



## Public Input Impacts Federal Regulations

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional councils in the U.S. that make fishery management recommendations to NOAA Fisheries. The Council manages reef fish, shrimp, lobster, and coastal migratory pelagics including mackerel and cobia. Though Council members are tasked with making management recommendations in the best interest of our nation, using local level expertise, public input does help guide their decision.

This fact sheet reviews the traditional, full amendment mechanism for addressing a fishery issue and shows when local public input is called for . . . and needed!

### ISSUE IDENTIFIED

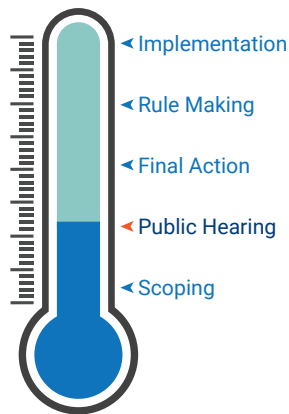
All regulatory actions begin when the Council identifies a fishery issue. Issues can be brought to the Council's attention in several ways; for example, the latest numbers produced by a stock assessment could trigger action, or a fisherman may raise an issue.

### SCOPING

At this stage, the Council gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve the issue at hand. This includes identifying potential impacts and reasonable alternatives.

### GET INVOLVED:

Attend a Gulf Council scoping workshop, read scoping documents on the Council's website and submit written comments by mail or email.



### PUBLIC HEARING

The Council holds public hearings after identifying management options that can potentially solve a fishery issue. The purpose of public hearings is to gather feedback on potential impacts of the solutions offered and to suggest other possible alternatives as appropriate.

**GET INVOLVED:** Read up on the proposed management options, and attend a public hearing or send in written comments to give your thoughts and ideas to the Council.

### FINAL ACTION

The Council decides on a management strategy during a regular meeting, after one more opportunity for stakeholder input. The Council then votes to forward their proposed fishery management plan amendment to the Secretary of Commerce for final approval and implementation.

**GET INVOLVED:** Early action is the best way to ensure that your input will influence management.

### RULE MAKING

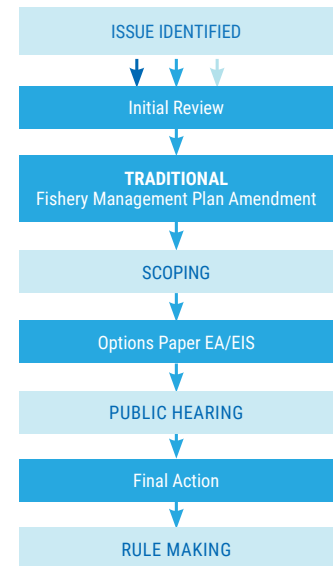
Once the Council submits a proposed rule, the Secretary of Commerce opens a final 15 – 60 day public comment period. After this period ends, the Secretary decides whether to approve, partially approve, or disapprove the proposed measures.

### GET INVOLVED:

Regulations are published in the Federal Register along with information on how to submit comments. Find it at [www.federalregister.gov/](http://www.federalregister.gov/) Search "Gulf Fisheries" for a list.



**INFORMATION SOURCE**  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)



**GET INVOLVED:** The management of the Gulf of Mexico fisheries affects your livelihood, and the Council process gives you a voice in the decisions that affect your business.

- **LEARN THE FACTS.** Find out how the Council system works, the background of the issues that interest you, and the terminology used so that your input is more effective.
- **JOIN A FISHERIES GROUP.** Be a part of a group (or start one) that represents your fishery so that you can have a unified voice and share common concerns and interests.
- **ATTEND A MEETING.** All regular Council meetings, science committee meetings, advisory panel meetings, public hearings, and scoping workshops are open to the public and most include opportunities for public comment.
- **COMMENT.** Share ideas and opinions at meetings, scoping workshops, and public hearings. Or visit [www.bit.ly/gulf-council-amendments](http://www.bit.ly/gulf-council-amendments) to submit comments online. All comments are summarized and presented to the Council before fishery management decisions are made.
- **WRITE.** Letters and emails should be submitted to the Council office no less than one week before the Council meeting.

