

Southeastern U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico Stone Crab Trap/Pot Fishery

Fishing gear type: Trap/Pot

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: Based on analogy to the Category II “Atlantic blue crab trap/pot” fishery, and serious injury and mortality to bottlenose dolphins (multiple stocks) reported in stranding data.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed: Bottlenose dolphin, Biscayne Bay estuarine; Bottlenose dolphin, Central Florida (FL) coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, Eastern Gulf of Mexico (GMX) coastal; Bottlenose dolphin, FL Bay; Bottlenose dolphin, GMX bay, sound, estuarine (FL west coast portion); Bottlenose dolphin, Indian River Lagoon estuarine system; Bottlenose dolphin, Jacksonville estuarine system; Bottlenose dolphin, Northern GMX coastal.

Estimated number of current participants: 1,282

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: None.

Year added to the LOF: 2001

Category when originally listed: Category III

Basis for original classification on the LOF: The Southeast U.S. stranding network reported one bottlenose dolphin entangled in this fishery in 1998. However, reference to the stock was removed from the final LOF based on a public comment and further investigation, which indicated that the dolphin was entangled in a gear configuration that is not a normal component of the fishery.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 4,453

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: Traps are the most typical gear type used for the commercial and recreational stone crab fishery. Baited traps are frequently set in waters of 65 ft (19.8 m) depth or less in a double line formation, generally 100-300 ft (30.5-91.4 m) apart, running parallel to a bottom contour. Buoys are attached to the trap/pot via float line.

Target species: Stone crab.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: Operates primarily nearshore in the State of Florida. Stone crab fishing outside of this area is likely very minimal. The margins of seagrass flats and bottoms with low rocky relief are also favored areas for trap placement. The season for commercial and recreational stone crab harvest is from October 15 to May 15.

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: There has not been observer coverage in this fishery.

Management and regulations: In 2010, the State of FL issued 1,282 commercial stone crab licenses and 1,190,285 stone crab trap tags. FL state regulations limit recreational stone crab trap/pot numbers to five per person (FL Administrative Code (F.A.C.) Chapter 68B-13). Commercial traps must be designed to conform to the

* The fishery is classified by analogy to other gear types or fisheries that are known to cause mortality or serious injury of marine mammals.

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

specifications established under U.S. 50 CFR 654.22, as well as F.A.C. Chapter 68B-13. In FL, commercial trap/pot buoys are required to be marked with the letter "X," the trap owner's stone crab endorsement number (in characters at least 2 inches high), and a tag that corresponds to a valid FWC-issued trap certificate. Recreational trap/pot buoys, except those fished from a dock, must have a permanently affixed and legible "R" at least 2 inches high and the harvester's name and address (Ch. 68B-13.009(3), F.A.C).

History of Changes on the LOF:

2012 LOF:

- Elevated from Category III to Category II based on analogy to the Category II "Atlantic blue crab trap/pot" fishery because the fisheries use similar fishing techniques, habitat and gear; therefore, posing a similar level of risk of interactions resulting in serious injury or mortality to bottlenose dolphins. Additionally, from 2002-2010, 3 bottlenose dolphin strandings (multiple stocks) resulting in serious injury or mortality were confirmed to result from interactions with stone crab trap/pot gear. Further, 7 bottlenose dolphin (multiple stocks) strandings resulting in serious injury or mortality were confirmed to result from interactions with a southeast trap/pot fishery, plausibly the stone crab fishery because of its spatial and temporal overlap with the strandings. The ten strandings from 2002-2010 strongly suggest the stone crab fishery has "occasional incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals" (50 CFR 229.2), further warranting a Category II classification.
- Added bottlenose dolphin, Central FL coastal; bottlenose dolphin, Eastern GMX coastal; bottlenose dolphin, FL Bay; bottlenose dolphin, GMX bay, sound, estuarine (FL west coast portion); bottlenose dolphin, Indian River Lagoon estuarine system; bottlenose dolphin, Jacksonville estuarine system; bottlenose dolphin, Northern GMX coastal to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery. From 2002-2010, three bottlenose dolphin serious injuries or mortalities were confirmed to result from interactions with the stone crab fishery, and seven bottlenose dolphin serious injuries or mortalities were confirmed to result from interactions with a southeast trap/pot fishery, plausibly the stone crab fishery based on spatial and temporal overlap with these strandings (2010 SAR). The 2010 SARs indicate that the serious injuries or mortalities were confirmed and/or could have been from the stocks listed above.
- Estimated number of participants updated from 4,453 to 1,282.

2011 LOF:

- Changed the stock names for bottlenose dolphins based on the revised stock structure presented in the final 2008 and 2009 SARs. Replaced reference to "bottlenose dolphin, WNA coastal" with the following "bottlenose dolphin, Biscayne Bay estuarine."

2009 LOF: Added bottlenose dolphin (WNA stock) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery. Stranding data indicated that bottlenose dolphins interact with this fishery. Two bottlenose dolphins stranded with stone crab trap/pot gear in 2003 and 2006, one in Biscayne Bay and one in Miami Beach, respectively. These animals fell within the WNA coastal bottlenose dolphin stock's Central FL Management Unit, which had an unknown PBR (2007 final SAR). Therefore, NMFS could not determine whether this fishery required reclassification to a Category II until more information became available.

2001 LOF:

- Listed on the LOF for the first time as a Category III.
- Southeast U.S. stranding network reported one bottlenose dolphin entangled in this fishery in 1998. However, reference to the stock is removed from the final LOF based on a public comment and further investigation, which indicated that the dolphin was entangled in a gear configuration that is not a normal component of the fishery.