

# Gulf of Mexico Essential Fish Habitat



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# Highlights

- EFH: Reduce vs. Refine
- Species Profiles
- Web Resources

# Reduce vs. Refine

- EFH in the Gulf of Mexico encompasses large portion of EEZ
  - For example Reef Fish EFH

# Current Reef Fish EFH

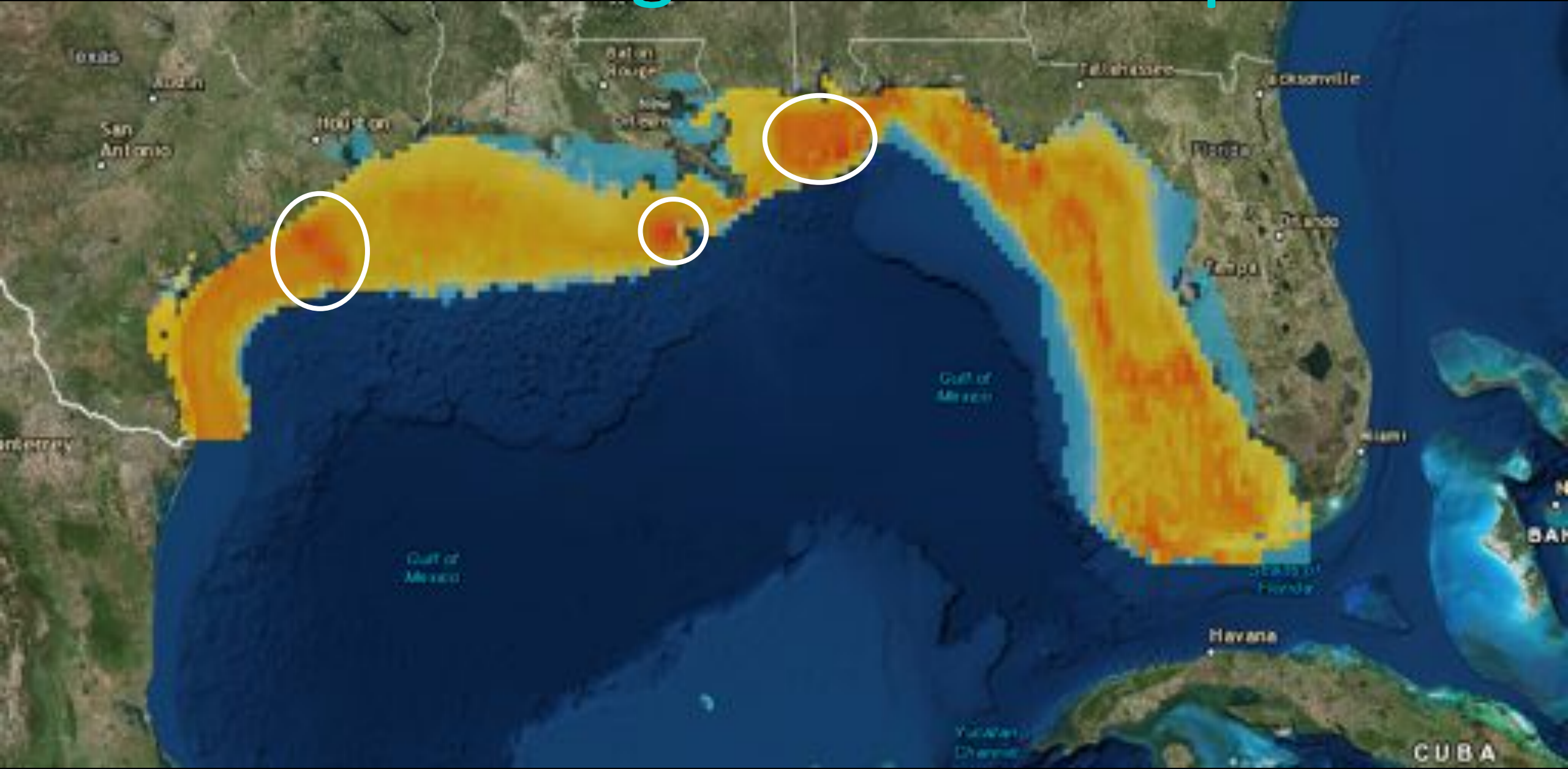


# Reduce vs. Refine

- Not reducing footprint, but refining by:
  - Identifying EFH by species and life stage
  - Overlaying mapped descriptions of species within FMP at certain life stage
  - Identifying hot spots of most 'essential' essential fish habitat



# EFH Designation Concept



# Species Profiles

- Synopsis of literature review
- Textual description of essential fish habitat
- Brief fishery history
- Stand alone documents

## Almaco Jack

*Seriola rivoliana*

### Distribution

Almaco jack occur throughout the Gulf of Mexico (GoM). Adults are benthopelagic and form small groups. Juveniles are frequently associated with floating objects, and eggs are water column associated. Minimal habitat information is available for this species.

### New literature review

Several studies were found during new literature review that expanded on the habitat information for this species. A diet study by Casazza (2008) off the coast of North Carolina revealed that juvenile almaco jack feed on fish, shrimp, and copepods. Coleman et al. (2010) found that adults in eco-region 2 utilize shelf edge and hard bottom habitat at depths of 80-120 m. In eco-region 5, adults utilize bank habitat at depths of 69-83 m (Hicks et al. 2014). Reed et al. (2006) conducted a study off the east coast of Florida that showed adults using reef habitat at depths of 70-179 m. Lastly, Reeves (2015) studied juvenile almaco jack in eco-region 4 and found that they occurred inshore at depths of 6.7-16.8 m and temperatures of 23.3-31.7 °C on artificial reefs (oil rigs specifically).

### Habitat information by lifestage (see HATs in appendix X for references)

#### Eggs:

Eggs occur from the Florida Keys to Pensacola Bay in the eastern GoM, and Freeport, TX to the Mexico border in the western GoM. Primarily prevalent from spring through fall in the water column.

#### Larvae:

Eggs occur from the Florida Keys to Pensacola Bay in the eastern GoM, and Freeport, TX to the Mexico border in the western GoM.

#### Juveniles:

Juveniles occupy the entirety of the GoM, from August-January and July-October. They utilize drifting algae and artificial reefs (not currently considered essential fish habitat (EFH)) as habitat and can be found nearshore and offshore. They have been observed in depths of 6.7-16.8 m and consume fish, shrimp, and copepods.

#### Adults/Spawning Adults:

Adults occupy the entire GoM and are found in the northern portion during summer months and year-round in the southern portion. They are found offshore in depths of 21-179 m, and are associated with artificial reefs (not currently considered EFH), shelf edge, hard bottom, bank, and reef habitats. Primary prey is fish. Spawning occurs from spring-fall, in eco-regions 1, 2, and 3, though the northern GoM is probably not an important spawning area.

### Fishery History

Almaco jack stocks have never been assessed, but will be as a part of SEDAR 49 data-limited species assessment. Anticipated completion is late-2016. Currently there are no fishing regulations in place for

# Web Resources

- [Gulf Council Data Portal](#)
- Searchable Bibliography
- EFH mapper by species and life stage
- Query able Habitat Association Tables
- Species Profiles