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Continued recovery of U.S. fisheries



NOAA Fisheries

The most recent [Status of the U.S. Fisheries report](#) indicates that the number of fish stocks designated as “overfished” is at an all-time low. Some of the fish recently removed from the list of species considered overfished include yelloweye rockfish, winter flounder, Pacific ocean perch, and (last but not least), Gulf of Mexico red snapper. Other species now considered “rebuilt” include populations of bocaccio and darkblotched rockfish. Despite a few setbacks (e.g. shortfin mako was added to the list of overfished species), it’s clear that federal fisheries management is making significant progress towards rebuilding U.S. fisheries.

It’s notable that several of these species (yelloweye rockfish, Pacific ocean


perch, bocaccio, darkblotched rockfish) are rockfishes, a group of fishes that are long-lived, slow-growing, and late to mature. The Pacific rockfish fishery was considered a disaster in 2000, yet hard work over the ensuing 20 years, including species-specific catch-limits, catch share programs, and vessel monitoring, has led to remarkable recoveries. Last year, landings in the Pacific rockfish fishery increased by 50%, the fruits of nearly two decades of hard work.

What does this mean for Gulf Coast fishermen? Before we examine that, let's revisit a few fisheries terms we'll use to better define these stocks.

Overfished is a condition, or a state, that refers to a stock of fish “whose size is sufficiently small that a change in management practice is required to achieve an appropriate level.”

Overfishing is a rate that will lead to an overfished state.

As such, stocks can be overfished *and* undergoing overfishing, overfished but *not* undergoing overfishing, and so forth. Now let's apply these terms to three of the most iconic fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Gulf of Mexico red snapper is no longer considered overfished or undergoing overfishing (although it's currently in a rebuilding plan). Greater amberjack is overfished (with overfishing occurring), and although gray triggerfish is not overfished, overfishing is occurring. Clear as mud?

Species	Overfished?	Undergoing Overfishing?
Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper 	No	No
Greater Amberjack 	Yes	Yes
Gray Triggerfish 	No	Yes

So what can we take away from this? Similar to the Pacific rockfishes described above, many fishes in the Gulf of Mexico are long-lived and slow-growing, traits that make them particularly susceptible to overharvest. Once overfished, these stocks can take many years (or even decades) to recover. Fortunately, the Magnuson-Stevens Act provides a framework to ensure that once overfished, there is a clear path to recovery, even if it takes longer than we'd like.

Make it o-fish-al



Attention youth ages 16 and under

This year's fishing season brings a brand-new opportunity: the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources has created a new state fishing record youth division! There are two categories, conventional tackle and fly tackle, and the minimum weight submission is 50% of the current state record weight. If you think you've got a record-breaking fish, bring your catch to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and fill out an application! The Commission on Marine Resources will vote on the record to make it official.

For additional record submission rules and guidelines, [click here](#), and ***good luck!***

Lionfish: Here to stay?



photo from Sarah White
University of South Alabama Fisheries Ecology Lab

The red lionfish, native to the Indo-Pacific and introduced to south Florida in 1985, is a threat to Gulf of Mexico fisheries. Wondering why we're concerned? This species of Scorpionfish possesses several traits which facilitate its expansion into new regions and promote its dominance over native species.

Lionfish proliferate rapidly

In just 30 years, lionfish have spread from Florida north to Rhode Island, west to Texas, and throughout the Caribbean Sea. Lionfish are highly abundant in the Alabama Artificial Reef Zone.

Lionfish grow and reproduce quickly

Juveniles grow more than 1 mm per day

Fish reach reproductive maturity before they are 1 year old

Females spawn frequently (every 3-4 days) and can spawn 2 million eggs per year

Lionfish have a large potential invasion range

The warm water temperatures from North Carolina south to Uruguay, including the Gulf of Mexico, are favorable for lionfish occupation

Lionfish inhabiting the Atlantic are free from limiting factors in the environment

Lionfish grow to larger sizes, and reach higher abundances, in the Atlantic compared to the Pacific

Lionfish are a new type of predator in the Atlantic

They consume a broad range of crustaceans and fishes, and displace native fishes

Lionfish have few natural controls

Most fins have venomous spines, which deter potential predators

These qualities help lionfish to spread rapidly and make it difficult for us to eradicate them. What are our defenses against the invasion? We can help to protect natural controls; assist with focused, intensive removals (think: lionfish nachos); and attempt to prevent future invasions.

*Information for this article was summarized in part from the research of leading lionfish expert Dr. Mark Albins, University of South Alabama

Fresh fish finder



When you're enjoying a meal at a restaurant, do you take care to ensure that you're consuming Gulf seafood? We do, too, which is why we're excited about the new Mississippi Seafood Trail app! The free app was released by the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association and is available for both iPhone and Android devices. The app features a map of the entire state with a search feature that allows the user to search by region, or by address and radius, to locate any of the 80+ participating restaurants. It also provides links to restaurants' websites and Facebook pages, as well as driving directions. The

app's best feature might be the reward ("Frequent Visitor") program, which lets the user check in to restaurants in exchange for discounts. [Download](#) this fantastic new resource today!

In the Galley

Lionfish Nachos

Each month in this series, we'll highlight a new way to prepare delicious seafood from the northern Gulf of Mexico. *Enjoy!*



Recipe courtesy of Alabama Gulf Seafood. For more recipes, please visit <https://eatalabamaseafood.com/>

You may have heard that lionfish is an invasive species that's threatening the ecosystem stability of our Gulf Coast. Yes, we need to catch as many of them as we can. And thankfully, their filets are quite tasty, so they won't go to waste when we do catch them. If you can find a few lionfish filets, this is a fantastic recipe to try. And if lionfish is hard to come by in your neighborhood, try substituting flounder.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless lionfish fillets (or substitute flounder)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 pack Asian wonton wraps
- 4 ounces wasabi powder
- 1 cup creole mustard
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup mayo
- 2 cups Sriracha hot sauce
- 1 cup mayo
- 1 cup roasted red peppers, chopped
- 1/2 cup banana peppers, chopped

- 1/2 cup green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup red onions, diced
- 2 cups seaweed salad (from the Asian market)

Method:

Lionfish

Season lionfish to taste with salt and granulated garlic. With a skillet on high, sear very lightly and very quickly sauté the lionfish fillets in oil. Make sure that the lionfish are ultra rare. Set aside on a plate in a cooler or refrigerator.

Wonton Nachos

Cut wonton wraps into triangles and fry at 350 degrees until crisp. Place on paper towels to drain and set aside.

Wasabi Drizzle

Mix wasabi powder into water until dissolved. Mix in with creole mustard, sugar, and 1 cup mayo, then set aside.

Spicy Mayo

Mix Sriracha hot sauce and 1 cup mayo well, then set aside.

Assembly

Remove lionfish from cooler, slice ultra thin and split into four portions. Place a pile of wonton nachos. Place lionfish on top of nachos. Garnish with chopped peppers and onions. Drizzle a small amount of each sauce onto the nachos. Top with seaweed salad. (Recipe Courtesy of Chef Chris Sherrill of the Flora-Bama Yacht Club)



Sea of Acronyms

Being an informed angler begins with understanding the terminology used in fisheries management. This series helps demystify the concepts hidden beneath a sea of acronyms.

Fishery Management Plan

A fishery management plan is a document created for all species under federal management. An FMP includes **1)** provisions “necessary and appropriate for the conservation and management of the fishery, to prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks, and to protect, restore, and promote the long-term health and stability of the fishery;” **2)** a description of the fishery; **3)** specification of “the maximum sustainable yield and optimum yield” from the fishery; **4)** description and identification of essential fish habitat and measures to minimize adverse effects to the extent practicable; **5)** measurable criteria for identifying overfished fisheries and measures to prevent or end overfishing and rebuild the stock; and **6)** a fishery impact statement.



Upcoming events

[*Jimmy Sanders Memorial Lionfish Challenge*](#)

May 26 - Sept 3

Weigh in at Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Biloxi, MS (M-F, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.)

[*Boats and Beignets*](#)

June 2

McElroy's in Biloxi, MS

[*Flora-Bama Fishing Rodeo*](#)

June 1-3

Flora-Bama, AL/FL

[*Ocean Springs Fishing Rodeo*](#)

June 2-3

Ocean Springs, MS

[*Ocean Springs Elks Junior Fishing Rodeo*](#)

June 9

Ocean Springs, MS

[*Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish Classic*](#)

June 4-10

Biloxi, MS

[CCA Casting for Conservation Fishing Tournament](#)

June 16

Long Beach, MS

[Mississippi DeepSea Fishing Rodeo](#)

June 29 - July 4

Gulfport, MS

[Alabama DeepSea Fishing Rodeo](#)

July 20-22

Dauphin Island, AL

[Shark Week](#)

July 23-27

Gulf State Park Pier, Gulf Shores, AL

[Sharks!](#)

July 27

St. Martin Public Library, St. Martin, MS



I'm Marcus Drymon, an Assistant Extension Professor at [Mississippi State University](#) and a Marine Fisheries Specialist at [Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant](#). I'd like to hear from you - please send any comments or questions to marcus.drymon@msstate.edu, and click on the links below for more information on my website and Facebook page.



Contributing authors shown with their favorite fishes: Amanda Jefferson (triggerfish), Extension Associate and Emily Seubert (sharpnose shark), Extension Program Associate.



Facebook Website

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