



Alliance Update

August, 2023

Alliance Team Updates

Happy August 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](#)).

We are also excited about the growth the Shareholders' Alliance has experienced this year. Our membership rates are up and the Reef Fish Quota Bank is in its ninth year of operations and continues to help more than twenty fishermen annually reduce discards and support allocation access for next-generation fishermen.

The strength of the Shareholders' Alliance is a reflection of the commitment of our members - we cannot understate how much we appreciate your support and devotion to our collective success. We are honored to continue working on your behalf, advocating for commercial fishermen and fishing families, telling your story as the true conservationists on the water, and finding proactive solutions that will lead to healthier fish populations and better fishing for everyone.

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.

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



Birth Announcement

On July 20, 2023, Policy Director Ashford Rosenberg and her husband Paul welcomed two baby boys to their family. James and Benjamin were born at 8:30pm. Everyone is home and healthy. Big sister, Ari, is settling into her new role and taking the duties of older siblings very seriously.

Reef Fish Quota Bank Update

2023 marks the ninth year of operation for the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Quota Bank - the only community-based program of its kind in the Gulf of Mexico that is working to reduce discards and support the next generation of professional commercial fishermen. So far in 2023, we've worked with 22 individual fishermen from 13 different communities throughout the Gulf of Mexico to support access to nearly 70,000 pounds of red snapper allocation.

Through our work with professional, dedicated fishermen members, we're showing how bottom-up, collaborative solutions can work without regulatory interference; and that fishermen are true problem-solvers when it comes to their businesses, their communities, and the health of the natural resources on which their businesses depend.

If you're interested in learning more about this unique program, please visit our [webpage](#) for more information.



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Appointments

After years of your emails, calls, and meetings, the Secretary of Commerce and Biden Administration appear to be turning an ear to the needs of fishing communities and have finally taken a small step in populating the Gulf Council with individuals who make a living on the water by appointing Captain Ed Walker to the Florida/At-Large Seat. Captain Walker is a qualified candidate with a unique perspective through his experience as a dual-permitted charter/for-hire and commercial fisherman. However, this still leaves the Gulf Council with only one seat out of seventeen with full-time experience in federally managed commercial fisheries. *One.*

This still falls far short of “fair”, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. It is imperative the Gulf Council return to fair, balanced, and impartial representation that prioritizes science-based management and conservation. We are encouraged by the appointment of Captain Ed Walker and extend our congratulations to him, but this still fails to meet the needs of healthy fisheries and healthy fishing communities.

The fight for balance is ongoing. We will continue to call for fair representation for commercial fishing families. We will not stop until our voices are heard, and the composition of the Gulf Council reflects the makeup of the men and women on the water – the people who work relentlessly to put seafood on everyone’s dinner tables deserve a say in the management process which directly affects their livelihoods. The Shareholders’ Alliance stands ready to work with Captain Ed Walker, and all Gulf Council members, to meet these objectives so that our fisheries are managed in a sustainable manner and the American public can continue their access to the bounty the Gulf of Mexico offers.

The next Gulf Council meeting will be held next week (August 14-17, 2023) in Austin, Texas. We’ll be there - will you?

August 2023 Gulf Council Meeting

Some of the relevant topics that will be discussed include:

- Gag and black grouper management
- Amberjack management
- Update on wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico
- Rice’s Whale critical habitat proposed rule
- Litigation update
- Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

August 14-17, 2023

Austin, Texas

The Driskill

604 Brazos Street

Austin, TX 78701-3212

512-439-1234

Scan for
more information:



We are excited to announce a new project to promote the interests of commercial fishermen and establish a personal connection between the consumers and producers of the Gulf seafood industry!

With our Communications Intern at the helm, the Shareholders' Alliance is crafting a communications campaign that will highlight and promote your livelihoods on the water and the hard work you put in to feed the American public. To create this campaign, we need your help - we are asking for support from fishermen who are willing to share their experience and investment in these waters through videos shot on your phone and shared with our team to compile and turn into the final video product.

We are looking for two kinds of video footage:

1. Video footage of boats, crew, and the process of fishing; this stock footage will be used in the video to show the public and our allies what a day on the water really looks like - and what you go through to harvest and deliver seafood to your fellow Americans.

2. Interview content: We are looking for commercial fishermen who are willing to share their stories and talk about your experiences and the work you do.

For more information on how to film and submit your content, refer to the instruction sheet. When you are done filming and ready to submit your videos, you can text/email them to me directly using my contact information below.



Devon Ledbetter
Communications and Public Relations Intern
Devon@shareholdersalliance.org



FACES OF THE GULF

Join the campaign, and tell your story.



SHOOTING

- Shoot video sideways (landscape)
- Sit somewhere with good lighting and a nice background
 - On the dock or on your boat is best!
- Prop your camera up / have someone record you

ANSWERING

- Answer all required questions in one video
- Each optional question is its own separate video
 - Stop the video and restart when you begin a new question
- Answers ~ 1 minute



SUBMITTING

- Three options
1. Submit to google drive via link in your email
 2. Email videos to devon@shareholdersalliance.org
 3. Text videos to 682-249-4440

QUESTIONS

Required

This is when you tell your story.

- How did you enter the commercial fishing industry?
- How long have you been fishing?
- What inspired you to become a commercial fisherman?
- Tell us about an experience you had at sea that you'll never forget

Optional

Pick some or all questions

- What do you see as the biggest threat to your way of life?
- How have you seen the industry change since you started fishing?
- What advice do you have for someone who wants to get started in the industry?
- Why is conservation important to your way of life?
- How do you practice conservation while on a fishing trip?
- If you could tell someone one thing about commercial fishing, what would it be?
- How can someone who lives hundreds of miles away from the ocean support your way of life?



Electronic Logbooks

The Gulf Council will hold three hearings to gather public comments on a Generic Amendment to move the submission of coastal logbooks from mail-in paper logbooks to electronic logbooks. This change would impact commercial Reef Fish permit holders in the Gulf and would not impact IFQ reporting requirements. See the times and dates below to join and offer testimony:

Register and join the virtual hearings [here](#).

12:00 PM EDT
August 23, 2023

6:00 PM EDT
August 29, 2023

10:00 AM EDT
August 30, 2023

National Standards ANPR

NOAA Fisheries' is considering potential future adjustments to National Standards 4 (Allocations), 8 (Communities), or 9 (Bycatch), of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Advance Notice of Proposed Rule has been published and comments are due by September 12, 2023 on whether or not NOAA Fisheries should proceed with a process that may include adjustments to these National Standards. We are currently evaluating the existing National Standards, including what appears to be working and where potential adjustments could be made, and conducting a risk assessment of this process. If you would like to provide input into this process, please contact Deputy Director Eric Brazer for more information.



Red Grouper Lawsuit

We're headed back to court next month - this time to challenge the District Court's decision to uphold NOAA Fisheries' approval of red grouper Amendment 53 - an amendment that:

- Increases the number of red grouper discarded dead and wasted by recreational anglers.
- Increases the likelihood that red grouper will be overfished.
- Reduces the size and productivity of the red grouper stock.
- Decreases the amount of red grouper available to be harvested for all fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Harms commercial fishing families and seafood consumers by reducing the commercial quota, partially to offset the increased waste that will be generated by recreational anglers.

Wednesday, September 27, 2023, we will be in front of the DC Circuit Court of Appeals to explain why the previous court got it wrong and why the best thing for the fishery, the commercial fishing industry, and the health and sustainability of the red grouper population, is to vacate Amendment 53.

Thanks to all that have reached out and supported this process - from giving testimony to traveling to DC to financially supporting this effort. Since we are now raising additional funds for the appeals process, we are asking you to help support this appeal and contribute to the [Red Grouper Defense Fund](#) today either by one of the following:

Go online and donate [HERE](#)

or

Send a check payable to:

Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders'
Alliance

1902 Wharf Road

Galveston, TX 77550

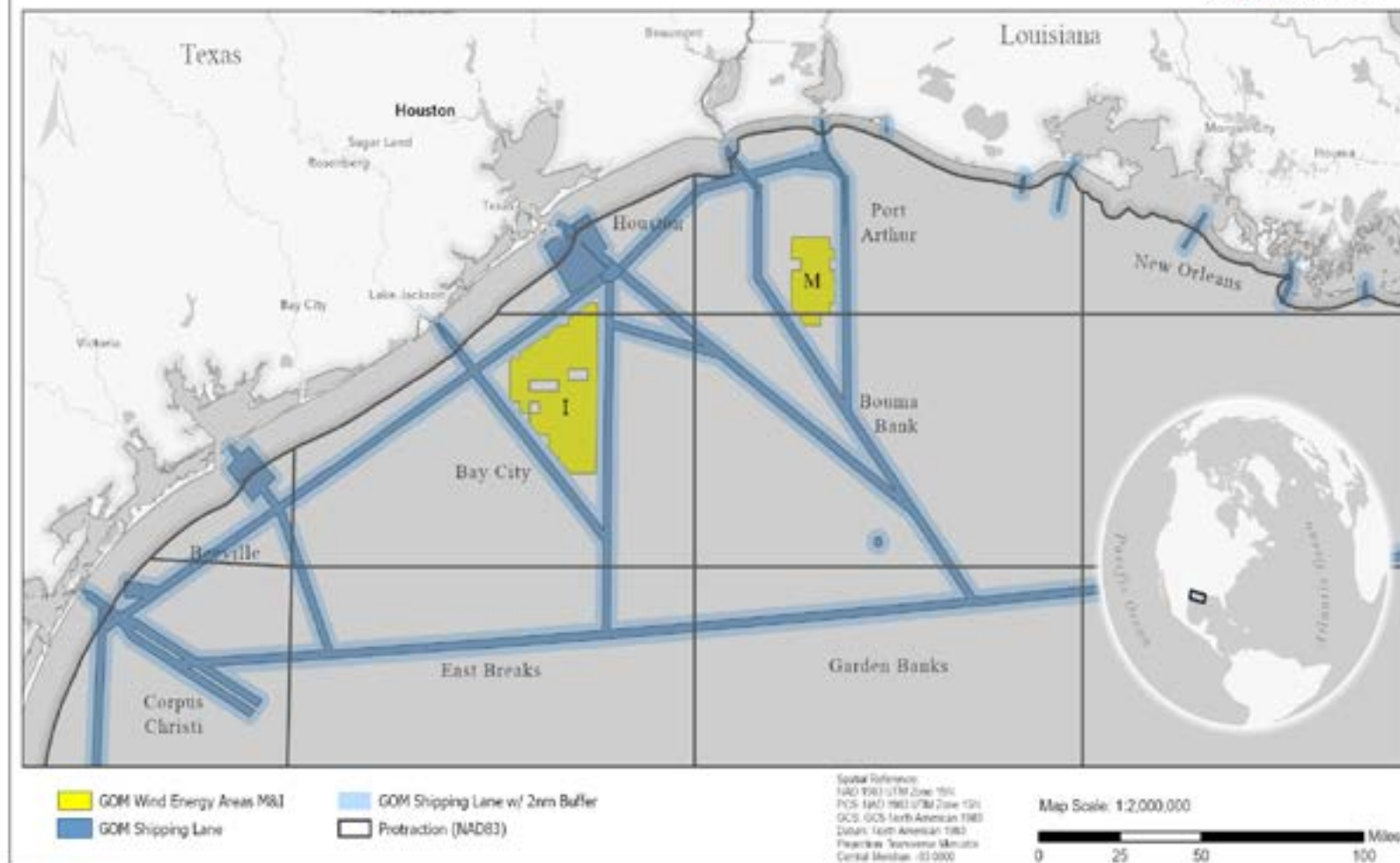
(Include "Red Grouper Litigation" in the
memo line)



For more information, please visit our updated red grouper [webpage](#).

Gulf of Mexico Final Wind Energy Areas

BOEM
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT



Wind Development in the Gulf

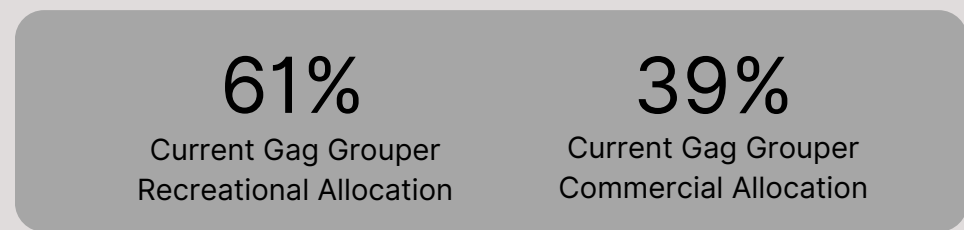
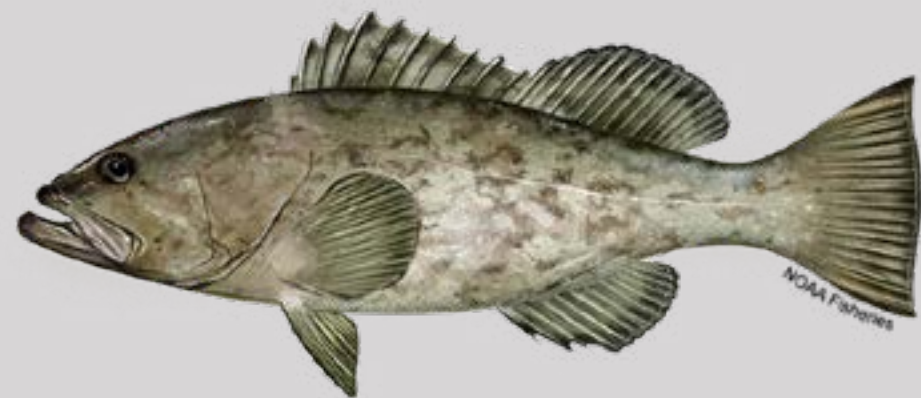
Wind development in Gulf has hit a critical point. Three sites in the Gulf totaling 300,000 acres – two off of Galveston, TX and one off of Lake Charles, LA – will be auctioned for wind development on August 29th, 2023.

In an extremely exciting turn of events, however, wind developers will have the opportunity to earn credits in the bidding process by creating a fund to compensate commercial and charter/for-hire fishermen for losses of gear and fishing income as a result of wind development. The exact mechanism for fund disbursement will be proposed by the developer and approved by BOEM.

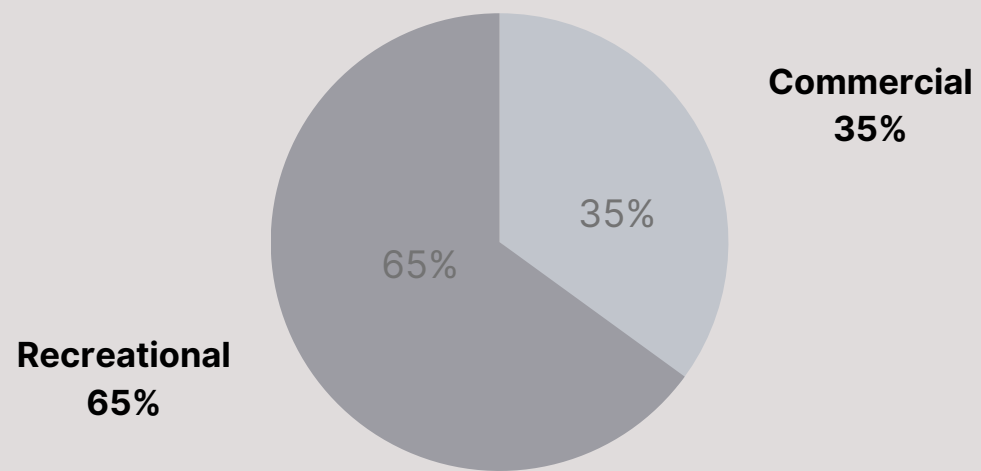
While impact mitigation and repayment should be a last resort, we consider this a step in the right direction and demonstration of BOEMs' consideration of fishermen in Gulf wind development.

Gag Grouper Reallocation

During the last meeting of the Gulf Council, councilmembers approved Draft Amendment 56: Modifications to the Gag Grouper Catch Limits, Sector Allocations, and Fishing Seasons which will decrease commercial allocation by 40% relative to the current level and increase the percentage of quota allocation to the recreational sector by four percent. This Draft Amendment will now be considered by the Secretary of Commerce for approval. This approval process will offer a new opportunity for commercial fishermen's voices to be heard on this topic. We'll let you know as soon as that comment period opens.



Proposed Stock Reallocation



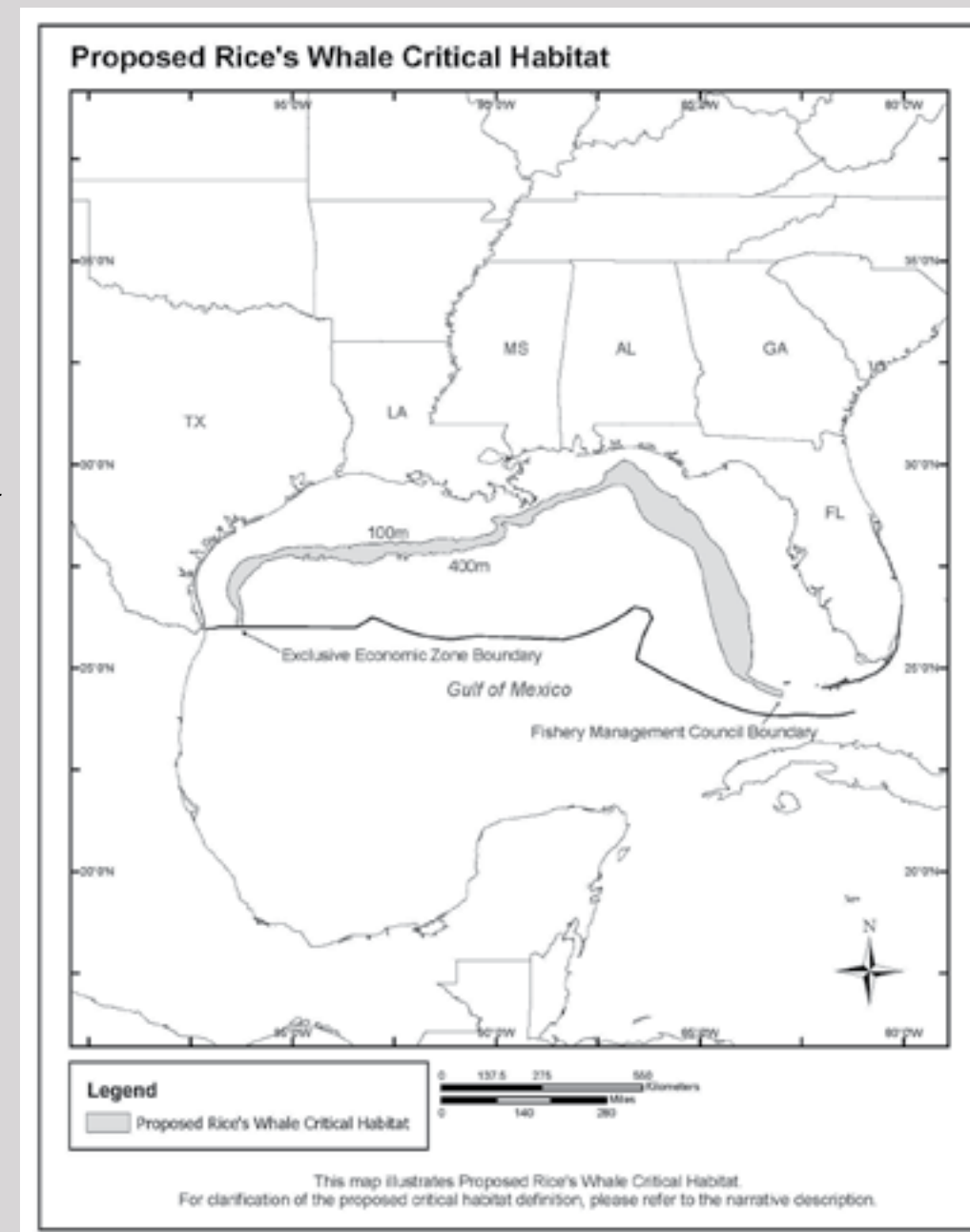
13% reduction in your commercial quota

Rice's Whale Update

A number of environmental NGOs recently submitted a petition to establish a 10 knot speed limit and limit on night transit, among other restrictions, within a large portion of the Northwest Gulf of Mexico for the sake of protecting the Rice's Whale.

The comment period for that petition ended on July 6th, 2023 – over 40,000 comments had been entered into the Federal Register, making this a particularly contentious issue. NOAA will now review those comments and determine their response. Many thanks to all who commented!

NOAA Fisheries has also been court-mandated to develop a Critical Habitat zone - an area where federal agencies are required to consult with NOAA prior to taking potentially habitat-damaging action - for the Rice's Whale. They proposed that zone on July 24th, 2023 which covers all sections of the Gulf between 100 and 400 meters deep.



We will continue to monitor this issue and brief you as [more information](#) becomes available.

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!

