

# Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan 2009-2012

*Expertise and input from law enforcement*

*Cooperative interface for state and federal partners*

*Maximizing resources to achieve Gulf-wide regulatory compliance*

*Ecosystem health and sustainability through regulations that manage, protect, and conserve*

*Legal and properly-identified aquatic products for the American consumer*

*Resources to provide continuous support of state/federal marine resource enforcement*



# Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

## Commissioners and Proxies

### ALABAMA

Barnett Lawley, Commissioner  
Alabama Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources  
64 North Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130-1901

#### Proxy:

Vernon Minton, Director  
Alabama Marine Resources Division  
P.O. Drawer 458  
Gulf Shores, AL 36547

Representative Spencer Collier  
P.O. Box 550  
Irvington, AL 36544

Chris Nelson  
Bon Secour Fisheries, Inc.  
P.O. Box 60  
Bon Secour, AL 36511

### FLORIDA

Ken Haddad, Executive Director  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

#### Proxy:

Virginia Vail  
FWC Division of Marine Fisheries  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

Representative Will S. Kendrick  
P.O. Box K  
Carrabelle, FL 32322-1211

Hayden R. Dempsey  
Greenberg Traurig, P.A.  
P.O. Box 1838  
Tallahassee, FL 32302

### LOUISIANA

Robert Barham, Secretary  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
P.O. Box 98000  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000

#### Proxy:

Randy Pausina  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
Fisheries  
P.O. Box 98000  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000

Senator Butch Gautreaux  
1015 Clothilde Avenue  
Morgan City, LA 70380

Wilson Gaidry  
8911 Park Avenue  
Houma, LA 70363

### MISSISSIPPI

William Walker, Executive Director  
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101  
Biloxi, MS 39530

#### Proxy:

William S. "Corky" Perret/Dale Diaz  
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101  
Biloxi, MS 39530

Senator Tommy Gollott  
235 Bay View Avenue  
Biloxi, MS 39530

Joe Gill Jr., *Chairman*  
Joe Gill Consulting, LLC  
P.O. Box 535  
Ocean Springs, MS 39566-0535

### TEXAS

Carter Smith, Executive Director  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, TX 78744

#### Proxy:

Mike Ray  
Coastal Fisheries Division  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, TX 78744

Senator Mike Jackson  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711

David McKinney  
10747 Ranch Road, 962 E  
Cypress Mill, TX 78663

**GULF OF MEXICO  
COOPERATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT  
STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2009-2012**

by the

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Law Enforcement Committee

and

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
Law Enforcement Advisory Panel

edited by  
Steve VanderKooy

GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION  
P.O. Box 726  
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564  
**[www.gsmfc.org](http://www.gsmfc.org)**

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**GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**  
**Law Enforcement Committee (LEC)**  
**&**  
**GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**Law Enforcement Advisory Panel (LEAP)**

Captain Chris Blankenship  
*Chair LEAP*  
Alabama Marine Resources Division  
P.O. Box 189  
Dauphin Island, AL 36528  
(251) 861-2882  
chris.blankenship@dcnr.alabama.gov

Harold M. Robbins, Jr.  
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Suite 109  
St. Petersburg, FL 33702  
(727) 570-5344  
hal.robbins@noaa.gov

Colonel Walter Chataginer  
*Chair LEC*  
Mississippi Department of Marine  
Resources  
1141 Bayview Avenue  
Biloxi, MS 39530  
(228) 523-4133  
walter.chataginer@dmr.ms.gov

Mark Kinsey (Proxy)  
Assistant Special Agent in Charge  
Galveston, Texas  
(409) 338-9111  
mark.kinsey@noaa.gov

Major Brett Norton  
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation  
Commission  
620 South Meridian Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
(850) 488-5600  
brett.norton@myfwc.com

Karen Raine  
Senior Enforcement Attorney  
NOAA General Counsel  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Suite 177  
St. Petersburg, FL 33702  
(727) 824-5360  
karen.raine@noaa.gov

Assistant Chief Robert Goodrich  
*Vice Chair LEAP*  
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, TX 78744  
(512) 389-4853  
robert.goodrich@tpwd.state.tx.us

James R. Gale  
Special Agent in Charge  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Office of Law Enforcement  
1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 380  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
(404) 679-7057  
james\_gale@fws.gov

Lt. Colonel Jeff S. Mayne  
*Vice Chair LEC*  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife &  
Fisheries  
P.O. Box 98000  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000  
(225) 765-2987  
jmayne@wlf.louisiana.gov

LCDR Carmen DeGeorge  
U.S. Coast Guard – Eighth District  
500 Poydras Street, Room 11128  
New Orleans, LA 70130  
(504) 671-2241  
Carmen.S.DeGeorge@uscg.mil

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## **Introduction**

Current state and federal regulatory approaches require development and implementation of concurrent law enforcement strategies. Concerns over ocean ecosystems, living marine resources, coral reefs, coastal habitat conservation, and international fisheries have escalated law enforcement responsibilities throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The foundations of fishery management plans are dependent upon sound regulations and the ability to maintain acceptable levels of compliance. The role of law enforcement in the fishery management process is to provide guidance to ensure effectiveness, consistency, and enforceability of proposed and adopted regulations.

Understanding the complexities of fisheries management regulations by the public and user groups requires enhanced interaction and communication by enforcement. Effective education and outreach programs by enforcement will increase public trust and awareness maximizing voluntary compliance and identifying illegal activity.

This long-term *Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Law Enforcement Strategic Plan* maximizes the effectiveness of interjurisdictional and international fisheries enforcement. This is accomplished by identifying priorities, developing comprehensive planning efforts, and conducting Gulf-wide operations.

## **Vision Statement**

*Improve regulations and increase compliance through cooperative law enforcement efforts which enhance, protect, and conserve ocean ecosystems and living marine resources throughout the Gulf of Mexico for the safe use and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

## **Mission Statement**

*Law enforcement is dedicated to providing professional guidance and expertise to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. We are committed to improving regulatory compliance through cooperative efforts that enhance, protect, and conserve shared living marine resources and their supporting ecosystems throughout the Gulf of Mexico.*



## Goals and Objectives

### **GOAL 1: Provide professional law enforcement expertise throughout rule-making processes.**

*Professional law enforcement expertise and input are integral to the development, promulgation, and implementation of clear and effective regulations.*

**Objective 1.1** – Increase participation in the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) and Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) processes.

- Attend LEC and LEAP meetings in conjunction with GSMFC and GMFMC meetings.
- Conduct a LEAP meeting during GMFMC meeting to increase visibility and discourse on enforcement issues when feasible.
- Conduct a summer work session to continue strategic and operations plan activities and opportunistic discussion of enforcement hot topics.
- Evaluate current GSMFC and GMFMC regulatory recommendations/actions.
- Assist in the development of interjurisdictional state and federal management plans.
- Provide timely and substantive comment on GSMFC and GMFMC actions.

**Objective 1.2** – Strengthen enforcement’s relationships with the GSMFC and GMFMC.

- Support communication between enforcement and GSMFC commissioners and GMFMC members.
- Provide bi-annual operating plans and interim/annual reports.
- Act as liaison between all law enforcement agencies and GSMFC commissioners and GMFMC members.

**Objective 1.3** – Increase participation in Secretary of Commerce management plans.

- Provide timely and substantive comments on Secretarial management plans.

**Objective 1.4** – Identify existing regulations that are effective, ineffective, or inconsistent.

- Eliminate or modify ineffective and/or unnecessary regulations.
- Promote statutory and regulatory consistency among all state and federal agencies.
- Support the development of “user friendly” regulations.
- Provide expertise as requested by state or federal agencies.
- Identify enforcement workload impact and cost-analysis.
- Identify tools and technologies that provide effective enforcement measures.

### **GOAL 2: Develop and implement effective educational programs.**

*A cooperative interface between state and federal partners and the public is essential to maximize resources in order to achieve Gulf-wide regulatory compliance.*

**Objective 2.1** – Improve community-oriented policing programs.

- Continue to implement and establish joint programs to increase contact and law enforcement presence among user groups.
- Continue to publicize different state and federal actions through mass media.
- Establish user group feedback programs to evaluate enforcement performance.

**Objective 2.2** – Promote Gulf-wide information programs.

- Identify and continue to provide web-based services for fishermen and the public to easily obtain current state/federal regulations.
- Encourage the GSMFC, GMFMC, and NOAA to develop mechanisms to compile up-to-date state/federal regulations into an understandable, multilingual guide.

**Objective 2.3** – Enhance awareness of the importance of state and federal prosecution to the successful adjudication of natural resource regulations.

- Continue outreach to prosecutors and litigators.
- Identify mechanisms to meet with prosecutors and litigators.

**GOAL 3: Promote cooperative law enforcement partnerships.**

*A cooperative interface is essential to maximize resources in order to achieve Gulf-wide regulatory compliance.*

**Objective 3.1** – Maintain cooperative enforcement agreements (CEAs), joint enforcement agreements (JEAs), and reciprocal agreements among the states and federal agencies.

- Whenever appropriate, provide comments in support of CEAs, JEAs, and reciprocal agreements to state and federal representatives.
- Promote the streamlining of processing and tracking JEAs.
- Ensure annual state and federal law enforcement needs are reflected within CEAs and JEAs.
- Encourage state and federal law enforcement goals and objectives are included in the JEA operations plans.

**Objective 3.2** – Seek and share information on federal programs supporting state law enforcement.

- Obtain law enforcement training for states.
- Identify and enhance law enforcement equipment for states.
- Enhance communications among federal and state enforcement partners on Homeland Defense issues.
- Enhance inner-operable communications among state and federal enforcement partners.

**Objective 3.3** – Explore a uniform enforcement data collection and reporting system.

- Evaluate available technology.
- Identify funding sources.
- Analyze and distribute information.

- Promote the use of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and NLETS as a point source for natural resource violations and provide input to that system.
- Acquire the wireless ability to access this system in the field by enforcement officers in real time.

**Objective 3.4** – Plan and analyze law enforcement effort and performance.

- Conduct state/federal strategic plan work sessions to evaluate progress and determine milestones.
- Conduct state/federal law enforcement meetings concerning joint Gulf-wide programs and operations.
- Explore tools and methodologies to chart performance.
- Ensure law enforcement program development in support of fisheries management plans.

**GOAL 4: Promote regulations to protect and enhance the health and sustainability of the ecosystem.**

*Ecosystem health and sustainability is the foundation for a viable living marine environment in the Gulf of Mexico. Regulations that manage, protect, and conserve the ecosystem are critical to maintain its health and sustainability now – and in the future.*

**Objective 4.1** – Share information to ensure the highest quality of biological data to support ecosystem sustainability.

- Support the inclusion of law enforcement statistics and other information in scientific modeling plans.
- Identify negative impacts of noncompliance to living marine resources.
- Identify and evaluate law enforcement strategies to address unique ecosystem enforcement challenges.

**GOAL 5: Protect the American consumer.**

*Ensure the American consumer is receiving a legal and properly identified aquatic product regardless of where harvested.*

**Objective 5.1** – Ensure the integrity of imported fisheries products.

- Identify illegal fisheries products.
- Identify participants of illegal interstate trade.
- Support enhanced development of documentation for imported fisheries species.
- Work cooperatively with other state and federal law enforcement agencies to identify and apprehend traffickers in illegal international trade.

**Objective 5.2** – Protect consumers regarding mislabeled or adulterated product.

- Work with partner agencies in using forensic tools to improve fisheries law enforcement capabilities.

- Identify persons who provide mislabeled or adulterated products.
- Support enhanced development of documentation for all marine species.

**GOAL 6: Obtain funds to aid state and federal law enforcement agencies.**

*State and federal agencies do not have sufficient resources or assets to provide continuous support of state/federal marine resource enforcement operations.*

**Objective 6.1** – Explore and enhance federal grant and funding programs for law enforcement.

- Identify and evaluate law enforcement grant and funding programs.
- Promote adequate long-term funding for JEAs that takes into account increased operation costs at a minimum of the current Consumer Price Index (CPI) to maintain historical JEA patrol levels.
- Promote and seek funding for a Gulf-wide marine enforcement communication system.

**Objective 6.2** – Seek a long-term, dedicated source of funding/appropriations for the JEA program to support regulatory compliance initiatives in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Identify the positive performance of the JEA program.
- Evaluate the cost effectiveness of current federal funding in fisheries law enforcement in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Objective 6.3** – Obtain adequate funding for the strategic planning process and greater representation of the LEC and LEAP at GSMFC and GMFMC meetings.

- Seek funding from the GSMFC and GMFMC for the LEC and LEAP to attend the GSMFC spring and annual meetings; the LEAP to attend GMFMC meetings twice per year; and the LEAP state representative to attend all GMFMC meetings when in their home state.





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