



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 – October 2016

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Biloxi, Mississippi, October 17 – 20, 2016, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including a gray triggerfish rebuilding plan, data reporting for federally permitted for-hire vessels, and appointments for the Ad-Hoc Private Recreational Advisory Panel.

Mackerel

The Council took final action on Mackerel Framework Amendment 5 which addresses restrictions that are unique to commercial king and Spanish mackerel permit holders. The Council chose to remove restrictions on the retention of the recreational bag limit of king and Spanish mackerel on vessels with federal commercial king or Spanish mackerel permits when the commercial season is closed. The framework amendment will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

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. The Council selected preferred alternatives that would conditionally transfer 10% of the stock allocation to the commercial sector for the next fishing year if less than 75% of the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) is harvested. If the commercial sector does not land at least 90% of its ACL, the transfer will not occur. The Council also selected an alternative that would replace the current in-season accountability measure (AM) with a post season AM. If both the recreational ACL and Stock ACL are exceeded in a fishing year, the length of the following recreational fishing season will be reduced by the amount necessary to ensure the landings do not exceed the recreational ACL. The Council plans to host public hearings on the amendment before the end of the year.

Data Collection

The Council reviewed a proposed generic amendment to modify the frequency and method of reporting for federally permitted charter vessels and headboats fishing for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagics in the Gulf of Mexico. After hearing a summary of the Data Collection Technical Committee and reviewing public comments and recommendations from the Ad-Hoc Red Snapper Charter For-Hire and Reef Fish Advisory Panels, the Council selected a preferred alternative which would require charter and headboat operators to submit fishing records via NMFS approved hardware/software with minimum archived GPS capabilities that provides vessel position.

The Council also initiated the development of an amendment that considers implementing mandatory electronic logbook reporting for commercial vessels.

Shrimp

The Council continued work on Shrimp Amendment 17B which considers shrimp permit issues such as setting a minimum threshold number of Gulf shrimp vessel permits and whether to create a Gulf shrimp vessel permit reserve pool, specification of optimum yield, and a transit provision in federal waters. The Council made numerous modifications to the document and is slated to review a public hearing draft at their January 2017 meeting.

Proposed Regulations on the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Expansion

The Council reviewed proposed fishing regulations for the expansion of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) along with comments from the Reef Fish Advisory Panel and the Law Enforcement Technical Committee. Council staff has prepared a white paper containing recommendations for each of the proposed expansion areas including different types of endorsements and anchor related regulations. The Council decided to forward the white paper and recommendations to the FGBNMS by the December 2016 deadline.

Mutton Snapper and Gag

The Council reviewed a draft framework action that considers revising the mutton snapper annual catch limit and other management measures and the gag commercial minimum size limit. Revisions made to the draft document include elimination of commercial trip limit alternatives for mutton snapper and a revised range of alternatives for a minimum size limit at 16, 18, and 20 inches total length. The Council plans to review an updated draft of this framework early next year.

Red Snapper Management for Charter Vessels and Reef Fish Management for Headboat Survey Vessels

The Council reviewed drafts of Amendment 41, which considers creating a red snapper management plan for federally permitted charter vessels and Amendment 42, which considers creating a management plan for federally permitted headboats fishing for reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico. The Council plans to convene the Ad-Hoc Red Snapper Charter For-Hire and Ad-Hoc Reef Fish Headboat Advisory Panels before the January meeting.

Gray Triggerfish

The Council reviewed a draft of Amendment 46 – Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding plan, which considers revising annual catch limits and targets along with commercial and recreational management measures. After reviewing recommendations from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Reef Fish Advisory Panel, the Council selected preferred alternatives. The Council selected alternatives that would establish a 9-year rebuilding period, retain the current gray triggerfish annual catch limits and targets, and to modify the recreational regulations by adding a January and February closed season in addition to the current June 1-July 31 closed season during the spawning season. The Council also selected preferred alternatives that would

reduce the bag limit to 1-fish per angler within the 20-reef fish aggregate, and increase the recreational minimum size limit to 15 inches fork length. Additionally, the Council has decided to express commercial trip limits in numbers of fish rather than in pounds and add an alternative that would consider a 16 fish trip limit. The Council choose locations for public hearings which will be held after the January 2017 meeting.

Modifications to Commercial Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program

The Council discussed a draft of Amendment 36A, which considers making modifications to the commercial IFQ program including hail-in requirements, inactivated shareholder accounts, mid-year quota changes, and dealer offload notification requirements. The Council selected preferred alternatives for each action, and plans to review a public hearing draft in January before sending a direct mailing to commercial permit holders and shareholders and hosting a webinar to solicit public comments.

Ad-Hoc Private Recreational Advisory Panel

The Council appointed 25 members to the newly formed Ad-Hoc Private Recreational Advisory Panel. The charge for the Advisory Panel will be: to provide recommendations to the Council on private recreational red snapper management measures which would 1) provide more quality access to the resource in federal waters, 2) reduce discards, and 3) improve fisheries data collection. Advisory Panel appointees are listed on our website at: http://gulfcouncil.org/panels_committees/advisory_panels.php

Questions?

The Council will host a Post Council Wrap-Up Webinar to review the Council meeting. Join us at 6:00 p.m. EST Wednesday, October 26, for a quick presentation followed by a question and answer session. Register for the webinar here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3042382036761235202>

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.