



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 – June 2016

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Clearwater, Florida, June 20 - 23, 2016, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including hogfish management, the red snapper sector separation sunset provision, and red snapper management for federally permitted charter vessels.

Red Snapper Sector Separation Sunset Provision

After hearing a summary of the comments received during public hearings, the Council reviewed Amendment 45, which considers eliminating or extending the sunset provision that will end the separate management of private anglers and federally permitted charter boats at the end of 2017. The Council chose to extend the sunset provision for five years, through 2022. The amendment will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation.

Red Snapper Management for Federally Permitted Charter Vessels

The Council discussed the latest draft of Reef Fish Amendment 41, which considers creating a red snapper management plan for federally permitted charter vessels fishing under the for-hire component of the recreational red snapper allocation. The Council added options to the document to recalculate allocations every five years and changed the years from which historical landings data would be considered to 2003 through 2013. They also asked staff to evaluate the recreational for-hire red snapper season for two different split season scenarios, with the first scenario being an open season on April 20 - May 31 with a possible reopening in September, and a second scenario being an open the season on June 1 – June 30 with a possible reopening October 1. The second season would occur only if there is available quota remaining.

Federal Reef Fish Headboat Survey Vessels Management

The Council reviewed a draft of Reef Fish Amendment 42 – Federal Reef Fish Headboat Survey Vessels Management and heard a summary of the input received from the Ad Hoc Reef Fish Headboat Advisory Panel. The Council will review an updated draft amendment in August.

Reef Fish Amendment 36A – Modifications to Commercial IFQ Programs

The Council reviewed the actions and alternatives contained in Amendment 36A, which includes actions related to the enforcement of commercial reef fish trips, inactive shareholder accounts, and mid-year quota changes. The Council modified the document, adding alternatives to the action “Method of Redistributing Shares”. Staff will present the revised document, with associated analyses to the Council during its August meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Ad Hoc Advisory Panel for Recreational Red Snapper Management

After a lengthy discussion, the Council agreed to assemble an Ad Hoc Red Snapper Private Recreational Advisory Panel. The charge of the panel is to develop fair and effective ways to

mitigate the derby fishing occurring in the private angler component of the red snapper fishery. The panel will meet by January 2017. We are soliciting resumes from prospective panel members and the applications will be posted to the website in the coming weeks.

Hogfish

After hearing a summary of the comments received during public hearings, the Council took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 43. If approved by the Secretary of Commerce, the amendment will increase the hogfish minimum size limit to 14 inches fork length, and set the annual catch limit (ACL) at 219,000 pounds whole weight through 2018. If there is no new assessment by 2018, the ACL will drop to 159,300 pounds whole weight in 2019. However, Florida FWC conducted the assessment and is planning an update assessment in 2018 that will provide new yield projections for 2019 and beyond. Additionally, the Gulf stock will be defined as the waters north of the line extending west from Cape Sable (29°09'N); the use of powerheads to harvest hogfish in the stress area will be prohibited; and the criteria used to define whether the stock is overfished or experiencing overfishing will be set.

Gray Triggerfish

The Council heard a presentation on the draft options in Amendment 46 – Modify Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan. A recent stock assessment indicates that the gray triggerfish population remains overfished. The Council's scientific advisors revised the acceptable biological catch levels and the Council will consider developing a new rebuilding plan for the stock. Along with determining new catch levels for the stock, the Council is also considering changes to the recreational bag limits, size limits, and closed season; and commercial closed season and trip limits.

Spiny Lobster

The Council initiated an amendment that will consider increasing the spiny lobster annual catch limit. The combined commercial and recreational spiny lobster harvest has exceeded the annual catch limit in two of the past four years, and the Gulf Council's scientific advisors have increased the spiny lobster acceptable biological catch level. Staff will begin work on an amendment to revise the spiny lobster annual catch limit and develop a suite of options for the Council to consider in October.

Mackerel

The Council discussed Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) Amendment 29, which considers allocation-sharing strategies between the recreational and commercial sectors and associated accountability measures for Gulf migratory group king mackerel. Action one of the amendment examines options for allocation sharing between the recreational and commercial sectors. Action two evaluates changes to the Accountability Measures (AMs) for king mackerel.

Also related to mackerel, the Council reviewed CMP Framework Amendment 5, which examines modifications to commercial permit restrictions for king and Spanish mackerel. The Council is considering removing the restriction on retaining a recreational bag limit of king or Spanish mackerel on vessels with a federal commercial permit for king or Spanish mackerel.

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.

About the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans that are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.