



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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Gulf Council Update - August 2016

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 15 - 18, 2016. The Council welcomed its newest member Dr. Thomas Frazer, Director of the School of Natural Resources and Environment for the University of Florida. In addition, Douglas Boyd (TX) and Leann Bosarge (MS) were each sworn in for an additional 3-year term. The Council elected Leann Bosarge as Council Chair and Johnny Greene as Council Vice Chair for the upcoming year.

Data Collection

The Council reviewed a proposed generic amendment to modify the frequency and method of reporting for federally permitted charter and headboats fishing for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagics in the Gulf of Mexico. The Council selected preferred alternatives for both charter vessels and headboats that would require vessels to declare a trip (hail out); hail in and submit fishing records prior to arriving at the dock; and require vessel operators to use NMFS approved vessel monitoring system hardware/software that provides vessel position. The Council will convene the Data Collection Technical Committee and review their comments along with an updated draft of the Amendment in October.

Coral and Habitat Protection

The Council heard a summary of a recent meeting of the Shrimp and Coral Advisory Panels and the Coral Scientific and Statistical Committee. The Council agreed to move forward with the development of a scoping document that considers identifying priority areas for Habitat Areas of Particular Concern designation. A scoping document will be presented to the Council in October and the Council expects to host public scoping workshops after the October meeting.

The Council took public comment on the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Expansion Draft Environmental Impact Statement and submitted a comment letter to the Sanctuary on the issue. The Council also plans to make recommendations on appropriate fishing regulations for the proposed expansion areas.

Modifications to the Commercial Individual Fishing Quota Programs

After hearing a presentation on quota banks and the structure and process of the commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs, the Council reviewed Draft Amendment 36A, which includes actions for hail-in requirements, inactivated shareholder accounts, and mid-year quota changes. The Council added an action to consider requiring dealers to provide notification of intent to offload landings of IFQ species.

Gray Triggerfish

The Council reviewed a draft of Amendment 46 - Modify the Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan. A recent stock assessment indicated that the gray triggerfish population remains overfished and the Council's scientific advisors revised the acceptable biological catch levels. The new rebuilding plan for the stock requires changes to recreational bag limit, size limit, and closed season. The Council is also considering modifying the commercial trip limit. The Council made several modifications to the document and a revised draft will be presented in October.

Federal Reef Fish Headboat Survey Vessel Management

The Council heard a report on the Headboat Collaborative Pilot Project and reviewed a draft of Reef Fish Amendment 42 - Federal Reef Fish Headboat Survey Vessels Management. The Council made modifications to some of the actions and alternatives in the document and staff will present an updated draft in October. The Council will need to define the criteria participants must meet to vote in the referendum to determine if a proposed allocation-based program will be accepted.

Red Snapper Management for Federally Permitted Charter Vessels

The Council heard a preliminary analysis on the potential for split seasons to manage the red snapper harvest by charter vessels and reviewed a draft of Amendment 41 - Red Snapper Management for Federally Permitted Charter Vessels. The Council made numerous revisions to the amendment and the Council will review an updated draft of the document in October.

Mackerel

The Council discussed Coastal Migratory Pelagic Amendment 29, which considers allocation-sharing strategies between the recreational and commercial sectors and recreational accountability measures for Gulf migratory group king mackerel. After making some changes to the document, the Council chose locations for public hearings that will be held sometime after the public hearing draft of the Amendment is reviewed at the October meeting.

Council Wrap-Up Webinar

The Council will host a webinar to review the Council meeting. Please join us at 6 p.m. EST Wednesday, August 24 for a quick presentation followed by a question and answer session. Register for the webinar here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7233203590071678980>

More Information

For more information about any of the amendments discussed during the Council meeting, visit http://gulfcouncil.org/fishery_management_plans/scoping-thru-implementation.php and scroll down to the amendment of interest to find the draft document, video, guide, and other information.