

Modification of the Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper Catch Limits and Accountability Measures

Framework Action to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish of the Gulf of Mexico

For review by LETC at its March 9, 2021, meeting

Accountability measures (AM) are used to reduce the likelihood of exceeding the annual catch limit and to ensure that overfishing does not occur in the fishery. In-season fishing closures are an example of an AM, and may be triggered when landings are projected or estimated to have reached the annual catch limit (ACL) or annual catch target (ACT), depending on how defined in the regulations for a given species, if applicable.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Council took final action on the following preferred alternatives at its January 2021 meeting.

Action 1 – Modify Catch Limits and Annual Catch Target for Lane Snapper

Alternative 1: No Action. The lane snapper OFL, ABC, ACL, and ACT will remain the same as implemented in 2012 by the Generic ACL/AM Amendment.

Preferred Alternative 2: Modify the lane snapper OFL, ABC, and ACL based on the recommendation of the SSC for 2021 and subsequent years from the updated yield projections, as presented to the SSC in March 2020. Do not set an ACT.

Alternative 3: Modify the lane snapper OFL, ABC, and ACL based on the recommendation of the SSC for 2021 and subsequent years from the updated yield projections, as presented to the SSC in March 2020. Set an ACT using the Gulf Council’s ACL/ACT Control Rule, which would result in a 16% buffer between the ACL and the ACT.

Action 2 – Modify the Fishing Season Closure AM for Lane Snapper

Note: Alternative 2 and Alternative 3b are not valid if Alternative 2 is selected in Action 1.

Alternative 1: No Action. If the ACL is exceeded in a given fishing year, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will prohibit harvest of lane snapper in the recreational and commercial sectors in the subsequent fishing year if landings meet or are projected to meet the stock ACL.

Alternative 2: Modify the closure AM such that an overage of the ACL in a fishing year would trigger a prohibition on the harvest of lane snapper by the recreational and commercial sectors in the following fishing year when the ACT is met or is projected to be met.

Preferred Alternative 3: Modify the closure AM such that if annual landings in a given year meet or are projected to meet the prescribed trigger, NMFS would prohibit harvest of lane snapper by the recreational and commercial sectors for the remainder of the fishing year.

Preferred Option 3a: Prescribed trigger is the ACL.

Option 3b: Prescribed trigger is the ACT.

Questions:

- Is law enforcement receiving adequate communication regarding in-season closures?
- Does the LETC wish to receive updates on the progress of regulatory actions that consider establishing or modifying in-season closures?