



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 1, 2022

Biden Administration Turns Its Back on Gulf of Mexico Commercial Fishermen

The [Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance](#) today issued the following statement on recent decisions by the Biden Administration that punish the hard working commercial fishermen and women Gulf of Mexico and jeopardize the health of this important marine ecosystem:

At one point, not very long ago, the Gulf of Mexico was a fisheries management success story – fish stocks were rebuilding, commercial fishermen had more profitable and stable businesses, and commercial fishermen were fairly represented in the regulatory process.

As the Biden Administration took office and announced its priorities, commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico were cautiously optimistic. Unlike the previous Administration, the current Administration pledged to follow the science, to prioritize conservation and ecosystem health, and to ensure fairness and equity.

Recent decisions by this Administration have demonstrated the exact opposite approach.

Many Gulf of Mexico fish stocks are in a nosedive – gag grouper and amberjack quotas have to be cut by as much as 80% because the populations are so low, due in part to a high volume of recreational discards with high mortality. Red snapper, the remarkable stock that bounced back faster than anyone expected, are now in decline due to mismanagement of the private recreational sector and their chronic overfishing. NOAA Fisheries recently took away 20% of commercial fishermen’s red grouper quota and gifted to the recreational sector under the guise of a “mathematical correction” based on new recreational catch data estimates without following its own guidance on the reallocation process – and with the knowledge it would result in more red grouper wasted by being discarded dead.

Furthermore, the regulatory body charged with advising this Administration on fisheries issues - the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) – has had its commercial representation steadily whittled away and replaced by private recreational angler interests. The disregarding of commercial fishermen’s voices continued this week as the Biden Administration announced that the Mississippi obligatory seat - held by Mississippi commercial fishing representatives for more than twenty years - has now been handed over to a private recreational angler, further marginalizing commercial fishermen and conservation interests.

This leaves the Gulf’s commercial fishermen with a single representative on this 17-member body who has experience in the commercial fisheries this Gulf Council manages. **One.**

The Gulf’s seafood industry deserves better.

The consequences of these Administration decisions are very real. Conservation successes are being unraveled, quotas slashed, small family businesses strained, and the public’s supply of Gulf seafood is being reduced because of the unsustainable actions of an unbalanced Gulf Council and a complicit NOAA Fisheries. Time and again, Federal courts have ruled that NOAA Fisheries’ Gulf of Mexico fisheries management decisions violated the law, yet they continue to head down that path.

Commercial fishermen are disappointed, frustrated, and angry. Despite the fact that we have small businesses to run, families to feed, and coastal communities to support, we consistently come to the table to work with the Gulf Council and NOAA Fisheries to find real solutions that protect fish *and* fishermen. Yet

we're faced with declining fish populations, instability in our businesses, and near-elimination of our representation.

The United States Department of Commerce and NOAA Fisheries should be better than this. The Biden Administration is failing the working people in the seafood industry, who support one of the most accountable fishery management systems in the nation, and is instead favoring wealthy boat owners, who are being rewarded for consistently exceeding their annual catch limits.

Commercial fishermen are relentless problem solvers. Despite the challenges we face, whether on the water or in the management process, we will continue to come together to rebalance this lopsided Gulf Council and double down on sustainability, accountability, and profitability.

We challenge this Administration to join us and do the same.

###

Media Contact:

Eric Brazer, Deputy Director, Shareholders' Alliance, 919-451-1971
eric@shareholdersalliance.org

The Shareholders' Alliance is the largest organization of commercial snapper and grouper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. We work hard to ensure that our fisheries are sustainably managed so our fishing businesses can thrive and our fishing communities can exist for future generations. We are the harvesters that provide much of the American public with a reliable source of domestically caught wild Gulf seafood, and we do this through a philosophy that sustainable seafood and profitable fishing businesses depend on healthy fish populations.

www.shareholdersalliance.org

[Unsubscribe](#)