



Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance

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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance Wins Gulf Guardian Award

Reef Fish Quota Bank Takes Second Place in Civic/Non Profit Category

Point Clear, AL. – The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance (Shareholders' Alliance) was presented with a second place U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Gulf Guardian award this evening for its work launching and running the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Quota Bank (Quota Bank).

*"I'm incredibly proud of the work we're doing with the Quota Bank in the Gulf of Mexico," said **Bubba Cochrane, commercial fisherman, owner of the f/v Chelsea Ann, and President of the Shareholders' Alliance.** "We're forging a path forward – the first of its kind in the Gulf – that demonstrates that fishermen are problem solvers. By helping reduce wasteful discarding and by supporting the next generation of commercial fishermen, the Quota Bank is helping ensure there's a sustainable future for the Gulf and the commercial fishermen who depend on it."*

The Reef Fish Quota Bank is an organization of forward-thinking fishermen coming together to help solve the problem of red snapper discards in the grouper fishery, and assist the next generation of fishermen become established. Established in 2015, it is the first fishermen-run community quota program in the Gulf of Mexico. In less than two years, the Quota Bank has worked with 20 fishermen in 15 fishing communities to salvage over 50,000 pounds of red snapper from being wastefully discarded, generated over \$150,000 in revenue for these businesses and assisted two young commercial fishermen to help then build stronger business plans.

*"The Quota Bank has helped my business become more profitable and more sustainable," said **Lisa Schmidt, owner of three bottom longline vessels in Madeira Beach, Florida.** "Now, when we're grouper fishing and accidentally catch red snapper, we don't have to discard them at sea – we keep them, land them, and count them. It's a much better way to fish."*

*"I'm a young guy just getting into commercial fishing, and the Quota Bank is helping me build my fishing business," said **Captain Bobby Kelly, commercial fisherman and owner of the f/v Miss Brianna in Orange Beach, AL.** "It's hard to find quota these days because the red snapper fishery is recovering so well. But the quota I get from the Quota Bank every year keeps me on the water."*

The EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. First, second and third place awards are given in seven categories: individual, business/industry, youth environmental education, civic/nonprofit organizations, cultural diversity/environmental justice, partnership and bi-national efforts.

This year's ceremony was held on November 30, 2017, at the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort in Point Clear, Alabama.

To read the EPA's Press Release, click [here](#).

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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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