

2018 *Deepwater Horizon* Oceanic Fish Restoration Project

SUPPORTING A HEALTHIER GULF OF MEXICO



NFWF

How can dealers get more information?

NFWF and NOAA will maintain an open dialogue with dealers throughout the life of the project. NFWF is working with the Audubon Nature Institute's Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries (G.U.L.F.) program to engage dealers and chefs in identifying actions that could be beneficial for the industry and the fishery. G.U.L.F. will host a workshop for dealers and chefs on October 24, 2017 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dealers can also find more information on the project website at www.nfwf.org/pll or contact:

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DEALER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Many species of oceanic (or pelagic) fish in the Gulf of Mexico were injured during the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, including tuna, billfish, sharks and mackerel, as well as deepwater fish such as lancetfish. The goal of this project is to help restore pelagic fish.

Deepwater Horizon Oceanic Fish Restoration Project development and design:

The project is funded with money made available by BP for Early Restoration. It was developed by federal and Gulf state natural resource trustees, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), according to the Oil Pollution Act and with opportunities for public review and comment. NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) are working with the pelagic longline (PLL) fishery in the Gulf to launch this temporary (five to 10 years) restoration project. The project includes a voluntary repose – a six-month period during which participating vessel owners will receive financial compensation to refrain from PLL fishing. The project is tailored to restore resources injured by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill and does not affect existing management practices or regulations.

Review of the 2017 Pilot Project:

In 2016, NOAA and NFWF began working directly with industry participants in order to get their

feedback before implementing this temporary restoration project. The project was successfully launched as a pilot in 2017 to allow for evaluation, adaptive management and further engagement with vessel owners, dealers and other stakeholders. During the 2017 pilot, seven vessel owners from Louisiana participated in a four-month repose period from March 1 through June 30.

All seven participants elected to fish using alternative gear during the repose. They fished for a collective total of 280 sea-days. Observer records of those sea-days show that the amount of non-target species caught using alternative gear was minimal, and those that were caught were released alive. (Read more about the pilot here: www.nfwf.org/pll)

Working with Dealers

Will this project affect dealers?

This project may affect some dealers, but is designed to mitigate potential impacts. For example:

- Participation in the PLL fishing repose is limited and voluntary – only a portion of the overall Gulf PLL fishing fleet of approximately 35 vessels will be selected to participate, which will help minimize potential impacts to dealers, relevant businesses and the shoreside economy.

- In 2018, participation is expected to take place in two separate regions in the Gulf — one in the Western Gulf (vessels with a hailing port of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas) and one in the Eastern Gulf (vessels with a hailing port of Florida and the Atlantic Coast). Holding the auction in two regions accounts for operational differences between the two areas and encourages broad geographic distribution of participants to help minimize impacts to any one region or local dealer.
- The repose period will last from January 1 to June 30.
- In addition to all the vessels that are not participating in the project and will be fishing as normal, those that do participate may resume PLL fishing after the repose ends, for the remainder of the year (July 1-December 31). This will help ensure that vessels throughout the Gulf continue to deliver high-quality products for both domestic and international markets.
- Participants are encouraged to use alternative fishing gear during the repose to continue harvesting targeted species, keeping vessels and crew active, and helping to offset potential economic impacts of the repose.

Will potential impacts to dealers result in any changes to the project?

This is a partnership — NOAA and NFWF are working directly with dealers to find additional ways to alleviate concerns and have already modified the project, including:

- **More alternative gear choices.** For the 2018 repose, participants have the option to continue to fish during

the repose period using up to two of three alternative gear types provided by the project: greenstick gear, buoy gear and/or deep drop gear. The addition of deep drop gear provides participants with more options to target swordfish, and buoy gear opportunities have been expanded to include the option to harvest yellowfin tuna under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP). The project has included these additional gear options in order to provide participants with more flexibility to explore fishing strategies that maximize harvest opportunity.

- **Additional training.** NFWF and NOAA intend to make more training available to participants to improve fishers' proficiency with the alternative gear and, ultimately, the quality of fish caught.
- **Engaging more stakeholders.** NFWF and NOAA will continue to have an ongoing dialogue with the dealers and other stakeholders to make this project as strong as possible. NFWF is working with the Audubon Nature Institute's Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries (G.U.L.F.) program to engage dealers and chefs in identifying actions that could be beneficial for the industry and the fishery.

Will fishing with the greenstick or buoy gear impact the quality of the fish that are caught?

Using buoy gear or deep drop gear to catch swordfish does not result in lower-quality product. While some suggest that using greenstick gear may yield tuna of a lesser quality, this project affords the opportunity to more rigorously evaluate this issue.

The quality of yellowfin tuna caught with buoy gear in the Gulf has not

yet been evaluated but data will be collected as part of this project to answer that question.

Throughout the project, NOAA and NFWF will work with participants, dealers and researchers to improve the fishers' proficiency using the alternative gear and enhance product quality of fish caught with these gear types.

Project Overview

What impacts did the spill have on pelagic fish?

In addition to killing fish at various life stages, the 2010 oil spill also had detrimental effects to those fish that survived the initial spill and cleanup. At various depths of Gulf waters, scientists found toxic impacts to fish, including cardiac (heart) toxicity and other developmental deformities such as a curved spine, reduced growth rates, impaired immune function, reduced swimming performance and inhibited reproduction.

What are the long-term benefits of this project?

The project will help to restore pelagic fish that were impacted as a result of the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Reducing fish mortality will allow fish to grow and reproduce, helping to increase the amount of pelagic fish throughout the Gulf.

When does the project start in 2018?

The 2018 repose period starts on January 1, 2018. Request for Quotation forms will be accepted from eligible vessel owners by October 31, 2017. Quotes received in a timely manner (by October 31, 2017) will be evaluated and all interested vessel owners will be

notified in mid-November 2017 about whether they have been selected to participate. Materials for eligible vessel owners, including the RFQ form, are available in English and Vietnamese on NFWF's website at www.nfwf.org/pll.

Why is the project starting so long after the oil spill?

The project was developed under the *Deepwater Horizon* Phase IV Early Restoration process, as part of a suite of projects, which BP agreed to fund before the natural resource damage claims were settled. The *Deepwater Horizon* Trustees undertook negotiations with BP to reach agreement on the structure of the project, in this case restoring injured fish.

A draft restoration plan, developed pursuant to the Natural Resource Damage Assessment regulations, was then released to the public for comment and review in May 2015. Since the finalization of the restoration plan in September 2015, NOAA has been working to implement the project. NFWF joined as a cooperating partner in 2016 to help launch the pilot earlier this year and help fully implement the project.

How did you notify the public about this project?

The *Deepwater Horizon* Trustees held public meetings on this project as part of the *Deepwater Horizon* Phase IV Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessments, released in draft for public review and comment in May 2015. The Trustees incorporated the public feedback into the final Phase IV Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessments, released in September 2015. Once the Restoration Plan was finalized and BP funding for the project

was available, NOAA and NFWF began outreach to the public to implement the project.

Are there new fishing regulations for the pelagic longline fishery in the Gulf of Mexico because of this project?

No. The project is voluntary, temporary and is tailored to restore a portion of fish impacted by the oil spill. The project does not affect existing management practices or regulations. As a voluntary project, no new regulations are being issued by NOAA or any other government agency.

Participation Details

Who can participate? What are the eligibility criteria for participating in the program?

Vessel owners interested in participating in the project must be active in the Gulf of Mexico, having made at least one PLL set in the Gulf over the last two years (Jan. 1, 2015 – Dec. 31, 2016). Participants must also possess sufficient Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) to make a PLL set in the Gulf and must possess all three valid limited access permits necessary to engage in PLL fishing in the Gulf: (1) a directed or incidental swordfish permit, (2) a directed or incidental shark permit, and (3) an Atlantic Tuna Longline category permit. In addition, NOAA will also evaluate past enforcement history.

Where are the potential participants and where do they come from?

In order to encourage participation from throughout the Gulf region, two separate auctions will be held: one in

the Western Gulf (vessels with a hailing port of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas) and one in the Eastern Gulf (vessels with a hailing port of Florida and the Atlantic Coast). Participation in the repose is limited and voluntary – only a portion of the overall Gulf PLL fishing fleet (estimated around 35 active vessels) will be selected to participate in any given year.

How will the Request for Quotation forms be evaluated?

NFWF and NOAA will evaluate all quotes received. Eligible quotes received from the Western Gulf auction and those received from the Eastern Gulf auction will be evaluated separately but using the same criteria. Offerors will be ranked based on the lowest cost quotes received in the Eastern Gulf auction and the lowest cost quotes received in the Western Gulf; quotes will not be compared between regions. In the event that there are two identical quotes for compensation in the same region, NFWF and NOAA will give preference based on past participation, if applicable, and willingness to use the alternative gear. The type(s) of alternative gear chosen by applicants will not determine their prioritization or selection to participate in the project.

If vessel owners choose to participate, can they still fish during the pelagic longline repose?

Yes, but not with pelagic longline gear. Participants may still fish using other gear types including greenstick, buoy, deep drop, bottom longline or any other gear associated with other active permits. In fact, during the PLL repose period, participating vessels will be encouraged to use greenstick, deep drop and buoy gear to harvest yellowfin tuna and swordfish.

Why can't participants fish with pelagic longline gear in other areas beyond the Gulf of Mexico?

The PLL repose is designed to help restore a range of offshore fish species that were injured as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill by reducing fishing mortality during the temporary, voluntary repose period each year. Injured species include those considered to be highly migratory — moving over very long distances within and outside of the Gulf. The pelagic species also include some species that may remain in the Gulf for most or all of their life cycle. PLL vessels participating in the repose agree not to fish with PLL gear inside or outside of the Gulf. For example, participants cannot use PLL gear to harvest mahi in the South Atlantic. Fishing outside of the Gulf would reduce the benefits of the repose for oceanic fish since non-target fish would still be incidentally caught and dead discards would not be avoided during the period.