



Sustainable Fisheries Partnership



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery Improvement Roundtable Announced

To address the challenges facing the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery, the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and Ocean Conservancy, in collaboration with Texas Sea Grant, announce the formation of an unprecedented project bringing together fishermen, seafood buyers, and other fishery experts to explore new and innovative ways to move this valuable and important fishery towards sustainability.

SFP and Ocean Conservancy will introduce the U.S. Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery Roundtable at meetings in Brownsville, Texas on July 30th and New Orleans, Louisiana on August 1. At the meetings representatives from SFP, Ocean Conservancy and Texas Sea Grant will discuss how U.S. Gulf shrimp stakeholders can work jointly to help shrimpers adopt new fishing gear that reduces bycatch, has less impact on the ocean floor and increases fuel efficiency. “Ultimately we would like to see this fishery certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council” stated Howard Johnson, SFP Senior Advisor.

Over the past decade, the Gulf of Mexico shrimp industry has seen dramatic declines in the value of the harvest due to competition from shrimp imported into the U.S. market, quality challenges, and a radical rise in the cost of fuel in this fuel intensive trawl fishery. The fishery has also had to deal with the environmental implications of its harvesting methods, which include habitat impacts caused from the use of bottom trawls and the incidental capture of a wide variety of sea life. Compounding the issue further is the loss of infrastructure in the central Gulf as a result of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in the 2005 hurricane season.

While the introductory meetings will be in Texas and Louisiana, there will be a single Roundtable with membership open to interested and committed stakeholders throughout the U.S. Gulf shrimp fishery.

A key objective of the Roundtable will be to help shrimp fishermen struggling with the rising cost of fuel transition to new shrimp trawling gear that includes federally-mandated bycatch reduction devices, lighter nets and hydrodynamic cambered steel trawl doors that may improve fuel efficiency by up to 39 percent while lowering bycatch by 30 percent. While the return on investment in this new gear is very rapid, fishermen will need help in financing.

“We see the Roundtable as a win-win situation” said Johnson. “Shrimpers win when they lower fuel costs and increase their efficiency and the environment wins as bycatch is reduced.”

The mission of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership is to maintain healthy ocean and aquatic ecosystems, enhance fishing and fish-farming livelihoods and secure food supplies. SFP was formed in 2006 as an independent nonprofit organization capable of breaking new ground in the world of sustainable seafood and marine and freshwater conservation by focusing on improving the seafood supply chain.