

We have a new gulfwide association to work on a national level with congress on fishery issues. The Conservation Cooperative of Gulf Fishermen (CCGF) is up and running and looking for more members. The concept is that the coop will be run by Gulf of Mexico charter/headboat owners and crews and will seek support from the recreational anglers who fish with us, the private recreational anglers who fish around us, and the businesses who support us and are supported by us.

Membership is open to anyone who fishes, supports fishing, or is supported by fishing. There are 3 levels of membership:

Regular Members (\$500.00); These members are responsible for directing the coop agenda and business. They receive full benefits which include voting for board members, are eligible to serve on the board, voting on issues to set our legislative agenda and the business of the coop, receive email alerts and notification of pending issues, receive the coop newsletter (under construction), eligible for all benefits of membership such as group and vessel insurance discounts and merchandise discounts.

Business Associate Members (\$100.00); These members will be eligible for all benefits except voting privileges and the ability to serve on the board. They will receive email alerts and notification of pending issues, receive the coop newsletter (under construction), eligible for all benefits of membership such as group and vessel insurance discounts and merchandise discounts. Business Associate Members will help to support our efforts by providing substantial contributions which will result in continued and expanded support by our members for these businesses. All sponsoring businesses will be acknowledged on our website and associated literature.

Individual Associate Members (\$25.00); These members will be eligible for all the benefits except voting privileges and the ability of serving on the board. They will receive email alerts and notification of pending issues, receive the coop newsletter (under construction), eligible for all benefits of membership such as group and vessel insurance discounts and merchandise discounts. They will provide additional support by being included in the membership as there is strength in numbers. An advisory panel composed of Business and Individual members will provide input to the board for consideration in all actions. Additional financial contributions are encouraged and greatly appreciated. The number one priority is to address the proposed national legislation to change the current overly restrictive requirement to end all over fishing by 2010. We are working with other groups in the gulf and east coast, both recreational and commercial, to work together to create flexibility in the law which will allow the NMFS to relax the current proposed regulations. Our proposed legislation should make it possible to ensure the resources are enhanced while allowing for reasonable participation by anglers. An analogy we have developed is in order to reach the top of a 10 story building you can take two approaches. One is an elevator which will get you to the top right away, but you may pass by some structural problems on the way. You may get to the top quickly only to have the building collapse under you when you get to the top. The other, and this is our preferred method, is to take the stairs. It will take a little longer but you are able to make forward progress, adjust the structure along the way, and when you reach the top, you have assured the building is strong and will support everyone,

The number two priority is to develop cooperative research proposals to provide better fishery dependent data. The recreational anglers and the charterboat fleet are the perfect platforms to provide much needed fishery research efforts. We work across the Gulf and the crews are experienced fishermen. Our data can provide the real world information so badly needed to

enhance stock assessments. In addition, cooperative research can be expanded to the private recreational anglers for their real world experiences which could provide additional needed data. CCGF will be continually updating our priorities and mission.

We are the FIRST RESPONDERS FOR MARINE CONSERVATION and we are working diligently for the enhancement of our resources and businesses.
For more information, please contact us today.