



PUBLIC HEARING GUIDE

5/2/16

Reef Fish Amendment 43: Hogfish Stock Definition, Status Determination Criteria, Annual Catch Limits, and Size Limit



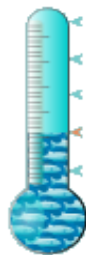
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What is a Public Hearing?

A public hearing gives you an opportunity to comment on a fishery management plan or amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is developing. Public hearings are conducted later in the amendment development process, after the Council has begun selecting preferred alternatives for proposed actions, but before taking final action. Suggestions, issues, and concerns expressed during the public hearings will be presented to the Council for review and consideration before final action is taken.

Focusing your comments on the pros and cons of specific alternatives in each action provides the most useful guidance to the Council. If you are unable to attend a public hearing in person, you are encouraged to submit your comments online. For online comment forms, video presentations, and full Amendment documents, visit our website at www.gulfcouncil.org and click the thermometer icon at the center of the homepage.



How does a public hearing affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the public hearing process are reported to the full Council prior to final action. Your input is considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures to address the issue(s) at hand.

How else can I get involved?

There are many ways you can help the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identify fishery management needs and develop reasonable management alternatives, each dependent on how actively involved you want to become. The first step to becoming involved is to educate yourself about the management process by visiting our website at www.gulfcouncil.org, signing up to receive our communications, and contacting Council members and staff to discuss management concerns. You can attend meetings, serve on panels and committees that advise the Council on fishery issues, and even apply to become a Council member.

Introduction to Amendment 43 - Hogfish

While hogfish do occur throughout the Gulf of Mexico, only small amounts of hogfish are harvested commercially and recreationally outside the State of Florida. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission completed a stock assessment for hogfish in 2014 (SEDAR 37 2014), and the Gulf Council is developing this amendment to address the findings of the stock assessment and to address some hogfish management concerns.

The hogfish stock assessment indicated that the hogfish stock in the Southeastern United States is divided into three genetically distinct stocks and each stock has it's own overfishing/overfished status. In this amendment, the Gulf Council is considering how to define the geographical management unit for hogfish in the Gulf; how to set the criteria used to determine if the Gulf stock is overfished or experiencing overfishing; and setting the Gulf hogfish annual catch limits and annual catch targets.

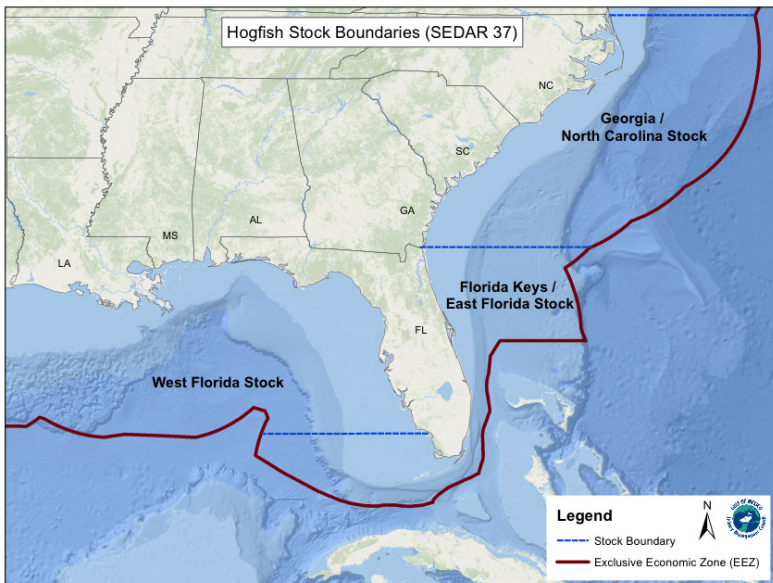
Additionally, the Council is considering changing the commercial and recreational minimum size limits for hogfish and removing a provision that allows the use of powerheads when harvesting hogfish in the stressed area of the Gulf.



Amendment 43 - Summary of Actions

Action 1. Definition of the Management Unit

Currently, the Council’s Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan defines the management unit of hogfish as all hogfish found in the Gulf of Mexico Federal waters. The Gulf Council is considering adjusting the current boundaries of the hogfish management unit because the most recent stock assessment found that there are three genetically distinct hogfish stocks in the Southeast United States. The West Florida stock incorporates most of western Florida and ends at or south of the Monroe/Collier County line, the East Florida/Florida Keys stock begins off the west Florida coast at or south of the Monroe/Collier County line and extends to the Florida/Georgia border, and the Georgia/North Carolina stock that extends from the Florida/Georgia border up through North Carolina. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has recommended that the management boundary separating the west Florida and east Florida/Florida Keys stocks be set south of Cape Sable (Preferred Alternative 2) for consistency with an existing state management boundary.



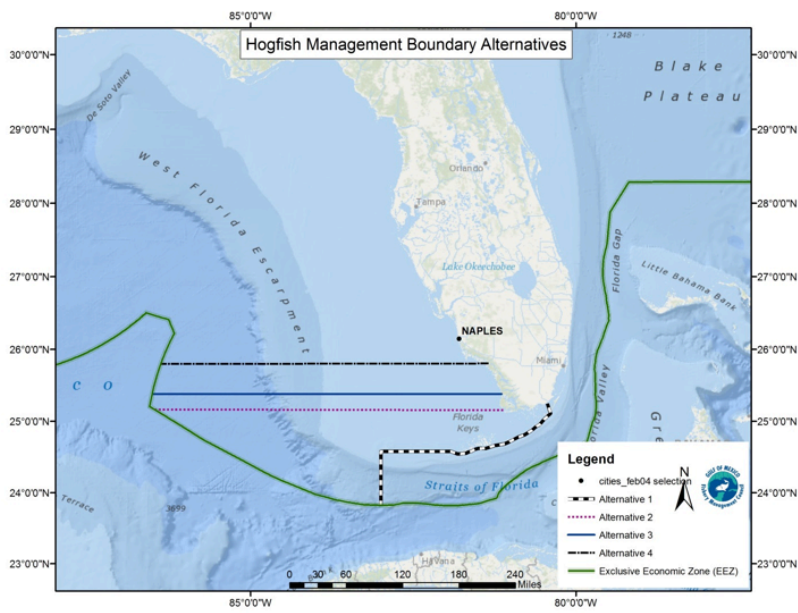
Alternative 1: No Action.

Preferred Alternative 2: South of Cape Sable. The geographical range of this unit is all waters of the Gulf of Mexico north of a line extending west from 25° 09' north latitude to the outer boundary of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Alternative 3: Shark Point. The geographical range of this unit is all waters of the Gulf of Mexico north of a line extending west from 25° 23' north latitude to the outer boundary of the EEZ.

Alternative 4: Monroe/Collier county line. The geographical range of this unit is defined as all waters of the Gulf of Mexico north of a line extending west from 25° 48' north latitude to the outer boundary of the EEZ.

Note: Under Preferred Alternative 2, Alternative 3, or Alternative 4, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) will request the Secretary of Commerce to designate the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) as the responsible Council for hogfish south of the demarcation line.



Action 2. Status Determination Criteria

The Council is considering setting criteria to determine whether the hogfish stock is overfished or experiencing overfishing. Currently, there is not a specific formula used to determine values for maximum sustainable yield (MSY) or minimum stock size threshold (MSST). The point estimate of MSY often has a lot of uncertainty, so a proxy is usually used. For most reef fish stocks, the MSY proxy is set equal to the yield when fishing at the fishing mortality rate F30% SPR, and the maximum fishing mortality threshold (MFMT) is set equal to the proxy fishing rate, F30% SPR. The MSST, which is used to determine overfished status, is set at some spawning stock biomass (SSB) level below the level corresponding to MSY (or its proxy).

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: MSY = the point estimate of MSY in the most recent stock assessment.

MFMT = FMSY in the most recent stock assessment

MSST =

Option 2a: $(1-M)*SSB_{MSY}$, where M (natural mortality rate) = 0.179 and SSB is the spawning stock biomass

Option 2b: $0.75*SSB_{MSY}$

Option 2c: $0.50*SSB_{MSY}$

Preferred Alternative 3: MSY = equilibrium yield at F30% SPR

MFMT = F30% SPR

MSST =

Option 3a: $(1-M)*SSB_{30\% SPR}$, where M = 0.179

Preferred Option 3b: $0.75*SSB_{30\% SPR}$

Option 3c: $0.50*SSB_{30\% SPR}$

Alternative 4: MSY = equilibrium yield at F40% SPR

MFMT = F40% SPR

MSST =

Option 4a: $(1-M) \times \text{SSB}_{40\% \text{ SPR}}$, where $M = 0.179$

Option 4b: $0.75 \times \text{SSB}_{40\% \text{ SPR}}$

Option 4c: $0.50 \times \text{SSB}_{40\% \text{ SPR}}$

Status determination criteria values for several MSY proxies.

	Alt. 1 Proxy undefined	Alt. 2 Model MSY	Preferred Alt. 3 30% SPR	Alt. 4 40% SPR
MSY (1000 lbs ww)	n/a	169	162	146
MFMT	0.095	0.150	0.095	0.062
MSST (1000 lbs ww)				
Option a	n/a	844	1,306	1,819
Preferred Option b	n/a	771	1,193	1,661
Option c	n/a	514	795	1,108

Action 3. Hogfish Annual Catch Limit and Annual Catch Target

The current Gulf annual catch limit (ACL) of 208,000 pounds and annual catch target (ACT) of 179,000 pounds was set in 2012 based on data poor methods. The most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 37), determined that the hogfish stock was distinctly different stocks and credited all hogfish landed in Monroe County to the East Florida/Florida Keys stock. Since, the Gulf Council is considering managing only the West Florida stock, and the recommended acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels for that stock have increased, the Council is considering increasing harvest levels for hogfish in the Gulf hogfish management unit. With some stocks, ACT is part of the accountability measures (for example, close the season when the ACT is projected to be met rather than the ACL). However, for hogfish the ACT has no function.

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: ACL equals the ABC for each year 2016-2018. The ACL for years following 2018 will then revert to the equilibrium ABC yield until modified by rulemaking.

2016 = 240,400 lbs ww
2017 = 216,800 lbs ww
2018 = 200,800 lbs ww
2019+ = 159,300 lbs ww

Option 2a: ACT will not be defined

Option 2b: ACT will be set based on the ACL/ACT control rule at 87% of the ACL

Preferred Alternative 3: A constant catch ACL is set at 219,000 lbs ww based on the constant catch ABC recommendation for the years 2016-2018 of the SSC. The ACL will remain at 219,000 lbs after 2018 until modified by rulemaking.

Preferred Option 3a: ACT will not be defined

Option 3b: ACT will be set based on the ACL/ACT control rule at 87% of the ACL.

Alternative 4: A constant catch ACL is set at the equilibrium ABC level of 159,300 lbs ww. This ACL will remain in place in subsequent years until modified by rulemaking.

Option 4a: ACT will not be defined

Option 4b: ACT will be set based on the ACL/ACT control rule at 87% of the ACL.



Action 4. Hogfish Minimum Size Limit

The hogfish minimum size limit for commercial and recreational fishing is currently 12 inches fork length. In 2013 the hogfish season closed early (Dec. 2) as a result of the ACL being reached. Increasing the hogfish size limit could slow the rate of harvest and reduce the likelihood that fishing will close due to the ACL being reached. Additionally, allowing fish to grow to a larger size before harvest will give the fish additional spawning opportunities and allow for more females to transition to males.

The South Atlantic Council is also considering a size limit increase and currently has 16 inches FL as its preferred alternative. Adopting the same size limit as the South Atlantic Council would result in a uniform size limit throughout the offshore waters of Florida.

Alternative 1: No Action.

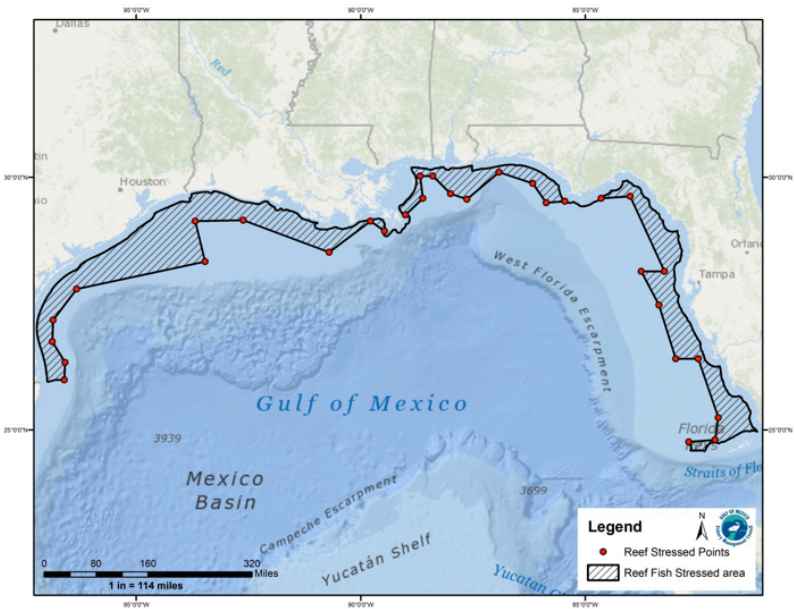
Alternative 2: Set the hogfish minimum size limit at 14 inches FL.

Alternative 3: Set the hogfish minimum size limit at 15 inches FL.

Preferred Alternative 4: Set the hogfish minimum size limit at 16 inches FL.

Action 5. Use of Powerheads to Harvest Hogfish in the Stressed Area

Powerheads, or any device with an explosive charge, usually attached to a speargun, spear, pole, or stick that fires a projectile upon contact, may not be used in the stressed area of the Gulf to take Gulf reef fish. Currently, that provision does not apply to hogfish due to a series of regulatory modifications. The Council is considering prohibiting the use of powerheads to take hogfish because powerheads are usually used to harvest larger fish and it is unlikely that many hogfish are harvested using this method anyway.



Alternative 1: No Action.

Preferred Alternative 2: Remove the provision in 50 CFR 622.35(a)(1) that exempts hogfish from the prohibition on the use of powerheads to take Gulf reef fish in the stressed area.

Send us your comments

The Council would like to hear your input on this proposed amendment before taking final action.

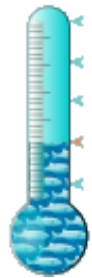
We are hosting the following public hearing workshops beginning at 6 p.m.:

Naples, Florida - Monday, May 9, 2016
Holiday Inn Express & Suites
1785 5th Avenue South

St. Petersburg, Florida - Tuesday, May 10, 2016
Holiday Inn Express
2171 54th Avenue North

Webinar - Wednesday, May 11, 2016
Click here to [register!](#)

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. Submit your comments online by visiting: http://gulfcouncil.org/council_meetings/comment_forms/Amendment_43.php, or click on the thermometer icon on our homepage www.gulfcouncil.org.





Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607

Tel: 888-833-1844

Fax: 813-348-1711

Email: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

Web site: www.gulfcouncil.org

