

Reef Fish Advisory Panel
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Scope of Work
October 11, 2022
Tampa, FL

Agenda Item V: Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings

Action: Presentation and discussion

Committee input and next steps: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff will review the status of reef fish and individual fishing quota (IFQ) program landings relative to catch limits, which is provided for the Reef Fish Advisory Panel's (RFAP) information only.

Agenda Item VI: Presentation: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Expansion Proposal

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Wernkli (FKNMS Staff) will present the Proposed Rule for the FKNMS expansion. The RFAP originally provided recommendations on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2019 and these recommendations were included in the Council's letter to the Sanctuary in 2020. The RFAP is encouraged to ask questions and provide recommendations for the Council to include in its comment letter to the Sanctuary. The Council has been granted an extension to provide comments until February 17, 2023.

Agenda Item VII: Review of Public Hearing Draft Amendment 54: Modifications to the Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations, and Other Rebuilding Plan Modifications

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. John Froeschke (Council Staff) will review the public hearing draft of Reef Fish Amendment 54, which revises the rebuilding plan for greater amberjack in response to the results of SEDAR 70. Greater amberjack is estimated to still be overfished and undergoing overfishing. Management measures proposed in Amendment 54, including revisions to catch limits and sector allocations, are expected to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock by 2027. The RFAP should review the materials presented and the proposed management alternatives, and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item VIII: Review: SEDAR 64 Interim Analysis for Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper and SSC Recommendations

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: SEDAR 64 was a benchmark assessment of southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper, and estimated a healthy stock as of 2017. Due to other priorities for the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, modifying management of yellowtail snapper was delayed, and the projections from the original SEDAR 64 stock assessment needed to be updated. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) updated the SEDAR 64 assessment with landings and discards through 2020, performed bias adjustments, and updated yield projections. The Gulf and South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) reviewed the results of the updated assessment, done as an interim catch analysis, at their August 4, 2022, webinar. The Councils will consider the catch recommendations from that webinar in the development of commensurate amendments to make modifications to the catch advice for the stock at upcoming Council meetings. FWRI staff will present the findings of the SEDAR 64 interim analysis to the RFAP, which should review the materials presented and make catch and management recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item IX: Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 56: Modifications to Gulf of Mexico Gag Grouper Stock Status Determination Criteria, Sector Allocation, Catch Limits, and Fishing Seasons

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will review the options being considered in Reef Fish Amendment 56, which will establish a rebuilding plan for gag grouper. The RFAP reviewed the results and SSC recommendations from the original SEDAR 72 stock assessment for gag grouper in January 2022, which estimated that the stock was overfished and experiencing overfishing as of 2019. Low recruitment and consistent red tide events in the last decade are thought to be contributing factors to the stock's decline, with the latter possibly attributable to a low proportion of males in the population. The Council requested an alternative run of SEDAR 72 using the Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) to inform recreational landings and discards for the private angling and state for-hire fleets, in place of the same as produced by the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES). This alternative SRFS run, determined to be consistent with the best scientific information available by the SSC in July 2022, uses a revised proxy for fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}) of a 40% spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$). This revised F_{MSY} proxy is expected to allow gag grouper to rebuild into a more robust stock that will be capable of producing more consistent recruitment and of being more resilient to future red tide events. Draft Amendment 56 will use the catch limits proposed by the SSC using projections from the SRFS run, based on the Council's proposed sector allocation alternatives, and will also consider modifications to the recreational fishing season. The RFAP should review the materials and draft management alternatives presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item X: Review: SEDAR 68 Operational Assessment for Gulf of Mexico Scamp

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will review the data and results from the SEDAR 68 operational assessment on Gulf scamp. SEDAR 68 used updated recreational catch and effort information from MRIP-FES, which results in increases in estimates of recreational landings, and in the uncertainty about those estimates. The SSC determined that the SEDAR 68 base model from the research track assessment was appropriate for use in this operational assessment for scamp. Mr. Rindone will also review the SSC's recommendations about the stock assessment, and any resultant yield projections. The RFAP may discuss the results of the assessment and ask questions. The RFAP should consider recommendations to the Council concerning catch limits, the inclusion of scamp in the shallow-water grouper complex, and the management of scamp under the grouper-tilefish individual fishing quota program.

Agenda Item XI: Review: Management Options: Gray Triggerfish Commercial Trip Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Ms. Carly Somerset (Council Staff) will provide a presentation on management options for modifying the commercial gray triggerfish trip limits. The Council approved a framework action to increase the gray triggerfish annual catch limits (ACLs), which was implemented in July of 2021, and the RFAP had previously indicated that it was in favor of increasing commercial gray triggerfish trip limits. The RFAP should consider the analyses presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XII: Review: For-hire Trip Declaration Modification

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Since the implementation of the Southeast For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program, participants have described aspects of the program, such as the hail-out provision, as unduly burdensome. A trip declaration must occur whenever the vessel leaves the dock even for short non-fishing activities. The Council is developing a framework action to address this issue to allow for an exemption to the hail-out provision. Ms. Somerset will review three options that exempt the vessel owner and/or operator from declaring when moving a for-hire vessel for non-fishing related tasks within a prescribed timeframe, and one that only requires a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of fishing or charter activity. The RFAP should review the materials presented and the proposed management modifications, and provide recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XIII: Review: Development of Electronic Reporting for the Commercial Coastal Logbook Program

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: The Southeast Fishery Science Center is interested in transitioning to an electronic reporting platform for the commercial coastal logbook program. This transition would allow fishermen with federal commercial Gulf reef fish and/or coastal migratory pelagic permits to report logbooks electronically rather than by completing paper forms. Program participants would still have 7 days to submit their logbooks. A policy document is currently being developed in partnership with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to implement this change throughout the southeastern U.S. The RFAP should review the meeting materials, listen to the program update, and provide guidance on the proposed program modifications.

Agenda Item XIV: Presentation: Modifications to Greater Amberjack Recreational and Commercial Management Measures

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Reef Fish Amendment 54 is being developed to reduce allowable harvest for both the commercial and recreational sectors (see Item VII). In response, the Council directed staff to begin development of a framework action for greater amberjack to modify commercial and recreational management measures. Council staff will provide a presentation on potential management measure changes for greater amberjack to best balance stakeholder access while remaining below the new catch limits during the rebuilding plan. The RFAP should consider options presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XV: Public Comment

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the RFAP directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item XVI: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by RFAP members, time permitting. If the RFAP wishes to pursue action, then action can be

scheduled at a future RFAP meeting.

Mr. Martin Fisher will discuss U.S. Coast Guard inspection requirements for Gulf federal commercial reef fish permits. A representative from the U.S. Coast Guard will be available to assist in the discussion.