



The DESCEND Act of 2020 will go into effect in January 2022

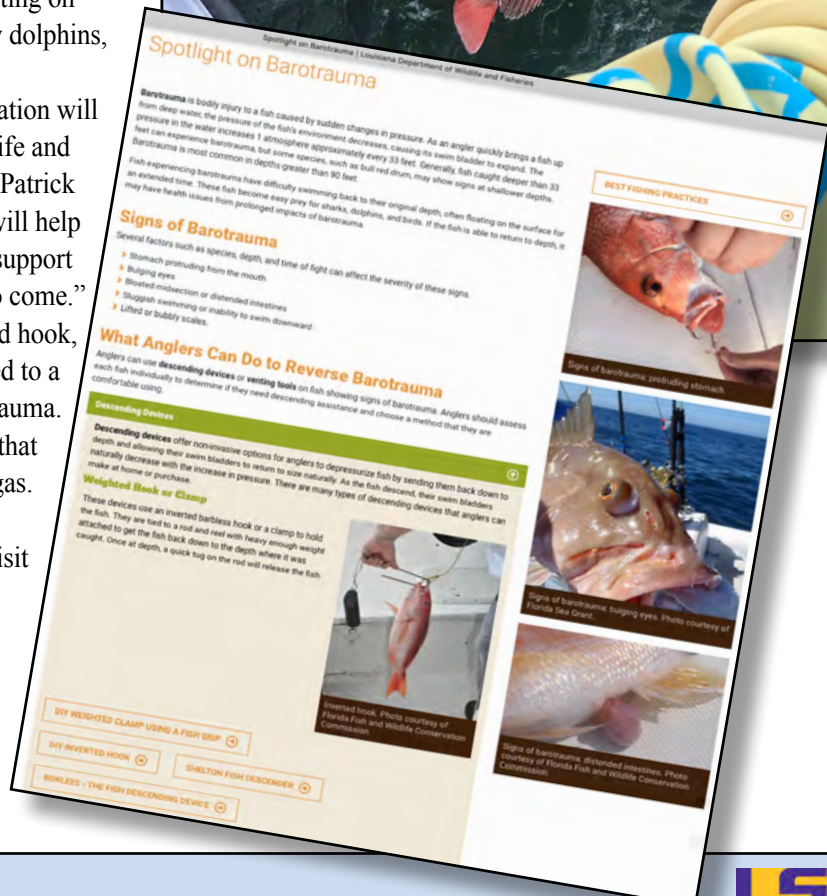
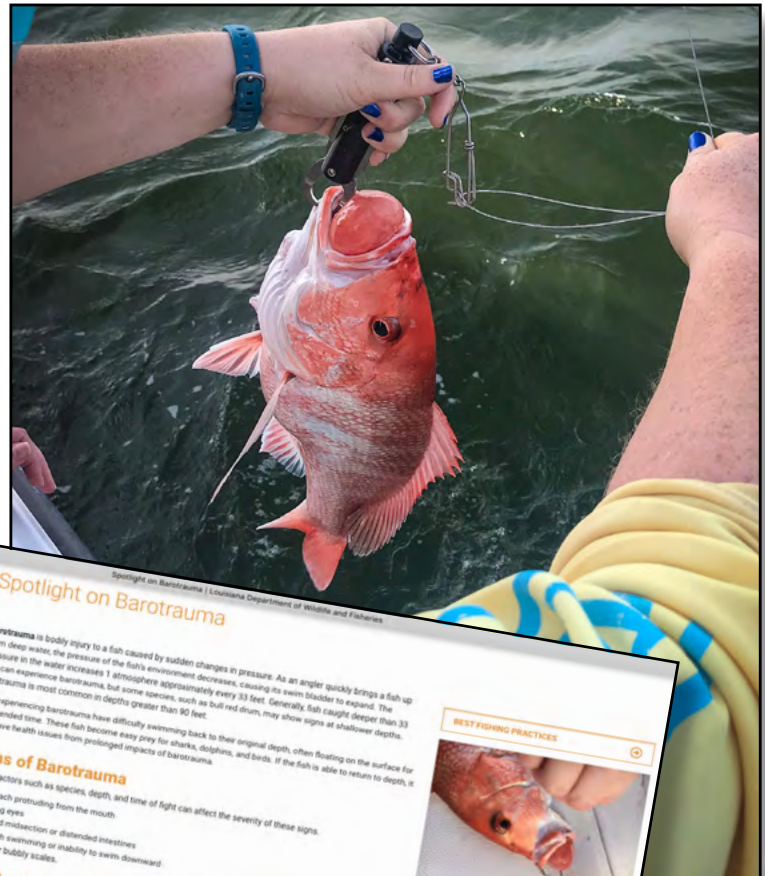
The Direct Enhancement of Snapper Conservation and the Economy through Novel Devices Act of 2020 (DESCEND Act of 2020) was signed into law on Jan. 13, 2021. The new act will require commercial and recreational vessels (including for-hire) to have a venting tool or descending device rigged and ready to use when fishing for reef fish species in Gulf of Mexico federal waters.

The DESCEND Act of 2020 was passed in efforts to reduce mortality caused by barotrauma on reef species like red snapper. Barotrauma is an increase in internal gas pressure caused by the sudden changes in pressure that fish undergo when being reeled up from depths generally greater than 90 feet, though it can occur in shallower waters of 33 feet or more. Fish experiencing barotrauma have difficulty quickly swimming back to catch depth, often floating on the surface where they are vulnerable to attack by dolphins, sharks and birds.

When asked about the impact this new legislation will have on the Gulf, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) assistant secretary of fisheries Patrick Banks said “The passage of the DESCEND Act will help to improve sustainable fishing opportunities and support Gulf of Mexico reef fish conservation for years to come.”

Descending devices are outlined as a weighed hook, lip clam or box that will hold a fish as it is lowered to a sufficient depth to allow for recovery from barotrauma. A venting tool is a sharpened, hollow instrument that can penetrate a fish’s abdomen to release excess gas.

For more information on barotrauma, the different types of devices, and how to use them visit the LDWF Spotlight on Barotrauma at <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/barotrauma>.



LSG Helps Develop Oyster Broodstock, Robotic Oyster Farming

Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG) is part of a \$5 million, five-year Gulf-wide effort to develop a genetically superior oyster broodstock for aquaculture. LSG's share of the research funding is \$200,000.

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Oyster Consortia's primary objectives are to develop improved lines of eastern oysters for the oyster industry and develop platforms to distribute improved oyster seed to where it is needed. "The first phase of the project was collecting wild oysters that have superior traits," said Brian Callam, director of the LSG oyster research lab on Grand Isle.

"The next phase is field testing," Callam said. "The goal is to create a broodstock – or trade set – of oysters that can be made available to Alternative Oyster Culture (AOC) hatcheries and are ideal for those grow-out locations."

The project comes out of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) effort to coordinate oyster genetics research along the Gulf of Mexico. All five Gulf states are participating in the project.

Callam also is involved in a \$10 million, five-year U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant, led by the University of Maryland. LSG's share of the research funding is \$740,000.

The project will explore whether robots and drones can be used in traditional on-bottom oyster culture. "Right now, crop management is accomplished by dredging a reef or using a cane pole to poke around and see if you hit a hard spot (group of harvestable oysters)," Callam said. Dredging is generally imprecise and can have negative environmental impacts, even for the oyster crop. Although the cane pole method is more precise in finding clusters of oysters, it's time consuming and labor intensive.

Through the use of robots, drones, high-precision GPS, underwater imaging and sonar positioning, the researchers hope to develop precision oyster grow-out and harvesting methods. The high-tech gear would map water bottoms where oysters are growing and help in determining when and exactly where the oysters are ready for harvest – streamlining the harvesting process. The technology could also be used to seed oyster reefs.

Callam's part of the in the project is to collect data on environmental conditions at oyster leases so that information can be fed into the robots. Then Louisiana field tests of the equipment will take place.



Delinquent and Canceled Oyster Lease List Available Online

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is required to make public notice regarding the nonpayment of fees related to oyster leases on both its website and in the official journal of the parish in which the delinquent lease is located.

As per Louisiana Revised Statute 56:429, any lessee who pays their rent on or after the first day of February owes the rent due plus an additional 10 percent penalty. Failure of the lessee to pay the rent punctually on or before the first of each January, or within 60 days thereafter, terminates and cancels the lease and forfeits to the department all the works, improvements, betterments and oysters on the previously leased water bottom.

The list of delinquent leases is available at <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/delinquent-oyster-leases>. Notices were made by certified mail to each lessee who had not yet paid their rent. The current list shows those lessees who did not provide payment by Feb. 1, 2021. All fees must be collected for leases by close of business on March 1, 2021.

Process to Lift Oyster Moratorium

LDWF is lifting the long-standing oyster lease moratorium, which has been in effect since 2002. The moratorium, which halted LDWF's practice of leasing state-owned water bottoms to private entities for oyster cultivation, was originally instituted by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at the request of the Department of Natural Resources and the governor's office under former Gov. Mike Foster.

The decision to lift the moratorium on Feb. 4 is based on new rules and regulations approved by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission on Aug. 2, 2019. LDWF staff worked with the Louisiana Oyster Task Force and the task force's oyster lease moratorium sub-committee, and various coastal stakeholders, to develop the Notice of Intent (proposed rule change) passed by the Commission.

The Oyster Task Force is a group established to monitor the oyster industry and to make recommendations that maximize benefits from that industry to the state and coordinate efforts to increase oyster production and stability.

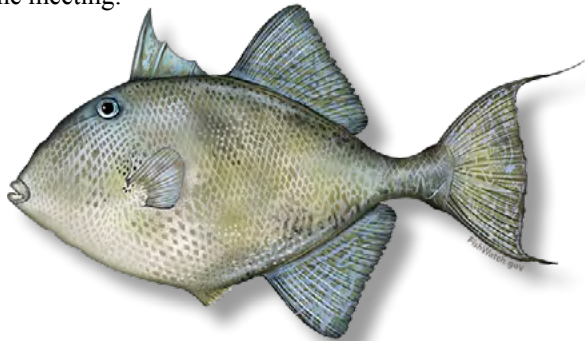
Other entities, including the state Attorney General's office, the Office of State Lands, Oil and Gas firms and private landowner groups participated in meetings before the final document was drafted and presented to the commission.

“Lifting the oyster lease moratorium is important for the industry as it will allow oystermen to diversify oyster growing locations within estuaries and adapt to environmental changes,” LDWF secretary Jack Montoucet said.

The moratorium was established in 2002 because of user conflicts within the coastal zone, especially as it related to coastal restoration activities performed by the state and lawsuits filed by oyster industry members in response to coastal restoration projects. The moratorium was requested and approved in order to limit the state’s liability in future lawsuits related to coastal restoration. The phased in approach and details can be found at www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/oyster-lease-moratorium-lifting.

January Council Meeting Summary

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met virtually from Jan. 25-28. The following are some highlights accomplished during the meeting:



Gray Triggerfish. The council took final action on a framework action to increase the gray triggerfish acceptable biological catch, annual catch limits and annual catch targets for both sectors.



Lane Snapper. The council took final action on a framework action to increase the lane snapper catch limits and modify the fishing season closure accountability measure. The most recent update assessment of lane snapper used catch and effort data from the Marine Recreational Information Program’s Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES), and indicated that there has been an increase in lane snapper stock biomass. This allows for a relative increase in the lane snapper catch limits.

Status Determination Criteria and Optimum Yield for Reef Fish and Red Drum.

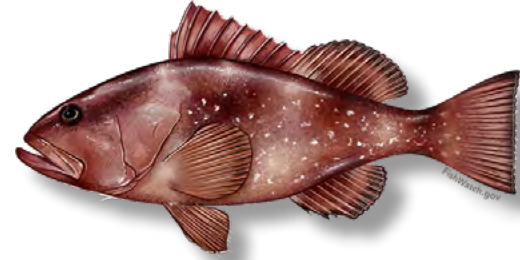
The council recommends the following:

- **Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY):** Set the goliath grouper MSY proxy at the yield when fishing at 40 percent spawning potential ratio. Set the red drum MSY proxy at the yield that provides for an escapement rate of juvenile fish to the spawning stock biomass (SSB) equivalent to 30 percent of those that would have escaped had there been no inshore fishery. Set MSY proxy for remaining reef fish species at the yield when fishing at 30 percent SPR (F30 percent SPR). Set MSY proxy values in the future based on the yield produced by FMSY recommended by the council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee and subject to approval by the council through a plan amendment.
- **Maximum Fishing Mortality Threshold (MFMT):** Set the MFMT equal to the fishing mortality at MSY for each stock.
- **Minimum Stock Size Threshold (MSST):** For stocks assessed across the South Atlantic and Gulf Council’s jurisdictions (goliath grouper, mutton snapper, yellowtail snapper and black grouper), set MSST using existing definitions of MSST defined by the South Atlantic Council. Set the $MSST = 0.75 \times BMSY$ for the remaining species
- **Optimum Yield:** Set the shallow-water grouper OY at 90 percent of MSY; set the goliath grouper OY at $(ACL/OFL) \times MSY$, or zero if the annual catch limit equals zero; maintain the current OY for red drum; and set OY at 90 percent of MSY for the remaining reef fish stocks.



Red Snapper.

The council heard a summary of the Scientific and Statistical Committee's review of the preliminary results of the Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC), a comprehensive study completed to estimate the absolute abundance of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. A panel of independent reviewers will review the GRSC and determine whether it is an appropriate estimate, and whether to use the data to generate management advice.



Red Grouper.

The council continued working on Reef Fish Amendment 53, which considers modifying red grouper commercial and recreational sector allocations and annual catch limits based on the results of the latest stock assessment (SEDAR 61). The assessment showed that the red grouper stock size is smaller than it has ever been. The council selected a preferred alternative that would revise allocations between commercial and recreational sectors based on average landings during the years 1986-2005 using MRIP-FES data. This would adjust the current 76 percent commercial, and 24 percent recreational allocation split to a 59.3 percent commercial and 40.7 percent recreational allocation split. The council will take this document to public hearing to solicit public comment before taking final action on this amendment.



Cobia.

A recent update stock assessment for cobia showed that the stock is not overfished but is currently experiencing overfishing.



King Mackerel.

A recent update stock assessment determined that king mackerel is not overfished and is not experiencing overfishing.



Greater Amberjack. The council reviewed a stock assessment which showed that greater amberjack is overfished and experiencing overfishing.



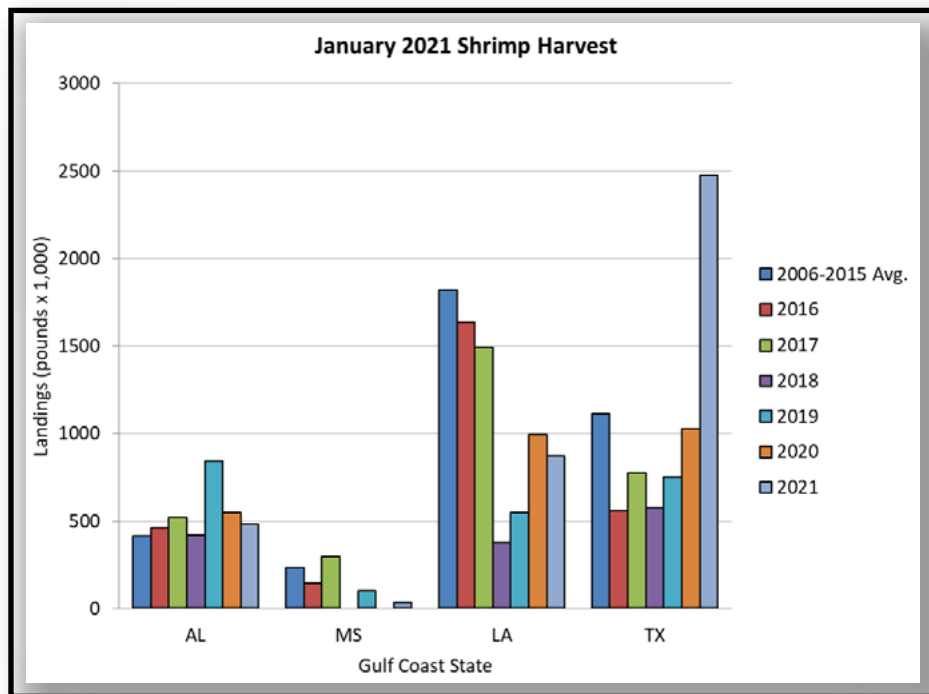
Yellowtail Snapper.

The yellowtail snapper stock is found in both Gulf and South Atlantic jurisdictions and is managed jointly by the Gulf and South Atlantic fishery management councils. A recent stock assessment showed that yellowtail snapper is not overfished, nor is it experiencing overfishing.

Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on its website. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as “zero” in these graphics. For more information, please refer to:

www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html.



Important Dates & Upcoming Events

Feb. 22, 2021: Closure of commercial hook-and-line harvest of king mackerel in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico Southern Zone

March 1, 2021: Louisiana recreational gray triggerfish season opened

March 10, 2021: Closure of Louisiana commercial fishing for large coastal sharks in the aggregated large coastal and hammerhead groups (great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, nurse shark, bull shark, lemon shark, sandbar shark, silky shark, spinner shark and tiger shark). The season will remain closed in state and federal waters until Jan. 1, 2022, when the season is scheduled to reopen. Commercial fishing for blacktip sharks will remain open.

March 23, 2021: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will convene a meeting of its Shrimp Advisory Panel from 7:30 am – 4:00 pm, CDT

March 24, 2021: The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will host a meeting of its Coastal Migratory Advisory Panel (AP) via webinar. The meeting will be held from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, EDT.

THE GUMBO POT

OYSTER AND MUSHROOM TART

Recipe courtesy of *Louisiana Kitchen & Culture*.

For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free newsletter, please visit <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>.



Ingredients:

The Mushrooms:

1 oz. dried porcini mushrooms
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
8 tbsp. unsalted butter
2 tbsp. finely chopped French shallot
1/2 lb. shiitake mushrooms, cut into thick slices
1 lb. oyster mushrooms, cut into thick slices
2 tbsp. dry white wine
2 tbsp. brandy
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tsp. minced parsley
1/2 tsp. minced fresh chervil
1/4 tsp. finely snipped chives

The Roux:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
1 tsbp. all-purpose flour

The Sauce:

40 shucked fresh Louisiana oysters
2 c. oyster juices (liquor)
2 tbsp. butter
1 tbsp. finely chopped French shallots
1/4 c. dry white wine
2 tbsp. dark roux
1/4 c. demi-glace
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tsp. finely chopped parsley
1 tsp. finely chopped fresh chervil
12 tsp. finely snipped fresh chives

Final Assembly:

2 tbsp. unsalted butter
the 40 reserved oysters
1 tbsp. minced French shallots
1 garlic clove, mashed and minced
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
1 c. coarse French-breadcrumbs
salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
8 prepared tart-pastry shells

Method:

Place the whole porcinis in a heat-proof bowl with 1/2 cup very hot water and turn them to coat them with the water. Let the porcinis stand for 20 minutes to absorb the water, tossing them again once or twice. Squeeze them over the bowl to remove as much water as possible, reserving the soaking liquid. Chop the mushrooms coarsely and set them aside.

Place the oil and butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat, and heat them until the butter melts. Add the chopped shallots and cook until soft. Raise the heat level to high and add the sliced shiitake mushrooms. Sauté the shiitakes for 2 minutes. Add the chopped porcinis and the sliced oyster mushrooms and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more, stirring continuously. Add the white wine and the reserved mushroom-soaking water, and continue cooking, uncovered, until the mixture is barely moist. Finally, add the brandy, salt, pepper, parsley chervil and chives. Reduce the heat to very low and let the flavors infuse for about 5 minutes more. Set the sautéed mushrooms aside.

Roux:

In a small sauté pan over medium heat, add the oil and whisk in the flour. Stir constantly until a dark peanut brown color has developed. It will require about 30 minutes.

The Sauce:

Drain the oysters in a strainer over a large bowl to collect the liquor. Measure 2 cups of the oyster liquor and set them aside. Reserve the oysters themselves for the final stage of the recipe preparation.

Place the butter in a medium sauté pan over high heat. When it is melted, add the shallots and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until just soft. Add the wine and deglaze the pan. Then add the oyster liquor and bring the liquid to a simmer.

Whisk in the dark roux, and, continuing to whisk constantly, simmer the mixture until it reduces by 1/4 and is thick enough to coat a spoon. Stir in the demi-glace, salt, pepper, parsley, chervil and chives. Remove from heat and set aside.

Final Assembly:

Preheat the oven broiler.

In a small skillet over high heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots, garlic, and thyme, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, or until slightly soft. Add the breadcrumbs and stir well to be sure they are evenly coated. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Reheat the sautéed mushroom mixture from the previous recipe over medium-high heat and stir in the prepared sauce. Bring to a simmer, add the oysters and cook until their edges just begin to curl. Spoon some of the mushroom-and-oyster mixture into the prepared tart-pastry shells, dividing the portions evenly among the pastry shells. Sprinkle the seasoned breadcrumbs proportionately among the tarts. Broil until the crumbs are just brown and the sauce is bubbly.

Be sure to visit the *Lagniappe* blog for additional news and timely events between issues.
<https://louisianalagniappe.wordpress.com/>

Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

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