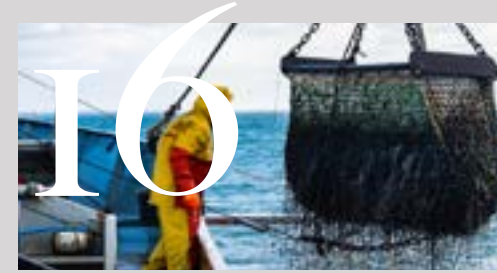




Alliance Update



NOAA Fishery Reports

In April, NOAA Fisheries released their annual [Status of the Stocks Report](#). The U.S. continues to be a leader in fisheries management.



News and Media

The Shareholders' Alliance has already made two trips to Washington, DC in 2023. Additionally, Eric Brazer was featured on "waterside chats" with MFCN.

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This summer, we are excited to bring on two new faces to the Shareholders' Alliance who will be working with us over the summer.



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Red Grouper

Read to find out the latest updates on the Red Grouper Amendment 53

Alliance Team Update

Happy Spring from the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance ([Shareholders' Alliance](#))!

It's been a busy year for the organization. We continue to be faced with quota reductions and constant reallocation battles led by the private recreational angler representatives at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). But we are cautiously optimistic about conversations around recreational management reform that are starting to happen at the regional and national level as well as advancement of commercial electronic logbooks.

We are also excited about the growth the Shareholders' Alliance has experienced this year. The Reef Fish Quota Bank is in its ninth year of operations and continues to help more than twenty fishermen annually reduce discards and provide allocation access for next generation fishermen. We have also brought on two staff members for the summer that will be bolstering our policy and communications work. We hope many of you have the opportunity to meet them during their time with us.

[The Shareholders' Alliance](#) remains focused on and dedicated to protecting the commercial reef fish fishery in the Gulf of Mexico and supporting the commercial fishermen who depend on it. We can't do what we do without you - our members. Thank you for your ongoing support on all fronts. Our staff are always available to answer questions and hear your experiences on the water so that we can continue to be an effective voice for your livelihood.

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

Ashford Rosenberg, Policy Director
ashford@shareholdersalliance.org
901-828-4343



MEET THE TEAM



Devon Ledbetter

**Fisheries Communications and
Public Relations Intern**

Devon Ledbetter is a graduate of the University of Miami with a B.A. in Marine Affairs and Communications. After becoming an avid scuba diver, she decided she wanted to pursue a career in ocean conservation. She is now a masters student at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science. Devon is thrilled to join the team as our intern for the summer of 2023, and will be working alongside our staff to assist within the field of communications and public relations.

Devon@shareholdersalliance.org



Hugh Cipparone

**Fisheries Policy and Management
Fellow**

Hugh's passion for sustainable seafood production grew from his childhood on Long Island Sound and travels to the Michigan town of Leelanau: a commercial fishing village – turned – tourist destination representative of the struggles faced by commercial fishermen in the United States and the benefits fishermen provide to the nation. Hugh has worked as an observer in the Bering Sea, improved operations for processing giant Pacific Seafood, and researched ornamental fish cultivation, news media discussion of aquaculture development, and surveillance technology in fisheries management. Hugh holds a Master of Environmental Management Degree from Duke University and a Bachelor of Arts from Bowdoin College.

Hugh@shareholdersalliance.org

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Gulf Council Appointments



Every year, the Secretary of Commerce appoints individuals to fill vacant seats on Regional Fishery Management Councils. This year, there are three seats on the Gulf Council that are up for appointment/reappointment.

1. Florida/At-large/Recreational - Currently held by Mr. Phil Dyskow, who is not seeking reappointment.
2. Alabama/At-Large/"Other" - Currently held by Dr. Bob Shipp, who is not seeking reappointment.
3. Texas/At-Large/"Other" - Currently held by Dr. Greg Stunz, who is ineligible for reappointment due to serving the maximum three consecutive three year terms.

State governors have submitted their list of candidates to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration, and we've been told that she will be making a decision by the end of June.

The Shareholders' Alliance continues to highlight the extreme unbalance on the Gulf Council where *only 1 of the 17 voting members have experience in commercial fisheries in federal waters*. This heavy favoritism is driving unsustainable (and, frankly, illegal) management actions that penalize commercial fishermen and reward the lack of accountability in the private angler sector. *We call on NOAA Fisheries and the Secretary of Commerce to right this wrong and set the Gulf Council back on a path of balance, fairness, and accountability.*

The lack of commercial representation jeopardizes the health of the Gulf of Mexico, and your livelihoods. If you would like to submit a letter to the Secretary of Commerce urging her to restore balance to the Gulf Council, please click [this link](#).

GIVE COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN A VOICE.



We need your help!

Commercial and charter/for-hire fishermen have lost their representation and we need your help getting it back.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has seventeen voting members, yet only one of them has any experience in the commercial fisheries it manages and only one of them has any experience in federal charter/for-hire fisheries. Each of these two critical fishery sectors has been reduced to one representative out of seventeen.

This is neither fair nor balanced, and is an insult to the hard working men and women that make their living on the water in the Gulf of Mexico.

Help us rebalance the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council by scanning this QR code, signing your name to the email, and submitting it to the United States Secretary of Commerce and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The businessmen and women who help provide seafood for this restaurant thank you in advance.

For more information, please email eric@shareholdersalliance.org

Sincerely, the Gulf's Commercial Fishermen



**SCAN AND SUPPORT
OUR COMMUNITY BY
SENDING AN EMAIL ON
BEHALF OF THE
FISHERMEN**



THANK YOU



Gag Grouper Reallocation Amendment 56

The last stock assessment for gag grouper, [SEDAR 72](#), showed gag grouper is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and that the male population is at historic lows. Initially, SEDAR 72 used Fishing Effort Survey recreational landings, but a push from Florida resulted in NOAA updating the stock assessment with recreational landings from Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS). SRFS did not cause a drastic change in the stock assessment results, but it did still indicate that the recreational sector landed and discarded more fish than previously thought, and the Gulf Council is using this recalibration to force reallocation of quota between the commercial and recreational sectors.

At the beginning of this year, NOAA published an Interim Rule that decreased the quota for gag grouper, but did not reallocate. Any changes to gag quota moving forward would be in addition to the reduction that took effect earlier this year.

For Action 2 of Amendment 56 (reallocation) the Gulf Council has selected Alternative 3, Option 3b as the preferred. This option shifts the largest amount of allocation away from the commercial sector to the recreational sector that has more dead discards and higher levels of management uncertainty.

Amendment 56 will also change the buffer between the annual catch limit (ACL) and annual catch target (ACT) for both the recreational and commercial sectors. Currently, for the commercial sector, the ACT (which is the quota) is 8.85% below the ACL. The Gulf Council chose to reduce the buffer to so that the ACT is 5% below the ACL, which increases the quota marginally from where it was set after the Interim Rule, but still is a net loss of almost 80% from this time last year.

There is one more virtual public hearing this month on May 30, 2023 from 6-9pm eastern. We encourage you to attend and provide your input on this Amendment and the harm it will cause.

	ACT (Quota, mp)	% change (from pre-Interim Rule)
Before Interim Rule	.939	
After Interim Rule	.199	-79%
Preferred Alternative 3	.204	-78%



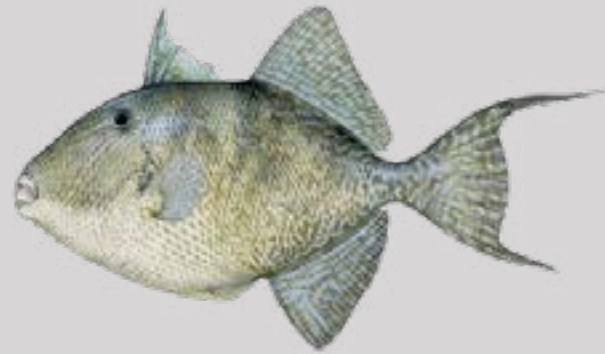
	OFL (mp)	ABC (mp)	Total ACL	% change (from pre-Interim Rule)	Com ACL (mp)	% change (from pre-Interim Rule)
Catch Limits Before Interim Rule	4.18	3.12	3.12		1.217	
Alternative 1 (status quo after Interim Rule)	4.18	3.12	.661	-79%	.258	-79%
Alternative 2, option 2b (39% comm, 61% rec)	.603	.456	.452	-85.5%	.176	-32%
Preferred Alternative 3, option 3b (35% comm, 35% rec)	.591	.444	.443	-85.8%	.155	-40%

[Register for the virtual hearing here](#)

[View Amendment 56](#)

Gray Triggerfish Commercial Trip Limits

Earlier this year, in a rare win for commercial fishermen, the Gulf Council approved an increase in the gray triggerfish commercial trip limit from 16 to 25 fish. On May 5, 2023 NOAA published the [Proposed Rule](#) and Public Comment is open until June 5, 2023.



We encourage you to submit comments on the Proposed Rule and show support for NOAA supporting science and the input of commercial fishermen so that we can better utilize the newly increased quota for gray triggerfish.

[Comment Here](#)



PROPOSED GRAY TRIGGERFISH TRIP LIMIT INCREASE



**SUPPORT THE
PROPOSED LIMIT
INCREASE VIA
PUBLIC COMMENT
ON BEHALF OF THE
FISHERMEN**



16 → **25**
Fish Fish

IMPROVING CONSUMER ACCESS.

In 2021, the commercial fishing quota was increased for gray triggerfish because of improving stock health. However, the 16 fish trip limit remained the same, meaning commercial fishermen were unable to harvest their newly allocated quota to its full extent.

By increasing the trip limit, we are removing the barrier that prevents commercial fishermen from utilizing their quota limits.

Scan to make public comments supporting **Alternative 3:**
Increase the commercial trip limit from 16 to 25 fish!

SEFHIER Update

In March, NOAA lost an appeal against the implementation of the Southeast For Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program, and the judge vacated the entire rule. However, the decision from the court only spoke to certain aspects of SEFHIER being either unconstitutional or redundant. We expect a decision from NOAA very soon as to whether it will appeal this ruling.

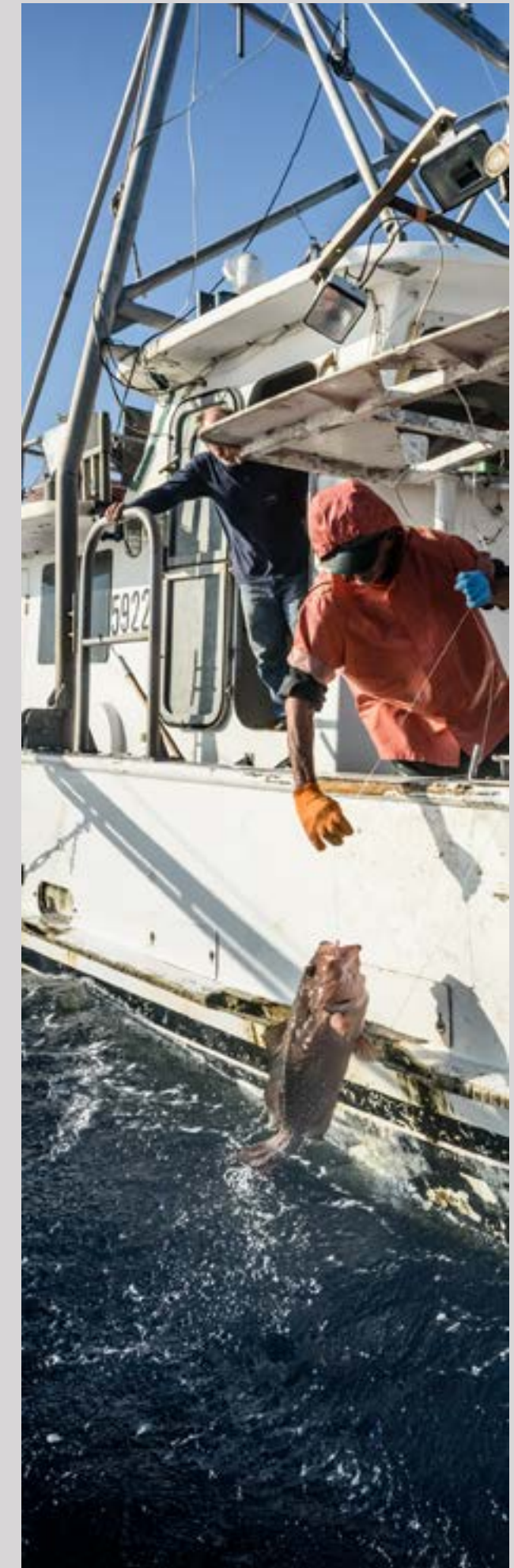
The judge's ruling leaves some room for an electronic reporting program to be salvaged/redesigned. It likely will not have a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) component, nor collect socioeconomic data, but there was almost unanimous support by the charter/for-hire industry work to start on a new document now while NOAA decides whether or not to appeal. Ultimately, the Gulf Council supported the industry, so from here Gulf Council will start working on a document that considers the current ruling of the appellate court while NOAA decides whether or not to appeal.

IFQ Discussion

At the April 2023 meeting, Gulf Council staff gave a presentation that summarized the goals and objectives of catch share programs across the country to provide context for discussion around if/how to change the goals of the Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish IFQ programs.

The discussion still has made little progress, and Gulf Council members kicked the ball back to NOAA and Gulf Council staff to generate suggestions that may be reviewed at the June Council meeting.

We continue to remind the Gulf Council that, thus far, the “problems” that have been identified are not ones that can be solved by policy changes, and that the current flexibility of the IFQ programs allows industry to adapt and address issues within the fishery. Recreational advocates remain determined to do something to change the IFQ programs. Through our outreach to industry, Reef Fish Quota Bank, and other proactive initiatives, we stand ready to be a resource that can inform this conversation.



Recreational Management Reform Initiative

At the January Gulf Council meeting the NOAA Southeast Regional Administrator took the initiative to craft a motion, which ultimately passed, to initiate a recreational reform initiative to guide the Gulf Council through some hard conversations about how the recreational sector can be managed more effectively.

Some of the ideas proposed in the motion include:

1. Development, review, and revision of goals and objectives for recreational fisheries management;
2. A review of the status of Federally managed species in the Gulf of Mexico that are highly sought after by recreational anglers, including recreational sources of directed and bycatch mortality.
3. A review of recreational management measures, including how management measures have changed over time;
4. Assessment of the performance and efficacy of recreational accountability measures and recommended improvements;
5. Evaluation and consideration of harvest control rules (i.e. pre-agreed guidelines) for setting bag, size, and season limits;
6. Scientific recommendations to the Council for addressing variability and uncertainty in recreational catch estimates, including use of multiple years of data, identification of catch estimates that are the result of low sample sizes or outliers, and statistical recommendations and guidance for how such approaches could be implemented;
7. Exploration of innovative new management strategies, including but not limited to: regional management, sector separation, a bottom-fish season, effort rationalization, and management approaches for reducing discards and discard mortality.

We remain cautiously optimistic about many of these ideas, but will monitor how they progress very closely. We will keep you informed as this moves forward.

June Gulf Council Meeting

June 5-8, 2023 in Mobile, Alabama

Relevant topics that will be covered include:

Final Action on gag grouper Amendment 56
Discussion of IFQ Programs Objectives
Recalibration of Red Snapper Recreational Catch Limits
Modifications to Commercial Amberjack Management Measures
SEFHIER Updates and Next Steps

We hope to see you there!

[Register for the Gulf Council Webinar Here](#)

Red Grouper Updates

In February, the Shareholders' Alliance, along with Southern Offshore Fishing Association and A.P. Bell Fish Company, appealed the judge's decision that upheld the Gulf Council's wrongful reallocation of red grouper away from the commercial sector to the recreational sector that has more dead discards and higher levels of management uncertainty. In April, the three appellants filed our opening brief, which explains why Amendment 53 was unlawful, and why the U.S. Court of Appeals should reverse the judgment of the District Court and vacate Amendment 53.

At this time, the amicus parties have submitted their briefs, as have NOAA Fisheries, CCA, and the State of Louisiana. The plaintiffs have one opportunity to respond by May 26, 2023. The Court will then set a hearing date.

We are now raising additional funds for the appeals process, and we are very grateful for your overwhelming support to this cause so far. This court process isn't done, and every dollar helps. If you have contributed already, thank you, and we hope you can find the means to contribute again. If you have not contributed, we ask that you do so as soon as possible. You can support the appeals process by either:

[Go online to donate here](#)

Or

Send a check payable to:
Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance
1902 Wharf Road
Galveston, TX 77550
(Include "Red Grouper Litigation" in the memo line)

Contributions may qualify as a business expense; please check with your accountant.

[Red Grouper Webpage](#)



NOAA Fishery Reports

2022 Status of the Stocks

In April, NOAA Fisheries released their annual [Status of the Stocks Report](#). The U.S. continues to be a leader in fisheries management - the number of fisheries that are overfished and/or undergoing overfishing continues to decline nationwide, and more fisheries are being rebuilt.

However, more Gulf of Mexico stocks were added to the overfished list than in any other region. We continue to remain concerned about the overall trend in stock health in our region, whether due to management decisions by a Gulf Council that is heavily weighted to recreational interests, ecosystem changes, or other factors.

2022 OVERFISHING LIST	
Removed	Added
Red porgy - Southern Atlantic Coast	Haddock - Gulf of Maine
Lane snapper - Gulf of Mexico	Cobira snapper - Gulf of Mexico
Bigeye tuna - Atlantic	Gulf of Mexico Mid-Water Snapper Complex
**Yellowtail flounder - Georges Bank	
Pacific halibut	

2022 OVERFISHING LIST	
Removed	Added
White hake - Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank	None
Winter flounder - Georges Bank	
Winter flounder - Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic	

Rebuilt
**Winter flounder - Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic
Yellowtail flounder - Cape Cod/Gulf of Maine

*Overfishing status changed to unknown because the 2013 stock assessment is too outdated to support a continued overfishing status determination. Catch limits remain in place. ** The target population level for this stock was reduced based on updated scientific information and stock abundance is above the new target.

Fisheries Economics of the U.S.

NOAA has released the annual report detailing the economic impact of fisheries across the country. It confirms the economic significance of the commercial fishing industry, both nationwide and in the Gulf of Mexico.

Gulf of Mexico commercial fishermen landed 1.2 billion pounds of finfish and shellfish, provided an economic impact of \$9 billion and provided tens of thousands of jobs in fishing communities throughout the region.

[Read the Full Report](#)

News and Media

Shareholders' Alliance in D.C.

The Shareholders' Alliance has already made two trips to Washington, DC in 2023 - one with the [Seafood Harvesters of America](#) (SHA) and one with the [Fishing Communities Coalition \(FCC\)](#). These trips are an important opportunity to build relationships with like-minded commercial fishing organizations across the country,

and to meet with Congressional offices to discuss priorities in the Gulf and nationwide. The Shareholders' Alliance uses these trips to emphasize the need for balance on the Gulf Council, the challenges commercial fishermen are facing in our region, the need for better recreational data collection and accountability, and any reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson) must maintain the reliance on science, data, and accountability that has made the US a leader in fisheries management.



We look forward to future trips with our partners in DC. While it is unlikely that any Magnuson reauthorization bill will move forward this Congress, it is important for the commercial fishing industry to maintain regular contact with our allies and keep them informed of conservation and political challenges we are facing.



Pictured left to right:
Eric Brazer, Mark Tryon and Tyler Massey

Shareholders' Alliance in the Media

Earlier this month, Shareholders' Alliance Deputy Director Eric Brazer was featured on "Waterside Chats" with the [Marine Fish Conservation Network \(MFCN\)](#). It was a great opportunity to share the work we do and our members' commitment to a healthy, sustainable Gulf of Mexico. If you missed it, you can view the full video here at [Shareholders' Alliance in the News](#)

Updates on Other Gulf Industries

Wind Industry

The Bureau of Ocean Energy and Management continues to give [regular updates](#) to the Gulf Council on how wind energy is progressing in the Gulf of Mexico. They have identified three lease sites - two off Galveston, TX and one off Lake Charles, LA, and recently had a public comment period on a Proposed Sale Notice in those areas

[More About the FFP](#)



Aquaculture

The Shareholders' Alliance continues to actively monitor how stay in tune with how this aquaculture is developing in our region, and has been participating in opportunities for the commercial industry to engage and provide input on possible impacts of this new-to-the-Gulf industry.

In January, our Deputy Director Eric Brazer attended an aquaculture seminar in Hawai'i that brought together representatives from a wide range of ocean use interest groups (commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, environmental consultants, ENGOS, academia, government). It was an opportunity for these groups to come together to learn more about aquaculture and how it could impact our region, build trust and relationships among user groups with common interests in the future of the Blue Economy, and identify key lessons from Hawai'i that can be transferred to other regions.

In February, our Policy Director Ashford Rosenberg attended a workshop in New Orleans that was hosted by Sea Grant and the National Centers of Coastal Ocean Sciences (NCOOS) where she, along with members of academia and the aquaculture industry, provided input on tools used for aquaculture siting and sustainability.

On May 2, 2023 NOAA published a "Gulf of Mexico Aquaculture Opportunity Area Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) Public Scoping Summary." This document summarizes the 216 written and verbal comments received during the scoping period for the PEIS. NOAA is continuing to review and consider these comments, gathering additional data, and may refine the proposed alternatives and scope of the draft PEIS. NOAA is aiming to publish and updated Draft PEIS in winter 2024, and there will be another opportunity for public input at that time.



Business Resources

NOAA Fisheries Finance Program

NOAA continues to offer commercial fishermen opportunities to access capital to reinvest in improving the safety and profitability of their businesses through the [NOAA Fisheries Finance Program](#). These long-term, fixed rate loans can be used for:

1. Refurbishing, modernization or purchasing of existing fishing vessels, fisheries facilities, or aquaculture facilities
2. Purchase of harvesting privileges (e.g. IFQs)
3. Refinancing existing debt for these purposes.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. If you are approved, you have 5 years to initiate the loan - this means you can get pre-approved and position yourself to move quickly on an IFQ purchase if one becomes available, rather than wait to secure loan approval afterwards.

For more information or if you have questions about this program, contact Maria Starr, SERO Loan Officer (maria.starr@noaa.gov, (727-332-3591) or visit this link [here](#).

SCORE Resources

SCORE is a network of volunteers dedicated to helping small businesses succeed. They offer free webinars, mentoring, and education across the country. Many of their resources could be helpful to you and your business.

[More About Score](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

Eat Seafood America!

[Eat Seafood America!](#) is now sharing some great recipes to try with friends and family. Whether it's fish tacos, shrimp boil packets, or crab cakes, there are lots of options for sharing some amazing Gulf seafood. Check out some recipes [here](#).

Join the Shareholders' Alliance

Do you know someone who would love to get more information about what's going on in Gulf fisheries? Tell them to [join the Shareholders' Alliance](#)! Membership benefits include access to quarterly membership calls, regular updates on management changes, as well as a sweet shirt and koozie. Memberships start at just \$25!