



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 2014

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Mobile, Alabama, October 20 – 23, 2014, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including recreational red snapper sector separation and red snapper regional management. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council.

Recreational Red Snapper Sector Separation

Reef Fish Amendment 40 considers dividing the recreational red snapper sector into two distinct components – a private angling component and a for-hire component.

After reviewing the document and listening to hours of public testimony, the Council approved sector separation after adding a three-year sunset provision. The amendment will go to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

Red Snapper Regional Management

The Council resumed discussions on Reef Fish Amendment 39 – Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper. This amendment considers dividing the federal recreational red snapper quota among states and giving them authority to set some of their allowing for own management measures for red snapper to vary by state.

The Council added an alternative to Action 1 that would establish a regional management program in which each region would submit proposals to NMFS describing the measures they would adopt for the management of their respective portion of the red snapper quota.

The Council also added options for a 2-year or 3-year sunset provision in both Alternatives 2 and 4 of Action 1. The Council selected Alternative 2, Option d; delegation with a sunset after 3 calendar years, as its preferred alternative. Under Action 3, which considered allocation among regions, the Council selected Alternative 2, Option d, and Alternative 3, Options a and b as its preferred alternatives. This would result in regional apportionments based on 50% of landings from 1986-2012, and 50% from 2007-2012 landings, and exclude landings from 2006 and 2010.

Finally, for Action 6, Accountability Measures, the Council removed Options a and b (delay implementation of quota overages until 1 year or 2 years after plan implementation) in alternatives 2, 3 and 4 and put them in the “considered but rejected” section of the document.

The most recent version of the document can be viewed here -

<http://gulfcouncil.org/docs/amendments/Regional%20Management%20Red%20Snapper.pdf>.

Reef Fish Amendment 36 – Red Snapper IFQ Modifications

The Council reviewed a scoping document for Amendment 36 – Modifications to the Red Snapper IFQ Program - and added a provision to consider allowing commercial fishermen who

regularly lease allocation to have the opportunity to own IFQ shares. Scoping workshops will be held in early 2015.

Greater Amberjack

This summer, the Council's scientific advisors reviewed a stock assessment and determined that greater amberjack did not meet the ten-year rebuilding plan that ended in 2012, and the stock continues to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. During its October meeting, the Council reviewed an options paper that considers adjusting the Annual Catch Limit and commercial and recreational management measures to ensure that the stock is rebuilt and the mandates of the Magnuson-Stevens Act are met.

Recreational Red Grouper Seasons and Bag Limits

The Council took final action on a Framework Action that will adjust the bag limit to 2-fish per person, per day, to reduce the likelihood of in-season quota closures. The framework also eliminates the automatic bag limit reduction accountability measure that currently occurs after the Annual Catch Limit is exceeded. The Council considered changes to the recreational red grouper closed season, but decided to leave it at February 1 through March 31 beyond 20 fathoms. The Framework Action will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

Shrimp

The Council added an Alternative to Action 1.1 of Shrimp Amendment 15 that would set the overfishing threshold at F_{MSY} . Amendment 15 considers revising the overfished/overfishing status of brown, white, and pink shrimp to ensure consistency with the new model used to determine stock status.

The Council took final action on Shrimp Amendment 16, which adjusts the annual catch limit and accountability measures for royal red shrimp. The amendment will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

The Council also reviewed a scoping document for Shrimp Amendment 17, which will address the pending expiration of the moratorium on federal shrimping permits.

The Council decided to convene a Shrimp working group, as recommended by the SSC, to review the analysis necessary for addressing the expiration of the shrimp permit moratorium. The Council also decided to convene the Shrimp Advisory Panel and subject matter experts to evaluate the document and related issues and to make recommendations to the Council.

Gag

A stock assessment completed this summer discovered that the gag stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing. However, scientists are concerned that a large red tide event occurring this summer may negatively impact the stock. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended an increase in the gag ABC from 2,820,000 pounds to 3,070,000 pounds in 2015, which is a smaller increase than originally planned. The Council has asked that the SSC reevaluate the projected impact of the red tide using the latest red tide information, and provide an updated acceptable biological catch for 2015-2016.

King Mackerel

The king mackerel gill net industry has asked that the trip limit be increased to 45,000 pounds to allow a more efficient prosecution of the fishery without harming the stock. The Council will

hold a public workshop for the king mackerel gill net fishery in mid December or early January to discuss potential options to address industry concerns.

The workshop date and location will be announced and posted on the Council website in the coming weeks.

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