and future generations. Our involvement in recent legal challenges, such as the review of Gulf of Mexico red grouper quota allocations, underscores our dedication to fair and accountable fisheries management. We are deeply grateful to our members and partners—you are the heart of this organization, and we couldn't do this critical work without you. Here's to another year of progress, collaboration, and shared vision.



Handwritten signature of Eric Brazer Jr.

ERIC BRAZER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

ERIC@SHAREHOLDERSALLIANCE.ORG



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NEW FACES WITH THE SHAREHOLDERS' ALLIANCE

ANTHONY COLLETTI, BOARD MEMBER



Anthony Colletti joined our Board of Directors this year, a seasoned commercial fisherman in both the Gulf and South Atlantic. With his boat, the *Almost There* he fishes mainly red snapper and kingfish out of Leeville, Louisiana. With years of experience navigating the Gulf waters, Anthony brings invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing our fishing communities, especially young and next generation fishermen. His firsthand knowledge and dedication to responsible fishing practices make him a valuable asset to our leadership team.

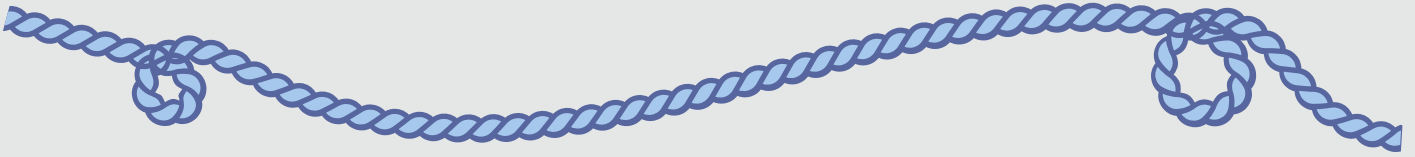
MAITE DUQUELA, NATIONAL FUTURE FISHERMEN COALITION COORDINATOR

In June, 2024, we were thrilled to add Maite Duquela Sanchez to our team. Maite's work focuses on building and developing a national coalition that supports next generation fishermen across the country.



Maite was born and raised in the Dominican Republic. She holds a Master's Degree in environmental economics and policy, along with a graduate specialization in climate science from the Nicholas School of Environment at Duke University, and a Bachelor's Degree in economics from the Santo Domingo Institute of Technology in her home country. Her career has been focused on leading coalition development and communication on ocean-based projects.

Your Feedback Fuels Our Future



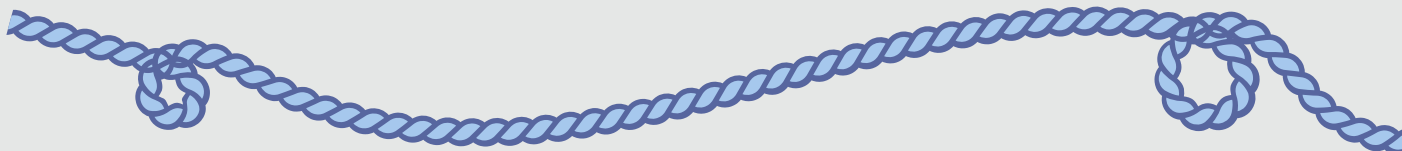
The Shareholders' Alliance is excited to launch a comprehensive membership revitalization program designed to strengthen our organization, enhance member support, and boost financial resilience. This initiative begins with a stakeholder survey, which can be found here - please take a few minutes to complete it today. With this tool and your valuable input, we can begin laying the groundwork for the creation of a dedicated Shareholders' Alliance Membership Committee, which will advise the Board on all membership-related matters.

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HONORING A LEGACY: THE WAYNE WERNER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND



In 2024, on the anniversary of Wayne Werner's passing, the Shareholders' Alliance proudly established the Wayne Werner Memorial Scholarship Fund to honor the legacy of a legendary Gulf of Mexico commercial fisherman and advocate for sustainable fisheries. This scholarship aims to support students pursuing careers in marine science, fostering stronger connections between scientists and the commercial fishing community. By encouraging collaboration and understanding, the fund seeks to build a future where fisheries science and industry work hand-in-hand.

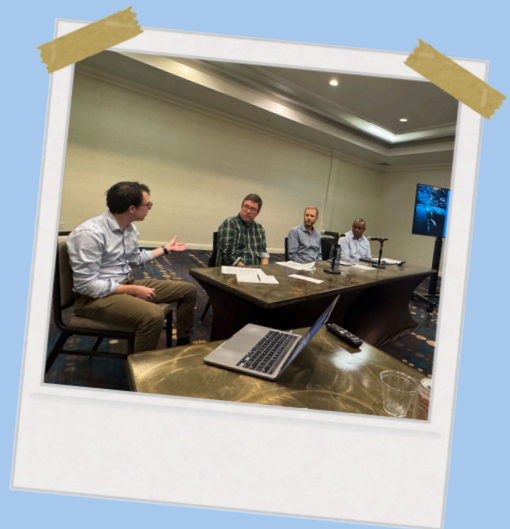
Thanks to the generosity of our members and supporters, we've raised **\$2,400** thus far this year to support this meaningful initiative, and donations keep rolling in. These contributions will help aspiring marine scientists gain the education and resources they need to advance our shared goal of sustainable fisheries. The Shareholders' Alliance is proud to honor Wayne's legacy through this scholarship and looks forward to supporting the next generation of leaders in the Gulf.



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From Deck to Dock: Supporting our Communities

The Shareholders' Alliance is dedicated to fostering healthy, resilient coastal fishing communities that are essential to the future of our industry. Through community-based projects, we support young and next-generation fishermen, provide workforce training, and advocate for working waterfronts and disaster relief resources. By addressing challenges such as hurricanes, climate change, and economic shifts, we are working to increase the resilience of coastal livelihoods. Together with our members and partners, we remain committed to ensuring that Gulf fishing communities can adapt and thrive for generations to come.



FROM DECK TO DOCK: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

GULF COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN PROGRAM

The launch of the [Gulf Commercial Fisherman Program \(GCFP\)](#) in October 2024 was the result of five years of dedicated effort by the Shareholders' Alliance and industry leaders across the Gulf of Mexico.



Working collaboratively with experts from diverse commercial fisheries—including reef fish, shrimp, pelagic longline (PLL), stone crab, and spiny lobster—we developed a program tailored to address the workforce challenges facing the fishing industry. By combining input from experienced fishermen with targeted training strategies, the program equips participants with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in commercial fishing.



This initiative is not only a testament to the power of collaboration but also a significant step toward ensuring the sustainability and resilience of Gulf fisheries. As we plan for additional sessions in Florida in 2025, we remain committed to supporting the next generation of fishermen and strengthening the communities that depend on healthy, thriving fisheries.



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FROM DECK TO DOCK: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

NATIONAL FUTURE FISHERMEN COALITION



The ‘graying of the fleet’ is not just occurring in the Gulf - it’s happening all across the country. In response and recognizing that there are commonalities across fisheries and fishing communities for the barriers next generation face, the Shareholders’ Alliance is spearheading the formation of the National Future Fishermen Coalition (NFFC). This Coalition, formed in 2023, comprises six member organizations, all of whom have programs engaging and assisting next generation fishermen.

The current Steering Committee members are: [Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association](#), [Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island](#), [Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association](#), [New England Young Fishermen’s Alliance](#), [Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance](#), and Bob Gill, an independent fisheries expert.

We are thrilled to have added Maite to our team to lead this effort. In the last year, she and coalition members are building the foundation for the NFFC, and we look forward to having our website and brand finalized in the coming years. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting initiative.

Mission: To create a space of open exchanges, resource sharing, and support for organizations dedicated to the current and future young commercial fishermen and women across all U.S. regions.

Vision: Imagine a future where the commercial fishing industry seamlessly bridges generational gaps, where domestic seafood demand flourishes, and where resilience and sustainability are at the heart of fishing practices and fisheries management.

FROM DECK TO DOCK: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

HURRICANES AND WATERFONT RESILIENCE

This year, Hugh won the Leadership for Climate Resilient Fisheries Fellowship, which funded work focused on waterfront resilience. Hugh and Ally Aplin, our Spring 2024 intern, traveled to Madeira Beach, Crystal River and Steinhatchee, Florida to produce a short documentary educating consumers and policymakers on the value of protecting working waterfronts, with support from a number of Shareholders' Alliance members. Ally also created an infographic providing information about the resources available to commercial fishermen in the wake of hurricanes. Finally, Hugh organized and moderated a panel of disaster relief experts from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida SeaGrant, and the Florida Small Business Development Center at the November 2024 Gulf Council Meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida.

GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH QUOTA BANK



The Quota Bank completed its tenth year of operation this year! In that time, it has provided 611,431 pounds of Red Snapper allocation to 68 distinct fishermen around the Gulf who would otherwise not have had access. This equates to \$3,616,545 in gross revenue and an estimated \$1,023,671 in profits. In 2024, the program provided 79,986 lbs of allocation to 18 fishermen! We'd like to thank again those Shareholders' Members who have made this work possible through their generous donations of shares to the Quota Bank and look forward to another ten years reducing discards and supporting fishermen Gulf-wide.



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ABOUT THE QUOTA
BANK

GULF COUNCIL WATCH: REGIONAL POLICY IN ACTION

This year has been a pivotal one for fisheries management in the Gulf of Mexico, with the Shareholders' Alliance actively participating in critical discussions and decisions at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). Read on to discover key developments for some of these issues and how they impact the Gulf's fisheries.



GULF COUNCIL WATCH: REGIONAL POLICY IN ACTION

NEW LEADERSHIP ON THE GULF COUNCIL

Commercial and charter fishermen - and those that care about sustainability and accountability - scored a major win in 2024 with the appointment of Juan “John” Sanchez and Captain Troy Frady to the Gulf Council. Both bring a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of what it takes to make a living on the water. Already, they have shown their value as Gulf Council members by standing up for science and advocating for balanced management approaches. Their contributions are helping ensure a more fair, equitable and sustainable future for the Gulf’s fisheries.

**ELECTRONIC LOGBOOKS APPROVED**

After years of advocacy, the Gulf Council finally approved the use of electronic logbooks (ELBs) for the commercial reef fish fishery, with implementation expected by the summer of 2025. This transition from paper-and-pen reporting to a modernized, electronic reporting system will streamline reporting, reduce redundancy, and provide better data for managing the Gulf’s fisheries. This is a win for efficiency, good science, and for the industry’s (and Agency’s) ability to adapt to modern management needs.



GULF COUNCIL WATCH: REGIONAL POLICY IN ACTION

RED SNAPPER

Our partnership with the charter/for-hire industry continues to grow stronger as we unite in addressing concerning trends with red snapper. Across the Gulf, fishermen are reporting alarming declines in red snapper size and abundance.



Together, we are urging managers to adopt precautionary measures when considering management changes to ensure the long-term health of the stock and stability for fishing businesses.

AMENDMENTS 58A AND 58B SHALLOW AND DEEP WATER GROUPER



We are closely monitoring the progress of Amendments 58A and 58B, which propose significant changes to the shallow and deep water grouper fisheries. These amendments could have far-reaching consequences for commercial fishermen. For detailed information, check out our last Gulf Council update. As always, we are committed to advocating for science-based solutions that protect fishermen's livelihoods and do not reward a sector that continues to grow without meaningful accountability measures.

GULF COUNCIL WATCH: REGIONAL POLICY IN ACTION

AMENDMENTS 59 AND 60: IFQ PROGRAMS

We are also tracking Amendments 59 and 60, which propose updates to the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) programs in the Gulf of Mexico. The Shareholders' Alliance is carefully analyzing these proposals to determine their potential impact on our members and, in particular, the Reef Fish Quota Bank. We strongly believe in the value of the Quota Bank, which has been instrumental in supporting next-generation fishermen and reducing discards and providing a grassroots community-based approach to management, and we will advocate for its continued operation. We are also analyzing the potential impacts of the actions and alternatives in these documents on the different factions and roles in the fishery (i.e. deckhand, owner-operator, fleet owner, fish house).

We encourage all members to stay engaged and informed as these policies develop, and we thank you for your continued support in these efforts.



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TIMELINE OF GULF
COUNCIL ACTIONS

FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE: NAVIGATING CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

The federal policy landscape continues to evolve, and the Shareholders' Alliance remains committed to staying informed and proactive on the issues that matter most to our members. We encourage our members to stay informed and engaged, as these issues will shape the future of our fisheries and our communities.



FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE: NAVIAGTING CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION TRANSITION

As the country prepares for the presidential administration transition, we are closely monitoring what changes may lie ahead and engaging strategically in this process. While we know that fisheries management and marine conservation are often perceived as bipartisan issues, the specific priorities and policy directions under a new or continuing administration remain uncertain. We are also closely watching to see who potential candidates might be for key positions, such as NOAA Administrator, and NMFS Administrator, as these roles will significantly influence federal fisheries policies.



FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE: NAVIAGTING CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY**Seafood in the Farm Bill**

Progress is being made to include provisions for seafood in the 2024 Farm Bill. These measures aim to strengthen support for working waterfronts, expand seafood marketing opportunities, and ensure American seafood has a seat at the table in federal agricultural policy. We are encouraged by the bipartisan attention this issue is receiving.

FISHES Act

The Fishery Improvement to Streamline Untimely Regulatory Hurdles post Emergency Situation (FISHES) Act, sponsored by Congressman Byron Donalds (R-FL), seeks to expedite the distribution of federal disaster relief following official fishery disaster declarations. The Shareholders' Alliance has joined a coalition of over 100 organizations in support of this bipartisan legislation, which has passed the House and is now under consideration in the Senate.



FEDERAL POLICY UPDATE: NAVIGATING CHANGE AND ADVOCACY

AQUACULTURE

The conversation around aquaculture operations in the Gulf of Mexico are still progressing. While aquaculture has the potential to complement wild-caught fisheries, we are advocating for stringent oversight, transparency, and careful consideration of how these operations impact the environment, wild stocks, the seafood marketplace, and coastal fishing communities.



Currently, NOAA Fisheries has released a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for the Identification of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The public comment period is open from November 22, 2024, through February 20, 2025. We encourage you to review the DPEIS and submit comments to ensure that any developments in aquaculture enhance—not harm—our marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of fishermen. Please reach out to us if you'd like more information on our review and response to this DPEIS - a summary and communications document that will be available in January 2025.

OFFSHORE WIND

The push for offshore wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico is gaining momentum, most recently with the December 12, 2024 announcement from the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) that there is competitive interest in two Wind Energy Areas in the Gulf.

We are actively engaging in these efforts to ensure fishermen's voices are heard, advocating for responsible development that minimizes impacts to our industry and the marine ecosystem that supports our businesses and coastal communities.

Legal Updates: Key Fisheries-Related Court Cases

AP BELL V RAIMONDO (AMENDMENT 53/RED GROUPER)

On March 1, 2024, the DC Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that NMFS used a flawed economic analysis in justifying Amendment 53's red grouper reallocation away from commercial fishermen to the recreational sector. While the Court didn't vacate the Amendment 53 (that is, the reallocation still stands), the Court remanded the case back to NMFS for further analysis. Despite repeated requests from the Shareholders' Alliance, the concerned public, our lawyers, and Gulf Council members, NMFS refuses to bring this new analysis to the light of day and appears content with conducting it behind closed door and without any public - of Gulf Council - involvement.



We will continue to work to bring transparency to this process, reverse this decision based on flawed analysis and to return the red grouper allocation that was taken away from commercial fishermen.



LEGAL UPDATES: KEY FISHERIES-RELATED COURT CASES

FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTIONALITY CASES

Several lawsuits have been filed challenging the constitutionality of the Fishery Management Council system, which is responsible for managing U.S. fisheries. These lawsuits generally focus on the following key issues:

1. **Delegation of Power:** Critics argue that the Fishery Management Councils, which are made up of industry representatives and other stakeholders, are given too much regulatory power. This could violate the Constitution's separation of powers because the councils act like government agencies but aren't directly accountable to voters or the president.
2. **Appointments Clause:** Some lawsuits claim that council members are not properly appointed under the U.S. Constitution. The Appointments Clause requires certain officials to be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, but Fishery Management Council members are often appointed by state governors or the Secretary of Commerce, which plaintiffs argue violates this rule.
3. **Unreasonable Search/Due Process:** Some lawsuits argue that the councils' actions harm fishermen by imposing costly and intrusive regulations, like requiring monitors or limiting fishing practices, without providing adequate procedural protections or input from the affected parties. This, they say, violates rights against unreasonable searches and due process rights guaranteed by the Constitution.



LEGAL UPDATES: KEY FISHERIES-RELATED COURT CASES

LOPER BRIGHT ENTERPRISES V RAIMONDO (OVERRULING “CHEVRON” DEFERENCE)

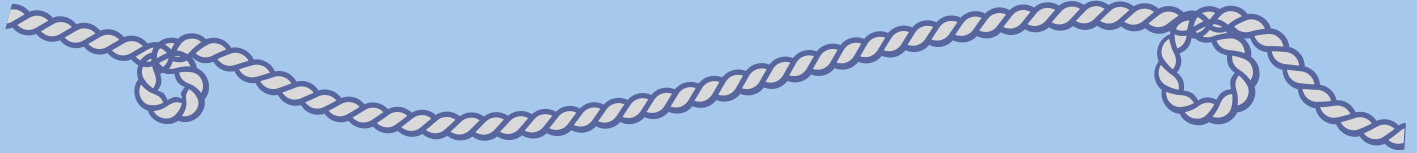
Earlier this year, the Supreme Court issued a ruling on a suit brought by herring fishermen regarding whether or not the MSA authorizes NOAA to require them to pay for fisheries observers on their vessels. The Supreme Court did not decide that question, but used the case as an opportunity to strike down the so-called “Chevron doctrine.” Under that doctrine, courts should defer to government agencies when they interpret unclear laws. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that if a law is unclear, the government’s interpretation is not the last word. Instead, the courts must determine what the law means, and agencies can’t just fill in the gaps however they want.

The full implications of this ruling are still being understood. While this seems like a win for fishermen and fishing businesses, there are concerns about larger scale impacts this could have. The question of whether the MSA allows NOAA to force industry to pay for observers is now being litigated in the lower courts. We will keep you updated as we learn more.

The Shareholders’ Alliance continues to monitor these legal developments closely, recognizing their potential implications for fisheries management and the commercial fishing industry. We remain committed to advocating for fair, science-based policies that support sustainable fisheries and the livelihoods of our members.



Advancing Science Through Cooperative Research



Cooperative research is a vital tool that brings fishermen and scientists together to collect data and find solutions to pressing challenges in fisheries management. By combining practical, on-the-water expertise with sound scientific methods, cooperative research ensures that management decisions are rooted in real-world observations and experiences. The Shareholders' Alliance is actively engaged in several projects, and is seeking new opportunities to engage in these collaborative efforts, recognizing their importance in promoting sustainable fisheries and supporting the long-term health of the Gulf's marine ecosystems.



ADVANCING SCIENCE THROUGH COOPERATIVE RESEARCH

**ELECTRONIC MONITORING**

The Shareholders' Alliance, in partnership with the Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at Mote Marine Laboratory (CFEMM), is advancing electronic monitoring (EM) technologies in the Gulf's commercial reef fish fishery. EM systems use onboard cameras to record data on catch, bycatch, and fishing activities, providing accurate, timely information that enhances fisheries management. CFEMM has equipped numerous volunteer fishing vessels with EM systems, demonstrating the technology's value in filling critical data gaps and directly involving fishermen in the scientific process.

OPTIMIZED RETENTION

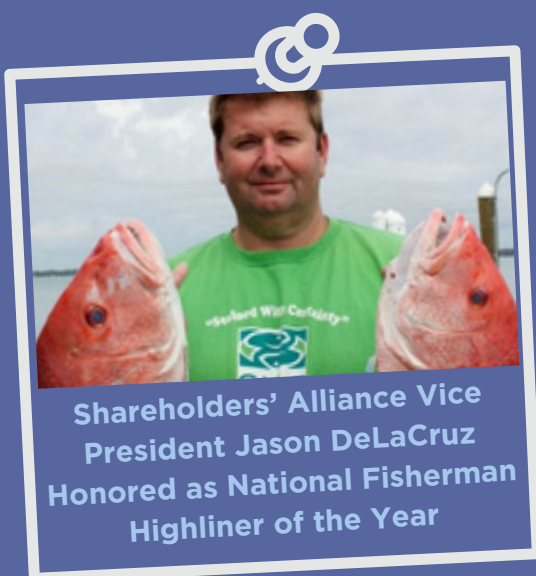
Working with CFEMM, several bottom longline vessels are testing whether keeping red grouper below the current size limit can reduce discards, create market demand for smaller fish, and provide valuable biological data to improve understanding of the species. Most age and length data rely on otoliths (ear bones) from fish 18 inches and larger, so this initiative offers insights into smaller grouper often excluded from research. Undersized red grouper are tagged and cameras used to record catch activity. This highlights the potential of EM to enhance data collection and explore innovative, science-based management solutions.



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CATCHING UP: NOTEWORTHY ACHIEVEMENTS

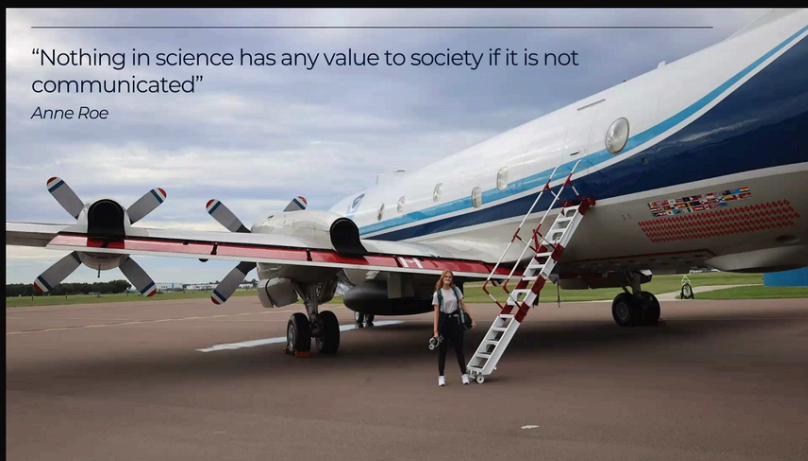
We are pleased to share several significant achievements and engagements that underscore our commitment to advancing the commercial fishing industry.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? CATCHING UP WITH DEVON



Many of you may remember Devon Ledbetter, former Shareholders' Alliance Communications Intern. If you've noticed a new, polished look to our social media, newsletters, or other communications materials, we have Devon to thank for them. We are proud to share that Devon recently defended her master's project, which focuses on developing innovative virtual reality experiences. Her work aims to immerse the public in the roles of a hurricane research pilot or a coral reef researcher, offering a unique perspective on the critical work being done to study and protect our environment. Devon's creativity and dedication have been inspiring, and we are thrilled to see what's next for her as she continues to make an impact in science communication and public engagement



Discover Devon's Project and Explore
the Virtual Reality Experiences She
Created

[Click Here](#)

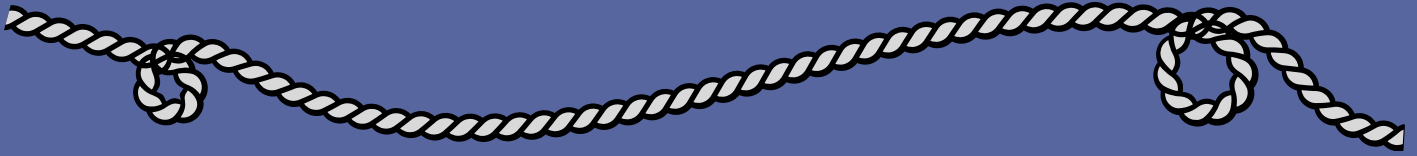
MAKING WAVES IN THE MEDIA



Throughout 2024, the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance has been featured in various media outlets, highlighting our commitment to sustainable fisheries and the commercial fishing industry. Below is a selection of articles featuring quotes from our staff, board members, and Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish fishermen:

- "Future Fishermen: Community recruiting for the next generation," November 5, 2024 - [**National Fisherman**](#)
- "Celebrating National Seafood Month with Launch of Gulf Commercial Fisherman Program," October 1, 2024 - [**Shareholders' Alliance Press Release**](#)
- "This Florida fisherman worries about industry's future," July 15, 2024 - [**Tallahassee Democrat**](#)
- "US names 22 members to regional fishery management councils but delays some appointments," July 8, 2024 - [**Associated Press**](#)
- "Fishing advocates say new Gulf council appointments 'maintaining a balance,'" July 2, 2024 - [**National Fisherman**](#)
- "Commercial and Charter Voices Preserved in Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Appointments," July 1, 2024 - [**Joint Press Release**](#) with Charter Fishermans Association, Destin Charter Boat Association, and Florida Guides Association
- "Fishing for the Future," June 26, 2024 - [**Florida Weekly**](#)
- "New Legislation Will Improve U.S. Fisheries' Resilience to Changing Ocean Conditions," June 18, 2024 - [**Environmental Defense Fund**](#)
- "Outlook for Gulf Fisheries not highlighted in Status of Stocks," June 10, 2024 - [**National Fisherman**](#)
- "Resilience Through Representation," June 7, 2024 - [**Marine Fish Conservation Network**](#)
- "Scholarship fund honors Gulf of Mexico fisherman Wayne Werner," March 25, 2024 - [**National Fisherman**](#)
- "US Federal Appeals Court Orders NOAA to Review Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper Quota Allocations," March 6, 2024 - [**SeafoodSource**](#)
- "Federal Appeals Court Orders Remand of Red Grouper Allocations," March 5, 2024 - [**National Fisherman**](#)
- "Court Finds Red Grouper Reallocation Was Flawed, Remands to NMFS," March 4, 2024 - [**Seafood News**](#)
- "Commercial fishermen score partial win in challenge of federal red grouper catch limits," March 4, 2024 - [**Houston Chronicle**](#)
- "Coastal Taylor County neighbors making a comeback six months after Hurricane Idalia," February 29, 2024 - [**WTXL Tallahassee**](#)

YOUR VOICE, OUR STRENGTH: JOIN US TODAY



Our strength comes from you—our members. Whether you're a fisherman, a seafood enthusiast, or simply someone who cares about the future of sustainable fisheries, your support makes all the difference. We can't do the work we do—advocating for healthy fisheries, supporting fishing communities, and protecting the Gulf of Mexico—without you. Memberships start at just \$25 per year, so join us today and become a vital part of our mission to ensure a thriving future for Gulf fisheries!



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