



Gulf Fishery News

Volume 29, Issue 5

November-December, 2007

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The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council *Protecting our marine resources*

Council makes changes to proposed Reef Fish Amendment 30A for greater amberjack and gray triggerfish

As the Gulf Council continues with the development of Reef Fish Amendment 30A—an amendment that will address the overfishing and overfished status of both gray triggerfish and greater amberjack—it took action to move the alternatives dealing with fractional bag limits to the *considered but rejected* section of the amendment.

Instead, the Council chose a preferred alternative that increases the recreational size limit to 31", sets a bag limit of one-fish per angler, and eliminates the bag limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels.

Actions in the amendment that deal with allocation of greater amberjack and gray triggerfish were moved to considered but deferred and will be discussed at a later date. The Council also added alternatives related to possible seasonal closures.

Other management alternatives under consideration include reducing the bag limit and increasing the recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish, along with establishing a commercial quota for both fisheries.

Greater amberjack have been under a rebuilding plan since 2003, but a new stock assessment concludes the stock remains overfished and is currently undergoing overfishing.



Photo: SEFC/NOAA Fisheries

According to another recent stock

[See Amberjack, page 11](#)

New Council Members



Michael Ray, Texas



Julie Morris, Florida (reappointment)



Kay Williams, Mississippi

New Council members invested

Please join the Gulf Council in welcoming its newest members. The Secretary of Commerce earlier announced the latest appointments to the eight regional fishery management councils.

For the Gulf Council that includes Michael Ray of Texas, Kay Williams of

[See New Members, next page](#)



Roy Crabtree, Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service performs the investiture ceremony for Michael Ray, Texas, Kay Williams, Mississippi, and Julie Morris, Florida.

Council elects new Chair and Vice Chair

Dr. Tom McIlwain was elected by his colleagues to chair the 2007-2008 Council. The Council voted in the new Chair during its November meeting in Biloxi, Miss. Dr. Robert Shipp will serve as Vice Chair.

McIlwain has been involved with Gulf fish stocks for more than 40 years. Appointed to the Council in August 2006, he is Director Emeritus of the Gulf Coast Research Lab, University of Southern Miss.



Tom McIlwain, Chairman

McIlwain is also the former liaison for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and has directed and managed the development and implementation of multiple complex fishery science and management programs.

"I am honored by the appointment and look forward to working with the Council to resolve the issues we face."

"I believe that we can manage all of our fishery resources conservatively and in an environmentally sound manner, so that our fishery resources are sustainable yet provide excellent fishing for fishermen," said McIlwain.

Dr. Robert Shipp is a fishery scientist and has taught at the University of Alabama since 1972. He previously served nine years on the Council before being appointed again in August, 2005, after a five-year break.

Shipp's research interests are fish systematics and zoogeography, and ecology of artificial reef systems.



Robert Shipp, Vice Chairman

"I look forward to working with Tom McIlwain to most effectively manage our Gulf fishery resources."

"I appreciate the Council's confidence in me, and will make every effort to maintain that confidence despite the many difficult and contentious issues we face."

"We must especially focus on improving our scientific data base so we can all feel more comfortable in making decisions that affect the livelihood of so many," Shipp said.

New members *continued from page 1*

Mississippi, and the reappointment of Julie Morris, Florida. Council terms are for three years, with a three-term limit.

Kay Williams is no newcomer to fisheries management. She previously served nine years on the Council, her last term ending in 2006. During her first stint on the Council, Williams served one term as Chair and another as Vice Chair.

Williams began participating in the Council process back in 1992 as spokeswoman for a commercial fishing lobbying group, Save America's Seafood Industry. She was also president of a commercial fishing industry group. She served on three Advisory Panels to the Council prior to her original appointment in 1997.

Michael Ray is currently the Deputy Division Director for Coastal Fisheries for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department where, for the past 20 years, he has served in several administrative capacities within the fisheries arm of the agency. Ray has served on various regional, state, national, and international conservation entities regarding aquaculture, exotic species diseases, interjurisdictional fisheries management, and sea turtle conservation.

Julie Morris, reappointed to her third consecutive term, is Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, New College of Florida. Morris has previously served as the Council Vice-Chair and its Chair. She is also a former Commissioner of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, serving as its Chair for the 1999—2000 Commission year.

Tentative Committee Schedule
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
St. Petersburg, FL
January 28—31, 2008

Tentative Council Agenda
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
St. Petersburg, FL
January 28—31, 2008

Monday, January 28, 2008**12:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.**

- Reef Fish Management Committee (**Tab B**)
- Options Paper for Grouper/Tilefish IFQ
 - Presentation
 - Committee Recommendations
 - Reef Fish Amendment 30A
 - Presentation of Revisions
 - Committee Final Actions
 - Update on SEP Grouper Allocation Recommendations
 - Public Hearing Draft of Reef Fish Amendment 30B
 - Presentation
 - Committee Recommendations
 - Report of Ad Hoc Recreational Red Snapper AP
- Informal Q&A Session from 5:30–6:30**

Tuesday, January 29, 2008**8:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon**Reef Fish Management Committee Continued (**Tab B**)**1:30 p.m.–2:00 p.m.**Shrimp Management Committee (**Tab D**)

- Cooperative Texas Closure
 - Shrimp AP Recommendations
- 2007 Vessel Effort Update

2:00 p.m. 2:45 p.m.Generic Amendment for Regulation of Offshore Aquaculture (**Tab J**)

- Public Hearing Summaries
- Public Comment Material
- Presentation on Amendment Revisions
- Final Committee Action

2:45 p.m.–3:30 p.m.Marine Reserve Committee (**Tab F**)

- Update on National Marine Sanctuary Islands in the Stream Concept

3:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m.Red Drum Management Committee (**Tab E**)

- Response by SEFSC

4:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.Spiny Lobster/Stone Crab Management Committee (**Tab H**)

- Generic Scoping Document for Minimum Size Limit
 - AP Recommendations
 - Summary of Scoping Hearings
 - Public Comment Material
 - Committee Recommendations

4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.Budget/Personnel Committee (**Tab M**)

- Status Review of 2007 Funding
- Review of 2008 Council Operational Budget
- SOPPs provisions for Leave Without Pay
- **CLOSED SESSION**—Personnel

Wednesday, January 30, 2007**8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.**Administrative Policy Committee (**Tab G**)

- NMFS Guidelines for ACL and AM (if available)
- Staff ACL/AM Discussion Paper
- Development of an Outreach and Education Committee

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.Mackerel Management Committee (**Tab C**)

- Terms of Reference for SEDAR Assessment

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

- I. Call to Order and Introductions (11:00 a.m.–11:05 a.m.)
 - II. Adoption of Agenda¹ (11:05 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.)
 - III. Approval of Minutes (**Tab A**) (11:10 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.)
 - IV. Appointment of Council Committees (11:15 a.m.–11:30 a.m.)
- recess -
- V. The National Bycatch Report (1:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m.)
 - VI. Public Testimony^{2,3}
 - a. Exempted Fishing Permits (EFP) if any
 - b. Final Action on Reef Fish Amendment 30A
 - c. Final Action on Generic Aquaculture Amendment
 - d. Spiny Lobster Scoping Document (1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.)
 - VII. Open Public Comment Period⁴ (4:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.)
 - VIII. **Closed Session**

Thursday, January 31, 2008

- IX. Committee Reports
 - a. Reef Fish Management (**Tab B**)
 - b. Joint Reef Fish/Mackerel/Red Drum (**Tab J**)
 - c. Spiny Lobster/Stone Crab Management (**Tab H**)
 - d. Shrimp Management (**Tab D**)
 - e. Budget/Personnel (**Tab M**)
 - f. Red Drum Management (**Tab E**)
 - g. Marine Reserves (**Tab F**)
 - h. Administrative Policy (**Tab G**)
 - i. Mackerel Management (**Tab C**) (8:30 a.m.–12:45 a.m.)
- X. Other Business (**Tab K**) (12:45 p.m.–1:15 p.m.)

- Adjourn -

¹The established times for addressing items on the Council and committee agendas, except for those setting times for public testimony or open public comment, may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the timely completion of discussion relevant to the agenda items. Such adjustments may result in the meeting being extended from or completed prior to the date established by these agendas.

²Persons wishing to testify must turn in a registration card before the beginning of the public testimony period; otherwise persons wishing to testify may be denied.

³Persons wishing Council members to have copies of written testimony or information should provide 30 copies to staff for distribution to members. All written information shall include a statement of the source and date of such information. Oral or written statements shall include a brief description of the background and interests of the person testifying.

⁴The Council has set aside this time for open public comment regarding any fishery issue or concern. People wishing to speak before the Council should complete a public comment card, making sure to check the box marked *Open Public Comment*. A note about open public comment: In the interest of giving everyone an opportunity to speak, speakers are asked to limit comments to three minutes. If your sentiments are reflected in comments made by others, please state so and allow the next speaker to address the Council. Individuals may be asked to reduce speaking time even further in order to accommodate all those who wish to speak.

The open public comment period will end no later than the time scheduled on the agenda, regardless of the number of persons wishing to comment.

Wayne Swingle receives Charles H. Lyle Award

Wayne Swingle, Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is this year's recipient of the **Charles H. Lyles Award**.

The award is presented annually by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) to an individual, agency, or organization that has contributed to the betterment of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico through significant biological, industrial, legislative, enforcement or administrative activities.

Mr. Swingle is one such individual. "Wayne's dedication and commitment



Larry Simpson, Executive Director, GSMFC and Wayne Swingle, Executive Director, GMFMC

to the management of the fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico has led to the improvement of these resources," said Larry Simpson, Executive Director, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Swingle began his interaction with the marine environment when he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving his country for two years and receiving an honorable discharge in 1957.

He received both a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science from Auburn University. While at Auburn, Mr. Swingle was a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Gamma Sigma Delta.

His career began in marine fisheries management as a research biologist with the Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources where he quickly rose through the ranks and became Chief Marine Biologist of the Division, and later became its Director of Marine Resources.

In 1977, Mr. Swingle was appointed Executive Director of the of the newly



Wayne and Billie Swingle

created Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council—a position he continues to hold.

Throughout his career, Mr. Swingle has served on numerous boards, committees, and many other marine fisheries advisory bodies. He is a certified fisheries scientist by the American Fisheries Society and is a member of the World Mariculture Society.

As a recipient of the award, Mr. Swingle is now an honorary Commissioner and will be an invited guest to all meetings of the GSMFC.

Additional hearing scheduled for Aquaculture Amendment

After taking into account considerable public comment during its November meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council agreed to hold another round of public hearings on its Aquaculture Amendment.

The Amendment has been under development for nearly five years, during which time a round each of scoping meetings and public hearings have been held around the Gulf coast, with numerous Council discussions and document revisions along the way.

"The Council has worked hard to create a permit review process that will address any and all impacts to the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico," said Joe Hendrix, Council member, Texas.

The December public hearings will be the last round,

with a final opportunity to testify during the January Council meeting in St. Petersburg, Fla.

"We're looking for additional comments from all concerned parties before the Council takes final action in January," said Hendrix.

Also during its November meeting, the Council agreed to remove shrimp and corals from the list of species allowed for offshore aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico, and will require a minimum of one locating device on each aquaculture pen.

The amendment represents an effort to develop a regional permitting process for regulating environmentally sound aquaculture in the Gulf EEZ. It also evaluates the effects of issuing permits for aquaculture operations.

[See Aquaculture, next page](#)

Aquaculture *continued*

A regional permitting process is intended to ensure any aquaculture operations undertaken in the Gulf are environmentally sound and sustainable, and provide maximum benefits to the Nation.

The process also is designed to maximize the benefits of U.S. coastal resources for local, regional, and national economies and to assist NOAA Fisheries Service and the Council in better achieving required objectives.

One such objective is optimizing yield and reducing fishing mortality on Council managed stocks.

The amendment consists of eight management alternatives:

1. Types of Aquaculture Permits Required
2. Permit Duration
3. Permit Conditions
4. Species Allowed for Aquaculture
5. Allowable Systems
6. Site/Area Designation
7. Buffers
8. Recordkeeping and Reporting

A final round of public hearings is scheduled for December 10—13, 2007. See page 7 for meeting times and locations.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B progressing

The Gulf Council at its November meeting selected preferred alternatives for much of the proposed Reef Fish Amendment 30B, which aims at addressing the overfishing of gag grouper.

Background

Gag and red grouper are the two most abundant grouper species in the Gulf of Mexico, with the majority of red grouper taken by the commercial fishery and the majority of gag taken by the recreational fishery.

The most recent stock assessment found that red grouper is fully recovered from a previous overfished condition and is no longer undergoing overfishing. Gag, on the other hand, is undergoing overfishing.

Overfishing occurs when a stock is being harvested at a higher rate than the stock can sustain. If left unchecked, it can result in the stock biomass declining to an overfished condition.

The proposed amendment contains a series of possible management actions. Below is a summary of some of the Council's preferred alternatives selected to date.

- Set gag total allowable catch (TAC) on a yearly basis during 2008—2012 at the yield for each year as defined by the constant F_{oy} projection from the 2007 assessment and re-evaluation. TAC would be set as follows:

2008	3.13 mp
2009	3.38 mp
2010	3.62 mp

2011	3.82 mp
2012	3.99 mp
2013	4.13 mp

- Set red grouper TAC at the constant catch level corresponding to fishing and equilibrium F_{oy} . TAC would be increased from 6.56 mp to 7.57 mp.
- Set the commercial gag and red grouper species quotas by multiplying the TAC for each year by each species' commercial allocation. The quota for the commercial other shallow-water grouper will be .68 mp, which is the average landings for the baseline years 2001—2004. The aggregate commercial shallow-water grouper quota for each year is the sum of the gag and red grouper species quotas, plus an additional .68 mp for other shallow-water grouper.

Considered but Rejected

The Council moved a number of management alternatives to the "*Considered but Rejected*" section of the document.

- Action 2—Red grouper Minimum Stock Size Threshold
Entire section
- Action 8—Application of quota Closures
Alternatives 3 and 4
- Action 9—Recreational harvest of gag and red grouper
Alternatives 5, 6, and 7
- Action 10—Alternatives to reduce discard mortality of grouper
Alternatives 2, 4, and 5

See Gag, page 7

National Saltwater Angler Registry Frequently Asked Questions

What is the issue?

Congress, through the recently reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act, called on NOAA to take the lead in creating a national registry of saltwater anglers.

Why is NOAA in charge of creating a registry?

NOAA is the logical choice because it is the federal agency with primary responsibility for governing marine resources in federal waters. Given that most fishing takes place in state waters, counting saltwater anglers is more than just a federal issue. NOAA, the coastal states, and the interstate marine fisheries commissions are collaborating on shared approaches to creating a registry.

Why do we need a registry?

An angler registry will lead to better recreational fishing data. It does so in two ways—first it creates a universe of saltwater anglers, essentially a phonebook of fishermen, and second, it uses that phone directory to reduce bias and improve the efficiency of catch and effort surveys. Instead of asking a random sample of coastal U.S. residents if they've gone fishing, an angler registry would allow us to target surveys only to those who have identified themselves as saltwater fishermen.

Is there a difference between a registry and a license?

Yes. A registry is like a national phonebook containing the names and contact information of saltwater anglers. By itself, a saltwater fishing license is not a registry. Rather a license is just one way to get the contact information contained in a registry.

Don't most states already have a saltwater fishing license?

Many states do have some kind of fishing license for saltwater anglers. In those states, the actual requirements for who has to have a license vary from state to state.

Are there any exemptions from the federal registry requirement?

Yes. Congress gave anglers who are licensed or registered by the states an exemption from the federal requirement, but only if a state can provide NOAA with certain information about anglers in their state.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act says that a state can get a pass on the federal registry if—1) it already has a program to count all of its saltwater anglers, or 2) “the Secretary of Commerce determines that information from the State program is suitable for the Secretary’s use or is used to assist in completing marine recreational fisheries statistical surveys, or evaluating the effects of proposed conservation and management measures for marine recreational fisheries.”

In other words, the state must either account for anglers themselves or provide information on fishing activity to the federal government.

If I'm registered under the federal registry, do I need to buy a state saltwater fishing license?

The federal registration does not pre-empt state licensing requirements. Any person fishing in state waters must abide by those state's regulations.

When would a federal saltwater angler registry requirement go into effect?

Congress set January 1, 2009, for establishing a national saltwater angler registry.

Will it cost money to register?

It could. Congress gave NOAA the option of collecting a fee to cover administrative costs, but not before 2011. The hope is that any extra fees anglers must pay will be offset by more accurate and timely data leading to more credible management decisions and improved fishing opportunities.

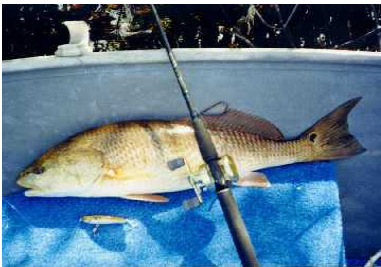


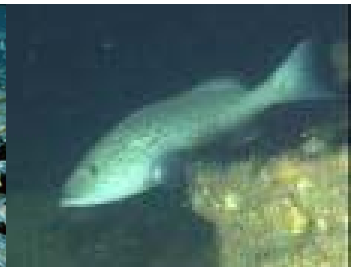
Photo Credits: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission



NOAA Fisheries



Florida Sea Grant



NOAA Fisheries

Gag *continued*

- Action 6—Accountability measures—to be addressed in a separate document.

New Alternatives Added

- Action 8—Application of quota closures
When 90% or some other percentage of an individual species quota is reached (gag or red grouper), directed commercial harvest of that species closes. However, harvest of the remaining shallow-water species can continue with a bycatch allowance on the closed species of 5—10% of the grouper catch by weight until either both gag and red grouper quotas are reached, or the shallow-water grouper quota is reached, whichever comes first.
- Action 9—Recreational harvest of gag and red grouper
One or more alternatives with a three-fish aggregate grouper bag limit will be added, but no bag limits higher than three will be considered.
- Action 10—Alternatives to reduce discard mortality of grouper.
An alternative that would remove or reduce the size limit for the shallow-water grouper commercial fishery was added.

Prior to the approval of the plan, a series of public hearings will be held throughout the Gulf coast—dates and locations will be announced in the near future. Amendment 30B is currently being revised for review at the January Council meeting.

To review the October draft of the document, please visit the downloadable file section of the Gulf Council web site—www.gulfcouncil.org and click on Amendment 30B.

Aquaculture Public Hearing Schedule

Mon., December 10

Hilton Houston Hobby
8181 Airport Blvd.
Houston, TX 77061

Comfort Inn North
2260 54th Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33714
727-362-0075

Tues., December 11

Hilton New Orleans Airport
901 Airline Drive
New Orleans, LA 70062
504-469-5000

Wed., December 12

Wingate Inn
12009 Indian River Road
Biloxi, MS 39540
228-396-0036

Thurs., December 13

Ashbury Hotel
600 Beltline Highway
Mobile, AL 36608
251-344-8030

All meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. and will end no later than 9:00 p.m.

The Council strongly encourages public participation—it is an important part of the amendment process. Public input offers the public an opportunity to have ideas heard and possibly included as alternatives presented to the Council for consideration.

Please contact the Gulf Council at 813-348-1630 for more information on how you can become part of the process.

Dr. Victor Restrepo new Chief of Sustainable Fisheries Division, SEFSC

The Gulf Council joins the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in welcoming Dr. Victor Restrepo as the new Chief of the Sustainable Fisheries Division.

Dr. Restrepo obtained his Ph.D. in Fisheries Science from the University of Miami in 1989 and went on to become a member of the University's faculty, where he worked on stock assessment methods development and implementation. He was also involved in various Council meetings.

From 1999 until October this year, Dr. Restrepo served as Deputy Executive Secretary of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) in Madrid, Spain.

The former Coordinator of the Cooperative Unit for

Fisheries Education and Research (CUFER) for the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies (CIMAS), Restrepo was instrumental in attracting and developing several SEFSC stock assessment scientists.

Restrepo has now returned to Miami to head the Sustainable Fisheries Division in NMFS' Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Welcome!



Victor Restrepo, Ph.D.

Dr. Bill Hogarth retires

Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, in a pre-Thanksgiving teleconference with NOAA Fisheries employees, formally announced his plans to retire effective December 31, 2007.

The University of South Florida has appointed Hogarth to serve as the



Dr. William Hogarth
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries

Interim Dean for its College of Marine Science.

Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher followed up with this November 20, e-mail message to employees:

"Today the University of South Florida is

announcing that Dr. William Hogarth, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, will become Interim Dean for the College of Marine Science, effective January 15, 2008. Bill had earlier informed me about his intention to accept the position and his plans to leave NOAA at the end of the year.

After a distinguished career with the State of North Carolina as Director of the Marine Fisheries Program, Bill joined NOAA Fisheries in 1994.

He was serving as Deputy Assistant Administrator when, in 2001, he was asked to serve as Assistant Administrator for Fisheries for President Bush. He has done an outstanding job leading NOAA's domestic and international living marine resource programs.

His management skills and his keen instincts have helped NOAA navigate

some rough waters as he adeptly handled the sensitive issues in his portfolio.

Among Bill's many accomplishments is the renewal of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, with its commitment to end the overfishing that threatens livelihoods and a major food source.

This year Bill obtained the subsistence bowhead whale quota for the Alaskan tribal community at the International Whaling Commission meeting.

He has been at the forefront of the Administration's drive to enact aquaculture legislation that will boost that beneficial industry in the United States.

We will miss him, but we wish him the best in his new assignment at the University. Please join me in thanking Bill for his outstanding and dedicated leadership."

Reminders:

Control date for Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper fishermen

NOAA Fisheries Service would like to remind fishermen about an existing October 15, 2004 control date for potential eligibility requirements in the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper fishery.

What is a control date?

A control date is a date chosen by a fishery management council and may be used by the council or NOAA Fisheries Service as an eligibility criterion allowing future access to fisheries, or sectors of fisheries. Control date notices let fishermen know the council is considering future actions to restrict access to the fishery and are intended to discourage speculative entry into a fishery.

What is the purpose of the control date?

This control date was established in 2004 by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council as they began considering an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program to control participation and effort in the commercial grouper fishery. If the Council chooses to establish a grouper IFQ

program, they could choose to use only those landings that occurred prior to the October 15, 2004 control date as an eligibility criterion. Currently, the Council continues to evaluate management alternatives and has not yet chosen a strategy to control participation and effort in the commercial grouper fishery.

Can the control date be changed or eliminated?

Yes. The Council may choose a different control date or a management regime that does not make use of a control date. Establishment of a control date does not commit the Council or NOAA Fisheries Service to any particular management regime or criteria for eligibility in the commercial grouper fishery. Fishermen are not guaranteed future participation in a fishery regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in the fishery before or after the control date under consideration. The Council also may choose to take no further action to control entry or access to the fisheries, in which case the control date may be rescinded.

[Continued on next page](#)

Control date *continued*

If an individual is considering purchasing a commercial Gulf reef fish permit, should he or she be aware of the landings associated with that permit?

Fishermen who are interested in purchasing limited entry federal permits from another individual, such as the commercial Gulf reef fish permit, should know the landings history associated with the permit(s). The landings history may be used as an eligibility requirement for future fishery programs, such as the IFQ program.

How do I obtain the landings history associated with a permit?

If a fisherman wishes to obtain landings data specific to his/her permit, landings data request forms can be obtained from <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/permits.htm>, or by calling the permits branch at 727-824-5326.

Fishermen requesting landings history from previous permit holders must provide original signed waivers from all of the previous permit holders authorizing the release of the previous permit holders' landings data. Please submit original request forms to:

NOAA Fisheries Service
NMFS Permits Branch
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727-824-5326

Where can I find information about control dates for other fisheries?

For more information regarding previous control dates, please read Fishery Bulletin [FB06-057](#) dated November 30, 2006.

Commercial reef fish permit renewal reminder

Owners of vessels possessing Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish permits are reminded to renew their reef fish vessel permits in a timely fashion. Failure to have an active commercial reef fish permit aboard the vessel will prohibit the owner/operator from selling the catch.

This is especially important for owners/operators of vessels participating in the red snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. In the case of the IFQ program, a landing transaction will not be possible if the vessel permit has expired. Additionally, without an active commercial reef fish vessel permit, a person can sell, but not buy, shares.

The IFQ database automatically removes vessels on the day the commercial reef fish vessel permit expires, even if the owner has submitted a renewal application.

The vessel permit renewal process must be completed prior to the expiration date to maintain an active permit at all times.

To ensure a vessel permit is renewed prior to the expiration date, a vessel owner should submit a complete permit renewal application at least 30 days before the expiration date.

As a courtesy, NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office Permits Branch mails a renewal application to vessel owners 60 days before a vessel permit expires.

However, it is the responsibility of the vessel owner to be aware of the expiration date of the vessel permit, and take appropriate action to acquire and submit all renewal forms and supporting documentation.

Vessel owners can call or write the Permits Branch (contact information below) and request necessary application forms, or these forms are also available online at the Southeast Regional Office Web site: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

The application may be filled out online, printed, and mailed to:

NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Permits Branch
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Please call 727-824-5326 for more information.

LAPPs for grouper under consideration—Amendment 29

Wes Erikson and John Koolman, commercial fishermen from British Columbia, shared with the Gulf Council their experiences with Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) in the BC fishery.

An IFQ system is currently in place in the Gulf of Mexico for the commercial red snapper fishery, and the Gulf Council is considering some sort of limited access privilege program for the grouper and tilefish fisheries, including a possible IFQ.

The Council is examining new management measures—Reef Fish Amendment 29—to rationalize effort and reduce overcapacity in the commercial grouper fishery as a means to achieve and maintain optimum yield (OY).

According to Erikson, pre-IFQ conditions in the BC fishery were marked by poor quality, low prices, low-paying and short-term jobs, and because of the race to fish, losing fishermen at sea was also a problem.

But today, the BC fishery remains within its total allowable catch (TAC), the season is spread out over nine months easing the race to fish while increasing safety, and quality and price have improved.

The number of vessels in the fishery has dropped by more than half since the implementation of the IFQ program, and while fewer boats means fewer jobs, they're much better jobs.

“While it can be difficult to gain entry into the fishery, one of the benefits of the IFQ is that individual accountability leads to individual responsibility,” said Erikson.

“While it can be difficult to gain entry into the fishery, one of the benefits of the IFQ is that individual accountability leads to individual responsibility,” said Erikson.

Compare that to the management of the BC Salmon fishery, which didn't adopt the use of an IFQ system, and a stark

contrast emerges. Management measures, such as gear restrictions, time/area restrictions, area licensing, bycatch reduction incentives and the like, some similar to those currently used in Gulf of Mexico Fisheries, created a culture of dependence and entitlement.

“BC fishermen now lead by example in conservation—it's important for fisheries to evolve in order to survive,” said Erikson.

The Gulf grouper fishery is currently managed through annual quotas, trip limits, minimum size limits, area gear restrictions, and seasonal closures. This management is based on a traditional command and control approach resulting in an overcapitalized commercial grouper fishery—the combined harvest capacity of those participating in the fishery is in excess of that required to harvest efficiently the commercial share of the TAC.



Reef Fish Amendment 29 is currently under development. Scoping meetings on a draft version of the document were held in September to solicit public input on the document. Of the commercial fishermen who attended these meetings, the majority were in favor of an IFQ system.

Reasons cited for support varied, but most believe an IFQ system would allow more professionalism among commercial fishers, help reduce bycatch, and could, if structured right, allow shares to be traded with red snapper IFQ shareholders.

While recreational anglers who attended the scoping meetings were largely opposed to an IFQ system, many agreed that if such a system is adopted, recreational fishermen would like the ability to buy shares.

The Council, after reviewing a draft options paper for Amendment 29, removed options for a buyback or buyout program, and an effort-based approach to Individual Transferrable Effort Quota to the “*considered but rejected*” section of the document.

The possible management actions that remain in the document include a possible permit endorsement, an IFQ program, and the elimination of latent permits.

Public comment on Amendment 29 is ongoing, with Gulf-wide public hearings planned for early 2008.



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Closures

Recreational Closures:

Red Snapper

The recreational red snapper season closed at 12:01 a.m. November 1, 2007, and is tentatively scheduled to reopen June 1, 2008, pending approval of Reef Fish Amendment 27/Shrimp Amendment 14 regulations.

Commercial Closures:

Tilefish

The commercial tilefish fishery in Gulf of Mexico federal waters closed at 12:01 a.m., local time, April 18, 2007, when the quota of 440,000 pounds, gutted weight, was projected to be reached. The fishery will remain closed until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2008.

King Mackerel

The Commercial run-around gillnet fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the **southern Florida west coast subzone** is closed. The gillnet fishery will remain closed in the EEZ through 6:00 a.m., local time, January 22, 2008, unless changed by future notice in the *Federal Register*.

The commercial fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the western zone is closed, effective 12:00 p.m. November 3, 2007, through June 30, 2008. The 2007/2008 western zone commercial quota of 1.01 million pounds has been reached.

Deep-Water Grouper

NOAA Fisheries closed the commercial deep-water grouper fishery in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico effective 12:01 a.m. local time, June 2, 2007. The fishery will remain closed until 12:01 a.m., January 1, 2008.

During the closure, if commercial quantities of reef fish are onboard, a recreational bag limit of reef fish is not allowed.

Amberjack *continued*

assessment Gray triggerfish are also overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Public comment on Amendment 30A is ongoing and is an important part of the Council process.

Comments can be e-mailed to Amendment30A@gulfcouncil.org, or sent via U.S. mail to:

Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607

The Council has scheduled a final opportunity for public testimony during its January meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Wayne Swingle
Executive Director

Richard Leard
Deputy Director

Appointed Voting Members

William Daughdrill
Panama City, FL
(850) 814-5468

Michael Ray
Austin, TX
(512)389-4649

Robert P. Gill
Crystal River, FL
(352) 795-1916

Robert Shipp
Vice Chair
Mobile, AL
(251) 460-6351

Joseph Hendrix, Jr.
Houston, TX
(281) 597-1620

Susan Villere
Mandeville, LA
(985) 845-3557

Thomas McIlwain
Chair
Ocean Springs, MS
(228) 818-8866

Bobbi Walker
Orange Beach, AL
(251) 981-6159

Julie Morris
Sarasota, FL
(941) 487-4527

Kay Williams
Vanceleave, MS
(228) 826-2160

Harlon Pearce
Kenner, LA
(504) 467-3809

State/Federal Voting Members

Robin Riechers,
Austin, TX
(512) 389-4864
Designee for
Larry McKinney

Corky Perret,
Biloxi, MS
(228) 374-5000
Designee for William Walker

Bill Teehan
Tallahassee, FL
(850) 487-0554
Designee for Ken Haddad

Karen Foote
Baton Rouge, LA
(225) 765-2383
Designee for John Roussel

Vernon Minton
Gulf Shores, AL
(251) 968-7576

Roy Crabtree
St. Petersburg, FL
(727) 824-5301

Non-voting Members

Sam Hamilton
USF&WS
(404) 679-4000

Larry Simpson
GSMFC
(228) 875-5912

Radm Joel White-
head
Eighth USCG District
(504) 589-6223

David Hogan
Foreign Affairs
Officer
(202) 647-2335

GMFMC wants your news and views

The Gulf Council would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments, or concerns you would like to see covered in the *Gulf Fishery News*. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials, or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management are encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Charlene Ponce, Public Information Officer, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Materials can also be sent via fax to 813-348-1711, or e-mail; charlene.ponce@gulfcouncil.org.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council is responsible for the development and modification of fishery management plans (FMPs) that are designed to manage fishery resources in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico from state boundaries to the 200-mile limit.

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The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council *Protecting our marine resources*

2203 Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607

Phone: 813-348-1630

Fax: 813-348-1711

E-mail: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

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