



Roundtable Meeting Report November 2008, Houston, Texas

Building on the two successful informational meetings at the end of July and the continued support and interest from fishermen, processors, and buyers throughout the summer, we convened another Roundtable meeting in Houston in November to begin formalizing the effort. Two major wholesalers and fishermen from TX and LA attended and agreed to be members of the Roundtable in addition to several other buyers and fishermen who have expressed their interest.

Participants reviewed a draft proposal on an innovative new Gulf of Mexico Loan Fund program to assist fishermen with securing the funds needed to not only buy the “cleaner” gear (steel trawl doors, lighter nets, highest performing bycatch reduction devices) but also to help them with much-needed funds for repairs and ongoing maintenance. The Loan Fund program is still in its very early stages and the Roundtable participants will help to mold the program based on potential needs and challenges. In addition, there was a presentation of a draft cost-benefit analysis based on a typical transition to the new, cleaner gear. Although the draft still needs to be finalized, early (and conservative) estimates demonstrate a savings of approximately \$20,000 per year.

Based on diverse stakeholder interest, we decided to take the Roundtable forward in two parallel tracks: one for the uptake of cleaner fishing gears and another for the pursuit of MSC certification. Through this work we hope that Roundtable participants will be able to bring a more sustainable and environmentally friendly product to the market place that will also provide them with some financial gains and recognition for their efforts.

Although the Roundtable is formally moving forward, we are continuing to meet with interested fishermen, processors and buyers. We are tentatively planning another informational meeting in Fort Myers, FL for January 2009. The next formal Roundtable meeting will be at the Boston Seafood Show in March 2009.

The Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery Improvement Roundtable is being developed in collaboration with Texas Sea Grant, Ocean Conservancy and the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership.