

Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Purse Seine Fishery

Fishing gear type: Purse seine

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on a review of observer data from 1992-1995. Observers recorded 9 incidental takes, 8 (3 mortalities) from the Western Gulf of Mexico [GMX] coastal bottlenose stock and 1 from the Northern GMX coastal stock. All of the lethal takes occurred in an area encompassing the Western GMX coastal stock of bottlenose dolphins. Extrapolating the takes from the average observer effort indicated the annual average mortality and serious injury was 68 animals/year, exceeding 100% of the Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level for the Western coastal stock (PBR=29), qualifying this fishery as a Category I fishery on the LOF. However, NMFS categorized this fishery as a Category II pending a revised analysis of stock structure for bottlenose dolphin in the GMX. If all bottlenose stocks in the GMX were grouped together PBR would equal 154, putting the fishery in Category II (68 animals/year is 44% of PBR when PBR is 154).

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a⁽¹⁾ indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification): Bottlenose dolphin, Eastern GMX coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, GMX bay, sound, estuarine; Bottlenose dolphin, Northern GMX coastal⁽¹⁾; Bottlenose dolphin, Western GMX coastal⁽¹⁾.

Estimated number of current participants: 40-42

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: N/A

Year added to the LOF: 1996

Category when originally listed: Category III

Basis for original classification on the LOF: Listed as Category III based on bycatch studies and Category III reports under section 114 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Data indicated that incidental take of bottlenose dolphins (Northern GMX coastal stock) does occur. In 1992 there were 2 observed mortalities, in 1994 there were 2 bottlenose dolphins caught and released live, and in 1995 there was 1 observed mortality. The Category III reports showed that 2 bottlenose dolphins were taken in 1993. Complete effort data for bycatch study was not available by the publication of the 1996 final LOF. However, information indicated that reclassification of the fishery may be proposed in a future LOF.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 50

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery uses purse seine gear.

Target species: Menhaden and thread herring.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: This fishery operates in bays, sounds, and nearshore coastal waters along the GMX coast. The majority of the fishing effort is concentrated off Louisiana and Mississippi, with lesser effort in Alabama and Texas state waters.

* The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 1% and less than 50% (Category II) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: Observed in 1992, 1994, and 1995 through an observer program conducted by Louisiana State University. There has been no observer coverage since 1995.

Management and regulations: Florida prohibits the use of purse seines in state waters. This fishery is managed under the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Interstate Gulf Menhaden Fishery Management Plan.

History of Changes on the LOF

2009 LOF: Added a superscript “1” in Table 2 after bottlenose dolphin (Western GMX coastal) in the final 2009 LOF to correct a previous typographical error. The superscript “1” was inadvertently left off the 2006 LOF when superscripts were added to Tables 1 and 2. The Western GMX coastal stock is a stock driving the categorization of the fishery.

2007 LOF: Estimated number of participants updated from 50 to 40-42.

2006 LOF: Added a superscript “1” in Table 2 after bottlenose dolphin (Northern GMX coastal), indicating that this stock is driving the categorization of the fishery.

2005 LOF: Bottlenose dolphin (Eastern GMX coastal) and bottlenose dolphin (GMX bay, sound, estuarine) added to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery based on interactions documented in recent SARs.

1999 LOF:

- Elevated to Category II based on a review of observer data from 1992-1995. Observers recorded 9 incidental takes, 8 (3 mortalities) from the Western GMX coastal bottlenose stock, and 1 from the Northern GMX coastal stock. All of the lethal takes occurred in an area encompassing the Western GMX coastal stock. Extrapolating the takes from the average observer effort indicated estimated annual mortality and serious injury was 68 animals/year. This data revealed that mortality and serious injury exceeded PBR for the Western coastal stock (PBR=29), which would qualify the fishery as a Category I. However, NMFS categorized this fishery as a Category II pending a revised analysis of stock structure for bottlenose dolphin in the GMX. If all bottlenose dolphin coastal stocks in the GMX were grouped together, PBR would equal 154, putting the fishery in Category II.
- Bottlenose dolphin (Western GMX coastal stock) added to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery based on documented mortalities in the 1992-1995 observer data.

[†] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).