

**Reef Fish Management Committee Report
August 16-17, 2016
Johnny Greene – Chair**

Draft Amendment 36A – Commercial IFQ Program Modifications (Tab B, No. 7)

The Committee heard presentations on the IFQ program process and quota banks. Staff then reviewed the document. For Action 1, staff will compile data on the additional number of trips made by reef fish permitted vessels landing any commercially caught species before the next Council meeting. Staff will request comments and recommendations on the Action 1 alternatives from NOAA OLE and the Council’s Law Enforcement Committee and provide these to the Council in October.

Action 2 addresses the redistribution of shares held in inactivated accounts. In Action 2.1, the Committee noted that Alternative 4 could be accomplished by selecting both Alternatives 2 and 3, and thus recommended its removal.

**With one opposed, the Committee recommends and I so move:
In Action 2.1, to move Alternative 4 to considered but rejected.**

In Action 2.2, the Committee discussed the proposed redistribution methods and passed the following motion:

**Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move:
In Action 2.2, to amend Alternative to 5 to read, “redistribute the shares from each share category to the allocation only account holders with a commercial Reef Fish permit and landings but not related to other accounts with shares in that category.”**

The Committee indicated that staff should provide options to Alternative 5 for satisfying the landings requirement. Noting the small amount of quota remaining in the inactivated accounts and the work involved in setting up a quota bank, the Committee passed the following motion:

**Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move:
In Action 2.2, to move Alternative 6 to considered but rejected.**

The Committee noted that consideration of quota banks should be retained in Amendment 36B.

Review of Headboat Collaborative Project (Tab B, Nos. 8, 9)

Jessica Stephen provided an overview of the Headboat Collaborative pilot project (**Tab B, No. 8**). Dr. Stephen’s discussion included the monitoring of the program, effort and landings levels,

allocation transfers, and reporting compliance. Dr. Stephen also provided lessons learned on several issues including the validation methods used in the program.

Josh Abbott provided a socioeconomic review of the Headboat Collaborative project (**Tab B, No. 9**). Dr. Abbott indicated that angler access to trips landing gag or red snapper increased and that discards were reduced. Dr. Abbott also noted that, compared to 2013, economic returns increased due to additional profits from greater consumer demand, small price premiums, and adjustments to the product mix.

NMFS-SERO Landings Summaries (Tab A, Nos. 8, 8a)

NMFS SERO staff summarized updated reef fish landings. Commercial landings through August 5 indicate that 55% of the commercial gray triggerfish ACT and 111% of the greater amberjack ACT have been caught, but both are still below their ACLs. Recreational MRIP landings are available through wave 2 plus wave 3 landings from the headboat survey and LA Creel. With the exception of gray triggerfish and greater amberjack, recreational reef fish landings are below their ACTs. Recreational gray triggerfish and greater amberjack are currently at 171% and 107% of their respective recreational ACLs. Landings for 2016 are not yet complete, so it is too soon to know whether there will be a gray triggerfish season in 2017.

Draft Amendment 46 – Modify Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan (Tab B, Nos. 10a,b, 11)

Dr. Larkin reviewed the commercial and recreational decision tools for gray triggerfish. Staff reviewed the draft options paper and discussed the timeline for development and implementation by November 2017. Ms. Bosarge requested that more background information on historical landings and management be added to the introduction of the document. The Committee discussed Action 2 alternatives and determined that the increasing 8-year rebuilding yield stream for 2017 through 2019 was duplicative of another alternative currently in the document that uses the mean ABC for the 8-year rebuilding period.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move: In Action 2, to move Alternative 3 to Considered but Rejected.

Staff reviewed the three recreational management actions and alternatives in the document: fixed closed season, bag limits, and minimum size limits. The Committee did not make any modifications to the current range of alternatives. Staff requested direction at full Council on the effort shifting by mode available in the decisional tool and what scalar the Council might consider using, if any.

Next staff reviewed the two commercial actions and alternatives. Staff stated since the implementation of the 12-fish trip limit and fixed closed season (June 1 – July 31) in 2013 commercial landings have been 22-31% below the commercial ACT of 60,900 lbs ww. Therefore, modifying the commercial closed season may not be necessary at this time. After discussion the Committee passed the following motion.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move: To move Action 6 (Modify the Commercial Fixed Closed Season for Gray Triggerfish) to Considered but Rejected.

The Committee discussed Action 7 that contains alternatives to modify the commercial trip limit per vessel per day. NMFS staff clarified even on multi-day trips only 12 gray triggerfish per vessel can currently be landed. The Committee discussed modifying the alternatives to include trip limits both in pounds and numbers. Staff explained that the LE technical committee previously commented that a low poundage of fish is difficult to enforce and recommended the trip limits be in numbers of fish. After discussion a motion to add an Alternative to establish a 75-lb trip limit per vessel for gray triggerfish the following motion was withdrawn.

A Committee discussed adding a 20 fish per vessel per day trip limit and whether or not it would constrain harvest to the proposed ACT. Staff stated that this trip limit combined with the June 1-July 31 closed season is projected to land 46,699 lbs ww. This is estimated to constrain landings to all ACT alternatives, but the 8-year rebuilding option of ACT = 47,320 lbs ww. After discussion the committee passed the following motion.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move: In Action 7, to add the IPT Proposed Alternative.

IPT Proposed Alternative X: Increase the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish to 20 fish per vessel per day.

Draft Amendment 42 – Reef Fish Recreational Management for Headboat Survey Vessels (Tab B, No. 12)

Staff provided the purpose and need and summarized the actions and management alternatives in the amendment. Staff discussed the eligibility criteria that must be met to participate in the management program.

Staff noted that a vessel qualifies as a landings history vessel if it has a valid or renewable federal reef fish for-hire permit and has individual landings history recorded by the Southeast Region Headboat Survey by December 31, 2015. Committee members discussed participation in the management plan and indicated that only landings history vessels that are reporting to the Southeast Survey in 2016 are eligible to participate in the management plan developed in Amendment 42. The Committee discussed the distribution of future quota increases and made the following motion:

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move: To move Action 13.1 (Distribution of Quota Increases) to the Considered but Rejected section.

The Committee discussed the opting out options in the amendment. A motion to move Action 3 (Participation at the Onset of the Program) to considered but rejected failed.

Committee members discussed a potential timeline for implementation of this amendment and the need for eligibility requirements for participating in the referendum. Staff will present draft referendum eligibility criteria during full Council.

Draft Amendment 41 – Red Snapper Management for Federally Permitted Charter Vessels
(Tab B, Nos. 13, 14)

The Committee received a presentation on potential split season lengths for the harvest of red snapper by charter vessels. Staff then reviewed the draft amendment, noting that the number of proposed programs should be reduced to allow staff to begin developing the supporting actions. A motion to remove the permit fishing allocation (PFA) and harvest tag programs failed. The Committee then passed the following motion to remove just the PFA program:

**Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move:
In Action 1, to move Alternative 3, Option 3a to considered but rejected.**

In Action 2, staff noted the time required for NMFS to recalculate the quota redistribution should participation in the program be voluntary. The Committee then passed the following motion to remove the option to opt out of a voluntary program every year:

**With no opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move:
In Action 2, to move Alternative 2, Option 2b to considered but rejected.**

In Action 3, staff reviewed the proposed alternatives for redistributing the quota. Dr. Crabtree noted that they would likely want to use a combination of the proposed methods for redistributing the quota, such as provided under Alternatives 6 and 8. The Committee then passed the following motions:

By a vote of 7 to 6, the Committee recommends and I so move: In Action 3, to move Alternative 2 (distribute quota equally among charter permit orders) to considered but rejected.

By a vote of 9 to 3, the Committee recommends and I so move: In Action 3, to move Alternative 3 (distribute quota based on passenger capacity of charter vessels) to considered but rejected.

Standing and Reef Fish SSC Report (Tab B, No. 17)

Staff reviewed the summary of the SSC webinar held on August 2. The SSC reviewed and approved the project schedule and terms of reference for SEDAR 51 (gray snapper) with minor editorial changes, and selected volunteers for a stock ID work group, data work group, assessment work group, and review work group. The SSC discussed F_{MSY} proxies for red snapper, but felt that it should be part of a more comprehensive discussion of MSY proxies scheduled for the next SSC meeting, and should be discussed in-person rather than by webinar.

The SSC also discussed what type of assessment should be conducted for the next gray triggerfish assessment. There has not been enough time to gather sufficient data to evaluate some of the concerns raised in the previous assessment, such as the impact of circle hooks, and without this new data a benchmark or standard assessment would not be meaningful. However, an assessment that incorporates recruitment and landings data through 2017 would be able to evaluate if there has been a recent change in recruitment. This could be accomplished in an update assessment, and the 2017 data will be available by mid-2018. Therefore, the SSC recommended that an update assessment for gray triggerfish be conducted at the earliest opportunity, which would be in the fall of 2018, with completion in 2019.

Other Business

Dale Diaz noted that the Council passed a motion to consider reducing the recreational ACT buffer for red snapper, but wanted to wait for the final 2015 landings before deciding whether to proceed. The 2015 landings show that the recreational for-hire component was below both its ACL and ACT, while the private vessel component was below its ACL but above its ACT. If the 2016 landings show that the for-hire component is again below its ACT, the Council may want to consider a change to the ACT buffer. The 2016 landings are not yet available, but Mr. Diaz asked that the Council begin thinking about this.

The following items were deferred to either full Council or the next Reef Fish Committee meeting due to a lack of time.

- Options Paper - Amendment 44 – MSST for Reef Fish Stocks (Tab B, No. 15)
- Discussion – Carryover of Unharvested Red Snapper Allocations (Tab B, No. 16)