

Congressional Activities Report for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

November 30, 2015

Overview of Work Provided:

- Provided timely information on hearings of interest to the Councils (see below for update on House and Senate Magnuson-related hearings)
- Monitored Congressional hearings and markups related to fisheries management, international fisheries, or other issues of interest to the Gulf of Mexico Council
- Provided timely notice of legislation of interest moving through the House, Senate, or to the President
- Provided Regional Fishery Management Councils' meeting schedule information to House and Senate staff for consideration in the scheduling of Congressional hearings related to the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization of other fisheries issues of interest to the Councils
- Provided publicly-available information to House and Senate staff from the Regional Fishery Management Councils dealing with National Standard Guidelines and Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization

Magnuson-Stevens Act Related Hearings Update:

Both the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee had expressed interest in holding hearings of interest to Councils in December, 2015.

The House Natural Resources Committee had expressed interest in holding a hearing on H.R. 3269, the North Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act, and the South Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act similar to S. 1336 (even though legislation has not yet been introduced in the House). They had been looking at either the first or second week in December; however, after reviewing the North Pacific Council's meeting schedule and the potential that interested members of the Western Pacific Council might be attending the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission meeting, the House Committee staff decided to postpone the hearing until a later date (possibly in January).

The Senate Commerce Committee staff was interested in holding a Magnuson-related hearing and had narrowed the scope to the National Standard Guidelines and proposed changes to those Guidelines with only NOAA likely to be the only witness invited to testify. Due to scheduling concerns, this hearing has also been postponed until January or later.

Appropriations Update:

Despite a two-year budget deal being negotiated by House Speaker Boehner prior to stepping down, the details of allocations between and within departments will still need to be passed by both Houses of Congress. The current Continuing Resolution runs through December 11, 2015.

The House Appropriations Committee is expected to release legislation within the next few weeks. Once the legislation is available, I will provide more details on fisheries-related provisions and any fisheries related report language. At this point, it is unclear whether action will be taken on individual appropriation bills, a new Continuing Resolution, or whether an omnibus bill will be considered.

Politics:

Senator Rubio: Next year is a Presidential election year, with all U.S. House Members up for election and one-third of the U.S. Senate being up for election. In particular, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Florida), currently the Chair of the Ocean, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, is running for President of the United States. His Senate term ends at the end of 2016 and whether he wins the Republican nomination for President or not, it is unlikely that he will run for his Senate seat in 2016 leaving that seat open. Because the Chairman has been running for President, his time in D.C. has been somewhat limited which has had an impact on hearings scheduled before the Subcommittee. While the Chairman has been willing to allow other Senators to take the lead on some issues, the red snapper issue has complicated Senators' interest in pursuing Magnuson-related hearings without Senator Rubio being in D.C. and able to participate in the hearing.

Senator Sullivan (R-Alaska) has shown an interest in taking the lead on fisheries and Magnuson-related hearings. As a way of moving forward on the reauthorization, Senator Sullivan's staff - along with Committee staff - have determined that holding a hearing on the National Standard Guidelines would allow Senators to ask NOAA questions on other Magnuson-related issues, but would be narrow enough in scope to limit the discussion on other fisheries issues such as red snapper. While they had hoped to hold a hearing along these lines this December, it has now been pushed until next year.

Senator Vitter: Senator David Vitter (R-Louisiana) has been a major proponent of legislation to transfer management of the red snapper fishery to the five Gulf States. He recently ran for Governor and was defeated in the run-off election held in November. Following this defeat, he announced he would not run for his Senate seat leaving that seat open in 2016.

Congressman Fleming and others: Several House Members have already expressed interest in running for the Senate seat being vacated by Senator Vitter. This list includes Congressman John Fleming (R-Louisiana) and Congressman Charles Boustany, Jr. (R-Louisiana). Congressman Fleming is currently the Chair of the Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee and has been neutral on H.R. 3094 (the Graves legislation to transfer management of the red snapper fishery to the five Gulf States). It is unclear how his interest in running for the open Louisiana Senate seat will affect his work as Chairman of the Subcommittee in the House. At this point, at least five other republicans have expressed interest in the Vitter seat with only one democrat expressing interest so far.

Congressman Graves: There has been speculation that Congressman Graves (R-Louisiana), in addition to the Congressmen listed above may also file to run for the Vitter Senate seat. How this will affect his interest in moving forward with H.R. 3094 is unclear.

Overview of Congressional Legislative Activities (updates in red):

Bills that have passed both the House and Senate (awaiting signature of the President):

H.R. 774, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act of 2015 (Bordallo, D-Guam) – Reported by the House Natural Resources Committee on July 20, 2015 (House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure discharged the bill on July 20, 2015), passed the House on July 27, 2015, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation discharged the bill on October 21, 2015, passed the Senate on October 21, 2015. **The bill was signed by the President on November 5, 2015 and became Public Law 114-81.**

Bills that have passed the House (awaiting action in the Senate):

H.R. 1335, the Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act (Young, R-Alaska) – Reported by the House Natural Resources Committee on September 30, 2015, passed the House on October 6, 2015.

H.R. 2168, West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act (Herrera Beutler, R-WA) – Reported by the House Natural Resources Committee on September 30, 2015, and passed the House on October 6, 2015. **Identical legislation (S. 1143) was ordered to be reported by the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on November 18, 2015.**

Bills that have been ordered reported by the Senate Commerce Committee:

S. 1251, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Convention Amendments Act (Markey, D-MA) - Ordered reported by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on August 28, 2015.

S. 1334, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act of 2015 (Murkowski, R-AK) – Ordered reported by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on July 28, 2015.

S. 1335, North Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Sullivan, R-AK) – Ordered reported by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on May 20, 2015.

S. 1336, South Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Schatz, D-HI) - Ordered reported by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on May 20, 2015.

S. 1403, Florida Fisheries Improvement Act (Rubio, R-FL) – Ordered reported by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on June 25, 2015.

Bills that have had a hearing in either House or Senate Committees:

H.R. 564, Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act (Herrera Beutler, R-Washington) – House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans hearing held on July 23, 2015

H.R. 3094, the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority Act (Graves, R-Louisiana) – House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans hearing held on October 22, 2015

Other Activities Related to Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Legislation:

On October 7th and 8th, the House Natural Resources Committee marked up H.R. 2406, a bill to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes or "SHARE Act" (Wittman, R-VA). This legislation has been offered every year for many years and has traditionally been a vehicle to bundle individual pieces of legislation important to the hunting and angling constituencies. In past years, attempts have been made to include red snapper related legislation to this package.

While the bill this year did not contain any marine fisheries related provisions, an amendment was offered by Delegate Radewagen (R- American Samoa) to prohibit the Secretary of Commerce or the Secretary of the Interior from restricting fishing access in any State or territorial marine waters or the Great Lakes under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service or the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries unless the restrictions have been developed with and approved by the fish and wildlife agency of the affected State or territory.

During the debate on this amendment, Congressman Graves (R-LA) discussed the actions by the Committee to extend State jurisdiction on the west coast - the Dungeness crab legislation (H.R. 2168), and the upcoming hearing on his red snapper legislation (H.R. 3094).

The link below is of the entire markup, with the discussion on the Radewagen Amendment beginning at approximately minute 24:30. Congressman Graves' statements begin at approximately minute 33:08.

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399405>

New Action in the Senate:

While not directly related to the Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization or the red snapper fishery, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee ordered S. 556, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act of 2015 to be reported on November 19, 2015. As mentioned above, this legislation has been a vehicle for red snapper riders in the past. No red snapper language was included in the underlying bill and no red snapper related amendments were offered.

Links to Other Hearings of Interest:

- House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3094, the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority Act (Graves, R-Louisiana) - October 22, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399448>

- House Natural Resources Committee Markup of a number of bills including H.R. 2406, To protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes or "SHARE Act" (Wittman, R-VA) - October 7 & 8, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399404>

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399405>

- House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans Oversight Hearing on Marine National Monument Designations - September 29, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399339>

- House Natural Resources Committee Markup of a number of bills including H.R. 2168, West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act (Herrera Beutler, R-WA) – September 9 & 10, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399239>

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399240>

- House Committee on Natural Resources and House Committee on Small Business Joint Oversight Field Hearing in Homestead, Florida on “Restricted Access at Biscayne National Park and Implications for Fishermen, Small Businesses, the Local Economy and Environment” - August 3, 2015 (Video of the field hearing is not available; however, testimony and other information is available at the link below):

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399137>

- House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans Legislative Hearing on H.R. 564, Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act (Herrera Beutler, R-WA), and H.R. 2168, West Coast Dungeness Crab Management Act (Herrera Beutler, R-WA) - July 23, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=399077>

- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Markup of S. 1403, Florida Fisheries Improvement Act (Rubio, R-FL) and other legislation - June 25, 2015:

<http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=FC4FFE29-8386-43AA-835F-2703329209A5>

- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Markup of S. 1334, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act (Murkowski, R-AK), S. 1335, North Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Sullivan, R-AK), S. 1251, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries

Amendments Act (Markey, D-MA), S. 1336, South Pacific Fisheries Convention Implementation Act (Schatz, D-HI) - May 20, 2015:

<http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=D82FC137-2F21-4008-969A-67A1CFD53D30>

- House Natural Resources Committee Joint Legislative Hearing by the Subcommittee on Federal Lands and the Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans titled "To protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes" – May 20, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=398523>

- House Natural Resources Committee Markup of H.R. 774, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act of 2015 (Bordallo, D-Guam) and H.R. 1335, the Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act (Young, R-Alaska) - April 30, 2015:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=398439>

- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on "The Impacts of Vessel Discharge Regulations on our Shipping and Fishing Industries" – February 4, 2015:

<http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=3D96309E-7F98-445B-9FDF-9483E042CD5E>