



THE
PEW
ENVIRONMENT GROUP



**END OVERFISHING
IN THE SOUTHEAST**
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**Testimony before the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Holly Binns, Pew Environment Group
June 16, 2010**

Good Afternoon Chairman Shipp and Council members. My name is Holly Binns, and I work with the Pew Environment Group. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on several issues before the Council. We do so in recognition that the Gulf oil spill is still unfolding and will continue to be a major focus for NOAA Fisheries and the Gulf Council. While we must immediately act to aid fishermen and communities, and to develop plans to restore damaged ecosystems, this tragedy also underscores the need to secure the long-term health of our fish populations so they can withstand unexpected, damaging events. Thoughtful plan amendments for the Gulf that comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act should provide a foundation on which to secure the future of healthy fish populations and vibrant fisheries.

Gag and Amendment 32

I would first like to address Council actions under consideration to protect gag grouper. The gag population has been severely depleted and the fishing mortality was much too high prior to the onset of the Gulf oil spill. Given the uncertainty of the impact of the oil spill and dispersants on the gag population, we believe that cautious management action to protect and restore gag should be undertaken. Therefore, we support the proposed Interim Rule approved by the Reef Fish Committee to address gag overfishing. We also urge the Council to continue to work towards finalizing the long-term plan to rebuild the gag population.

Generic ACL/AM Amendment

The proposed series of actions and alternatives in the Generic ACL Amendment options paper provides a useful overview of the issues that should be included in the amendment. We commend the Gulf Council, staff and all involved for their hard work in putting together this comprehensive approach. In our comment letter, we offered some recommendations and suggested actions that are intended to improve the Generic ACL Amendment so that it provides more clarity and transparency and meets requirements and the intent of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the National Standard 1 guidelines. However, in the interest of brevity, I'll refer you to our written comments on this.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address the Council today. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the staff on these important amendments as they move forward.

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