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Gulf of Mexico menhaden fishery gets MSC recommendation

Chris Chase published in [Environment & Sustainability](#)

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The Gulf of Mexico menhaden purse seine fishery has been recommended for certification against Marine Stewardship Council standards by SAI Global, Omega Protein announced 4 June.

The recommendation means that both U.S. menhaden fisheries – Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico – have gained recommendation for MSC certification. Omega Protein and Daybrook Fisheries, the two companies that participate in the Gulf of Mexico menhaden fishery, requested the evaluation in 2017.

"The recommendation for MSC certification for our Gulf of Mexico operations is a testament to the hard work we've put in over many years to conduct responsible operations," Omega Protein CEO Bret Scholtes said in a release. "The fact that both of the nation's menhaden fisheries have now been recommended for MSC certification should assure customers and the public alike that our products meet the highest standards of sustainability."

The Atlantic fishery was recommended for certification [back in December](#), also from SAI Global.

The certification process hasn't been without objections from competing groups such as recreational fishermen, whale watchers, and environmental nonprofits. The Atlantic fishery, in particular, has seen recreational groups [formally object](#) to the fishery gaining MSC certification.



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The Gulf of Mexico fishery, too, hasn't been without its controversy as environmental groups, such as the Gulf Restoration Network, object to it. The Gulf fishery is the larger of the two, with more than 460,000 metric tons caught in 2017.



Despite objections, SAI Global cited the fisheries large amount of data and management plan as reasons for certification.

"In their report recommending certification, SAI Global praised the Gulf of Mexico menhaden fishery for, among other things, extensive surveys and monitoring of the ecosystem and menhaden stock, a comprehensive fishery management plan, and a robust governance and policy framework," Omega Protein wrote in a press release. "The report also noted that menhaden-specific conservation and management measures are in place, and menhaden biomass is well above single-species threshold levels while fishing effort is well below the threshold."

Following the recommendation, there will now be a 15 working-day period for stakeholders to object to SAI Global's recommendation.

Photo courtesy of Omega Protein.

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