



## GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Monday, May 02, 2011

### **Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, Trace Register, LLC, and MRAG Americas, Inc. Begin Regional Traceability Program for Gulf of Mexico Seafood**

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC), Trace Register, LLC, and MRAG Americas, Inc. have begun a regional traceability program aimed at ensuring confidence in the market about Gulf of Mexico seafood. This program will empower the regional fisheries management bodies, the seafood industry, and consumers by providing critical information about seafood from the Gulf as it travels from the boat to the plate.

The project is a component of the GSMFC's Oil Disaster Recovery Program, which is funded by NOAA Award No. NA10NMF4770481 in an effort to mitigate the economic effects of the oil disaster on Gulf fisheries. With regional coordination by the GSMFC, this program is currently funded through the end of 2015.

The program aims to place confidence into the marketplace by creating innovative information portals, integrating external data such as seafood testing results, and answering complex fisheries management questions. It will also be well placed to meet the requirements of eco-labeling programs that require chain-of-custody for fishery products.

Alex Miller, GSMFC economist and traceability coordinator, said "information about Gulf seafood is out there, we just need to organize it and make it available in the right format for people to make well-informed decisions. The Trace Register-MRAG system will allow us to do that."

Consumers will be engaged virtually through the use of smartphones and online portals, which will allow them to learn the story of where their seafood came from, who caught it, and how their dinner navigated the market on its way to their plate.

Trace Register, LLC, a global food traceability company, will employ their system to capture information from state trip tickets that are used to document catch when boats unload at the dock. Dealers, processors, distributors, and retailers will voluntarily link

their information about the seafood they handle into the system as it makes its way from the dock to the dinner table. MRAG Americas, an independent fishery consulting business, will enhance the system by conducting random voluntary audits aimed at mitigating risk to buyers.

Trace Register founder and CEO, Phil Werdal, said his team “is both pleased and honored that the Gulf seafood industry has selected Trace Register for this important project.” He added, “All of us at Trace Register look forward to working with the GSMFC to develop and implement an electronic traceability system that will help consumers have confidence in the seafood they buy from the Gulf.”

Economic analysis from 2008, the most recent available, showed that the commercial seafood industry of the Gulf generated more than \$5 billion in sales impacts and supported more than 119,000 jobs throughout the Gulf region. Since then, markets have continued to erode as a result of imported seafood products and were later impacted by the oil disaster. The development of a regional traceability system has the potential to reestablish those markets and create new ones by supplying a myriad of information about Gulf fishery products.

The GSMFC seeks to conserve, develop, and fully utilize the fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico in order to provide food, employment, income, and recreation to the people of these United States.

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