

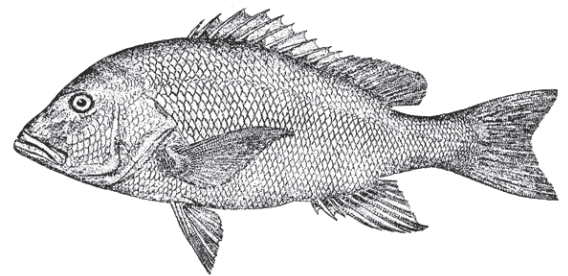
Lagniappe



April 1, 2007 Volume 31, No. 4

Interim Measures Finalized for Gulf Red Snapper and Shrimp

NOAA Fisheries Service's final rule implementing interim measures in the Gulf of Mexico red snapper and shrimp fisheries will publish on April 2, 2007. These interim measures are intended to temporarily address overfishing of red snapper in 2007 while the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) develops additional, long-term measures to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock. In summary, the interim measures will:



Red Snapper

- Reduce the commercial red snapper minimum size limit from 15 inches to 13 inches total length (effective April 2, 2007);
- Establish a goal to reduce red snapper bycatch mortality in the shrimp fishery to 50 percent of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003 (effective May 2, 2007);
- Reduce the total allowable catch quota (TAC) of red snapper from 9.12 million pounds (mp) to 6.5 mp, resulting in a commercial red snapper quota of 3.315 mp and a recreational red snapper quota of 3.185 mp (effective May 2, 2007);
- Reduce the recreational red snapper bag limit from four fish to two fish per person per day (effective May 2, 2007);
- The recreational size limit will remain at 16 inches; and
- Prohibit the captain and crew of for-hire vessels from retaining the recreational bag limit (effective May 2, 2007).

NOTE: The recreational red snapper fishery will open at 12:01 a.m. on April 21, 2007, which is 11 days before the interim measures for the recreational red snapper fishery take effect. Consequently, the red snapper bag limit will remain at four fish per person per day and will be available to the captain and crew of for-hire vessels for the first 11 days of the recreational fishing season. However, beginning at 12:01 a.m. on May 2, 2007, recreational fishermen will be limited to two red snapper per person per day and the captain and crew of for-hire vessels will be prohibited from retaining the red snapper bag limit.



MANAGEMENT ACTION	CURRENT MEASURE (STATUS QUO)	NEW INTERIM MEASURE	
		EFFECTIVE APRIL 2, 2007	EFFECTIVE MAY 2, 2007
Reduce commercial red snapper minimum size limit	15" total length	13" total length	
Establish red snapper bycatch mortality reduction goal for shrimp fishery			50% of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003
Reduce red snapper total allowable catch	9.12 mp (4.65 mp commercial; 4.47 recreational)		6.5 mp (3.315 commercial/ 3.185 recreational)
Reduce recreational red snapper bag limit	4 fish/person/day (also applies to captain & crew of for-hire vessels)		2 fish/person/day (0 fish/person/day for captain & crew of for-hire vessels)

The commercial red snapper fishery opened on Jan. 1, 2007, under an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program, but received only 2.55 mp of the 3.315 mp commercial red snapper quota specified by these interim measures for the 2007 fishing year. NOAA Fisheries Service will issue the balance of the 2007 commercial red snapper quota to the commercial red snapper fishery after the 2007 TAC becomes effective on May 2, 2007, and no later than July 1, 2007. The final rule implementing the commercial red snapper IFQ program describes how the balance of the commercial red snapper quota will be allocated among IFQ participants. A copy of that rule can be obtained online at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/ifqprogram.htm>.

All interim measures implemented through this final rule will expire at 12:01 a.m. on Sept. 30, 2007, unless extended on an interim basis for one additional 186-day period or replaced by measures implemented through another rule.

Written copies of the final rule implementing these interim measures also may be obtained from NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Electronic copies of the final rule, once published, may be obtained from the Federal Register Web site at: www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html. For more information on Gulf of Mexico red snapper, log onto: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/> or call (727) 824-5305.

Know Your Tunas - The Smaller Tunas: Little Tunny, Skipjack and Blackfin

Tunas are popular to both commercial and sport fisherman, and are among the most valuable of marine finfish. Tuna belong to the family Scombridae, which includes mackerels and bonitos in addition to tuna, and represent one of the peaks of fish evolution. They are voracious predators with a torpedo-like body shape for maximum speed. Some species have evolved an ability to elevate their body temperature above that of the surrounding water, helping them to swim faster than most other fish and recover rapidly after rigorous exercise. These adaptations come at a metabolic cost of an unusually high food requirement. Daily food consumption can be as high as 25 to 30 percent of their body weight. However, they can go up to two weeks without food.

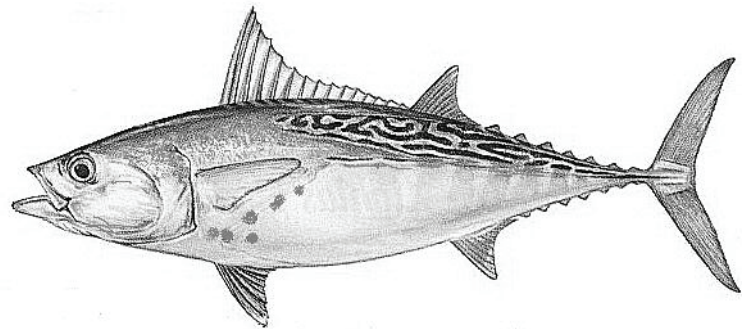
Although known to make very long migrations across oceans, tuna distribution is restricted by temperature, food availability and oxygen concentrations. Some species of tunas cross the entire width of the Pacific Ocean, while others migrate north-south over 60 degrees of latitude. The long migrations of tuna are known from studies involving the recapture of tagged fish. It is not know

how tuna navigate across large expanses of open ocean, but there is evidence that they have a geomagnetic sense.

Commercial landings of tuna have increased almost steadily since 1950. This relentless pressure has resulted in the full exploitation of most species of tuna. The ever-growing demand for tuna, especially in Japanese sushi markets, has resulted in individual fish fetching upwards of \$100,000. As such, tuna fishery management has evolved into a difficult, multi-organization, international collaboration.

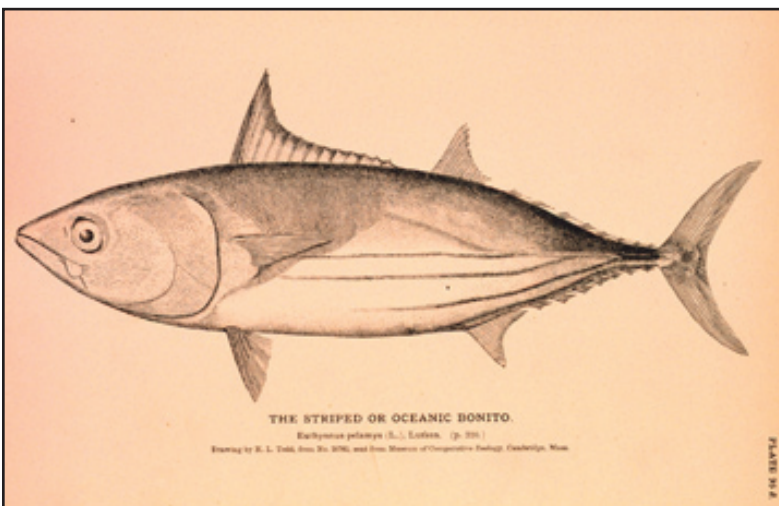
In the Gulf of Mexico, a number of species of tuna are present for your angling (the tunas are, arguably, the hardest fighters in the sea) and dining enjoyment. This article is the first in a series of three, and focuses on three of the smaller tuna species.

Little Tunny, or Little Tuna (*Euthynnus alletteratus*) - This fish is distributed Gulf-wide in blue and green water at all depths. It can be found closer to shore than other tuna species. This fish has a “tuna-shaped” but streamlined body. The back is steel blue to dark blue in color and has a patch of wavy lines on the rear back. The belly is white and has several dark spots on each side between the pectoral and pelvic fins. No other species with a back-patch of wavy or mottled lines has these spots, although the spots may be hard



Little Tunny (*Euthynnus alletteratus*)

to see on some fish. Little tunny are a strongly schooling species that can form schools nearly a mile long. When a large school is actively feeding, they are very noisy, keeping the water splashing and foaming. They feed most heavily on fishes such as herrings, sardines and scads, but they will also readily take squid and crustaceans. They are fast-growing but short-lived fish. At one year of age and 14 inches, they are mature enough to spawn, which takes place offshore in waters over 100 feet deep. Little tunny seldom live more than 5 years. Little tunny can grow to 4 feet and weight up to 26 pounds. They average 10-12 pounds, but are not rare over 20 pounds. They are known as excellent fighters on the line but are rarely eaten, being much stronger-flavored than other tunas. This fish is commonly called “bonito” in Louisiana, but the true Atlantic bonito is rare in the Gulf. The state record is 29.75 lbs, by Sidney Gonsoulin back in 1974. This record, like all the other listings for little tunny in Louisiana (1949-1977), was from the time before biologist certification was required. Kevin Natali has the more recent state fly fishing record: 16.9 lbs in 2004.



K. Pelamis: Skipjack Tuna (1880 Drawing – U.S. Fish Commission)

Skipjack Tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) – Skipjack tuna account for more of the commercial tuna catch by weight than any other species, and are often used for canned tuna. Skipjack are unique among the tunas in that they have no swim bladder, which forces them to expend more energy than their more buoyant relatives. As a result they have a higher oxygen demand than other tunas, which restricts their vertical migrations and limits them to the upper part of the water column. They are distributed Gulf-wide in blue water. This fish can be identified by its color alone. It is the

only member of the tuna family with horizontal stripes on its belly. In large specimens the lines may be broken into rows of blotches. The back is dark purplish blue. This is a migratory species that forms very large schools often with another small tuna, the blackfin. They are ravenous predators, primarily on fishes and squid, and can eat nearly a third of their body weight in a day. Favored fishes in their diet are herrings, mackerels and flying fish. This is a fast-growing, short-lived fish that can reach 2½ feet in length by age 3. They can grow to 4 feet and weigh 50 pounds; although they average about 10-20 pounds. The Louisiana all-tackle record is 30 pounds, taken by Grant Hewitt in 2002. Louisiana fly fishers haven't entered any skipjack – yet.

Blackfin Tuna (*Thunnus atlanticus*) – This species is found Gulf-wide, in the open ocean. It will venture closer to land than the other tunas, penetrating green water. This small tuna has the typical fusiform, tuna body shape. The back is dark metallic blue, the sides are silvery-gray and the belly is white. Many have traces of a bronze-colored line down each side. The most reliable identifying characteristic is the color of the small finlets located behind the dorsal and anal fins. In the other four species of tuna, they are yellow or yellow edged with black. In the blackfin, they are distinctly dusky, although they may have a yellowish tinge. This tuna seems to have less of a fish-based diet than other tunas and will actually consume the tiny larvae of stomatopods (king shrimp or mantis shrimp), true shrimp and crabs, as well as fish larvae. It does, of course, also eat juvenile and adult fish and squid. They are a short-lived, fast-growing species, with a 5 year old fish being considered old. They reach sexual maturity at two years old and 4-6 pounds in weight and spawn in the open sea during the summer. Blackfin tuna are a warmer-water fish, preferring water temperatures over 68°F. What they lack in size, they make up for in numbers and willingness to bite. Usually 10-20 pounds, they may reach 40 pounds. The state rod-and-reel record (37.6 lbs) was caught at the Midnight Lump by James Hawkins in 2001. The fly fishing record is 27 lbs, also caught at the Lump, by Scott Harness in 1999.

To look at all the state records, and to see where your big catch might be entered, visit www.laoutdoorwriters.com/index.asp?pg=fr_choose

- Craig Gothreaux

Sources:

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Laws, Edward. 2006. OCS 4001: Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture. Chapter 8.

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Seafood Substitution Widespread, Creates New Industry: Fish DNA Testing

Headlines about fish species substitution on menus have been very prominent lately. The problem has been turning up not just in high-value species, but also at the all-you-can-eat level. Some laboratories that specialized in work on research mice are now testing restaurant fish for newspaper and television stations all over the country; and are finding that about 60 percent of the samples are not what consumers thought they were.

Vietnamese fish exporters have been shipping catfish under a variety of names. Many diners found that basa catfish was a quality choice and it gained market acceptance. But Southeast Asia is home to many catfish species, and some unscrupulous exporters began to ship inferior tra, ponga, swai and sutchi with incorrect or misleading labels.

One high profile case occurred in a café in Florida's capitol building, one floor below the governor's office. Customers were told that they were being served grouper, which wholesales for up to \$10 per pound for fresh fish from the Gulf of Mexico. Samples sent to a DNA testing lab showed the fish to be south Asian ponga catfish, which wholesales for about \$2 per pound. Like many restaurant owners, folks at the capitol café demonstrated that they were serving fish that had arrived in boxes marked "grouper."

Private food-testing laboratories are not abundant, and seafood identification has only recently become a significant business. One of the private U.S. labs got started in seafood testing by testing crabmeat. Cheaper meat from Asian blue swimming crabs was being sold as, or mixed with, premium domestic blue crab. This work led to contracts with some of the largest food service companies, which wanted to check the identification of grouper they were importing. The result: Nearly every sample turned out to be one of the Asian catfish species.

The fish substitution on Florida menus story became public last year, when the *St. Petersburg Times* conducted an investigation that showed that six of 11 plates sold as grouper in restaurants around Tampa Bay were cheaper substitutes. Another study of Tampa Bay restaurants was conducted by the Florida attorney general's office, finding that 17 of 24 grouper meals were not grouper.

News media exposes then began to appear all around the country. The Los Angeles CBS affiliate found that red snapper meals it bought from four upscale restaurants were actually mahi, tilapia, and catfish. A Phoenix station also had red snapper dinners tested: All five were something other than red snapper. A Mobile station had grouper from seven restaurants and three fish markets tested. Only one was actually grouper, the others were Asian catfish, snapper, emperor fish and even marlin.

The good news: The need for genetic profiles is helping research programs. Universities are expanding their genetic databases to eventually include nearly every fish on earth. Also, the demand for gene sequencing equipment is causing the price to drop from the current \$50,000 range, so that genetic testing for seafood identification will become more and more affordable. And finally, very recent tests in Florida have found that nearly all the grouper on menus was in fact some type of grouper (mostly imported). From this point, it will be up to the consumer to seek out fresh Gulf fish.

Shrimp Tariff News

As reported earlier this year, the appeals court of the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled against the United States' practice of "zeroing," which has been the method used for most of the shrimp tariffs imposed on imported shrimp. Japan had filed several appeals to anti-dumping cases assessed by our Commerce Department. The WTO Appellate Body ruled against the U.S. in nearly every practice used by the Commerce Department for assessing tariffs on imported shrimp. The ruling against zeroing was unequivocal; there are no instances when the WTO views it as a legitimate practice.

To understand how the Commerce Department was calculating tariffs, you have to look at the definitions of "dumping" and "zeroing." Dumping is the sale of product at prices below the normal value that would provide a legitimate profit, usually for the purpose of killing competition and capturing

an increased share of the market. Zeroing is method of calculating whether “dumping” has occurred. Rather than using the average price of an imported product, Commerce was using only the numbers that fell below the established anti-dumping level. Because they ignored any sales of shrimp that were above the anti-dumping margin, Commerce was able to impose anti-dumping duties on the shrimp arriving from Vietnam, Ecuador, India and Thailand . This ruling came on the heels of the repeal of the Byrd Amendment, and the cumulative effect is being felt in additional limits in the ability to control seafood imports to the U.S.

However, tariffs that were imposed last year are only now being tallied, and new tariff rates are being calculated. The Department of Commerce is preparing to publish the results of the first administrative review of shrimp tariffs. The review will list specific rates for individual companies who participated in the administrative review, as well as the rates for the respondent countries. Some companies chose to settle up directly with the Southern Shrimp Alliance, and their numbers won't be included in the national review.

Generally, the total amount being collected in shrimp tariffs is declining rapidly. Companies and countries with the highest tariffs are abandoning the U.S. market and expanding their exports to other regions, particularly Europe. At the same time, countries with low tariff rates are rapidly expanding their exports into the U.S.

In 2006, overall U.S. shrimp imports actually increased 11.4 percent. Imports from Thailand increased by 20.4 percent, from Ecuador by 19.7 percent and Chinese imports increased by 50.8 percent. Vietnam's shrimp exports declined by 13.7 percent due to production problems, not tariffs. Tariffs have changed the markets for India and Brazil, which have been developing European outlets. Indian shrimp exports to the U.S. have declined 23 percent, and Brazil's have declined by more than 80 percent. Overall, the beneficial effects of tariffs for American producers are not being realized at the level that Commerce may have intended.

Gulf Reef Fishery VMS Requirements Delayed

NOAA Fisheries Service announced a 60-day delay, until May 6, 2007, in the effective date for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirements. The delay is necessary to: (1) resolve an unanticipated technological problem with one of the approved VMS units, and (2) allow vendors additional time to meet the demand for purchase and installation of VMS units that are currently backlogged.

In addition, the Fisheries Service has approved a third model of VMS equipment. The Faria WatchDog 750VMS is now type-approved for use in the reef fish fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. Current information and frequently asked questions on the VMS program including the type-approved units, Boatracs, Faria, and Thrane & Thrane, can be found at the southeast region's Website: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/vms/vms.htm>.

Reef fish permit holders in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery are eligible for a VMS reimbursement program. Funds are available to reimburse vessel owners and/or operators for the purchase price of the newly-required VMS systems, but there are a limited amount of funds available for reimbursement. New VMS programs are being implemented around the United States in 2007, and these programs will be eligible for reimbursement through the same funds. Therefore, it is important to apply for reimbursement as soon as possible. Reimbursement requests will be handled on a first-come first-serve basis. The reimbursable expense is the purchase price of the least expensive VMS unit type-approved for the reef fish fishery. Currently, the least expensive unit costs \$3,095.

For questions about VMS units, contact the VMS Support Center (888/219-9228) or the Southeast Region OLE, 263 13th Avenue South, Suite 109, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, (800/758-4833). For questions regarding reimbursement applications, contact the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97202, (503/595-3100, voice; 503/595-3232, fax). For questions regarding the 60-day delay contact Jason Rueter or Peter Hood at (727/824-5305), or Jason.Rueter@noaa.gov or Peter.Hood@noaa.gov.

Underwater Obstruction Locations

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that 11 claims in the amount of \$46,984.00 were received for payment during the period January 1, 2007 - January 31, 2007.

There were 11 claims paid and 0 claims denied.

Loran Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

27707	46891	ST. MARY
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Latitude/Longitude Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

29 05.744	90 52.091	TERREBONNE
29 09.136	90 05.135	JEFFERSON
29 14.020	89 35.140	PLAQUEMINES
29 17.930	89 53.455	JEFFERSON
29 21.285	89 48.436	JEFFERSON
29 24.541	89 59.406	JEFFERSON
29 29.281	89 27.490	PLAQUEMINES
29 37.012	90 04.516	JEFFERSON

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that 9 claims in the amount of \$30,279.95 were received for payment during the period February 1, 2007 - February 28, 2007.

There were 9 claims paid and 0 claims denied.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

28 09.230	91 06.830	TERREBONNE
29 08.228	89 26.075	PLAQUEMINES
29 09.125	90 38.035	TERREBONNE
29 34.280	92 09.440	VERMILION
29 39.865	89 22.096	ST. BERNARD
29 49.419	93 20.819	CAMERON
30 07.796	89 47.613	ORLEANS

A list of claimants and amounts paid can be obtained from Verlie Wims, Administrator, Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund, P.O. Box 44277, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or you can call (225)342-0122.

Not all of the claims received are represented by coordinates.

THE GUMBO POT

Crab Au Gratin

Julie Keating

1/2 stick of butter
 4 T flour
 1 cup milk
 1 cup light cream
 2 lbs crabmeat
 1/2 cup mushrooms
 1 shallot, chopped
 grated cheddar cheese
 salt and pepper to taste

Melt butter, add flour. Add milk and cream. Cook until thick. Add cheese, crabmeat, mushrooms, shallot and salt and pepper to taste. Pour in casserole dish. Sprinkle cheese on top. Bake 15 minutes at 350. Serves 4 - 6.

Reprinted from *A Louisiana Seafood Cookbook*, available for \$6 from Louisiana Sea Grant. Make checks payable to Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, 105 Sea Grant Building, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA 70803.

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