



Update on CARES Act Relief Funding

The Shareholders' Alliance continues to work with Gulf State and Federal representatives to gather information about relief available due to the impact of COVID-19. Right now, the five Gulf States are working on their spending plans for the money from the CARES Act. Information is below. As always, feel free to check in with our [COVID-19 Resources webpage](#) for the latest information on resources available for the industry.

Thanks,

Eric

The [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) was signed into law on March 25, 2020, which allocated \$300 million in relief funding for fishery related businesses impacted by COVID-19. Each state must submit their spending plans to the Interstate Fishery Commissions, where they will then be reviewed and approved by NOAA Fisheries. Recently, NOAA Fisheries provided further guidance to the states and Commissions regarding participant eligibility.

To be eligible for CARES Act relief, you must be a participant in a marine fishery. Freshwater fisheries are not eligible. You must apply for funding in the state in which you reside. For example, if you live in Alabama but primarily fish or land fish in Florida, you must apply for funding to the state of Alabama. You must be able to prove 35% loss this year, compared to a five-year average. You do not have to be fishing in the entire five-year time period, but must be able to document loss. Therefore, if 2020 was your first year fishing you are not eligible.

Lastly, upstream businesses in the supply chain are not eligible, such as restaurants, bait and tackle shops, or gear shops. Some of this guidance has only been distributed to the state agencies, but was discussed at the June meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC). You can hear and view the presentation [at this link, starting at 1:08:30](#).



Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) and Atlantic States Fisheries Commission (ASMFC)

The Gulf States and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions are acting as the “pass-through” for the CARES Act funding. Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama will develop spend plans for the money and work with [GSMFC](#), while Florida will work with [ASMFC](#). Once a state’s spend plan has been approved by NOAA Fisheries, GSMFC and ASMFC will process the payments to eligible fishery participants on behalf of the states.

Each state is responsible for developing a spending plan for their allocated money. The amount awarded to the Gulf States are:

- Florida - \$23,636,600 (8% of total, 45% of Gulf)
- Louisiana - \$14,785,244 (5% of total, 28% of Gulf)
- Texas - \$9,237,949 (3% of total, 18% of Gulf)
- Alabama - \$3,299,821 (1% of total, 6% of Gulf)
- Mississippi - \$1,534,388 (0.5% of total, 3% of Gulf)

NOAA Fisheries [apparently](#) calculated this distribution by viewing revenue histories, though how the calculations were done has not yet been publicized.

NOAA Fisheries has confirmed that fishermen were not consulted regarding how to allocate the funding.

Information from GSMFC can be found at [this link](#).

Information from ASMFC can be found at [this link](#).



Status of State Spending Plans

The Gulf states are all at various points in the process of developing their spend plans. Unfortunately, unlike states such as [Massachusetts](#) that have developed industry advisory panels to provide input on these spend plans, commercial fishermen continue to remain excluded from Gulf state discussions. We call on all Gulf states to quickly develop a public and transparent process for informing the development of their spend plans. Commercial fishermen should have a say in this process.

Florida

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is still developing its spending plan. FWC is encouraging all saltwater product license, wholesale dealer, and charter license holders to ensure their contact information is up to date to ensure application information is received once the plan is finalized. Information can be found at [this link](#).

You can email questions, concerns, or comments for FWC's plan for CARES Act Funding to CARESAct2020@MyFWC.com

Louisiana

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has been working with Louisiana Sea Grant to assess economic impact to the Louisiana seafood industry. They have been surveying processors and docks but not harvesters since harvester data is available through the trip ticket system. At the June Louisiana Wildlife and Fishery Commission (LWFC) meeting, the Department went over some of the ideas in their plan, and are trying to ensure money is

distributed quickly. You can hear and view the presentation [at this link, starting at 1:08:30](#).

LDWF is looking at ways to document and validate active members in Louisiana fisheries, including licensure and landings. They are currently proposing a two-phase payment program. Using available economic data, LDWF will calculate a minimum payment all fishery participants would receive should they be approved. The first payment will go out as soon as possible after an individual's application is approved. Following the application deadline and distribution of funds, should any money be leftover, it will be divided among the accepted applicants. The application process will likely be web-based only.

Mississippi

Mississippi has not published details of their spend plan at this time. The primary contact for Mississippi Department of Marine Resources for CARES Act Spending Plan has yet to be designated.

Alabama

Alabama has not published details of their spend plan at this time. the primary contact for Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division for CARES Act Spending Plan is Scott Bannon, 251-861-2882. Scott.Bannon@dcnr.alabama.gov

Texas

Texas has not published details of their spend plan at this time. The primary contact for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for CARES Act Spending Plan is Lance Robinson, 512-389-4649. Lance.Robinson@tpwd.texas.gov

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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.

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