

Draft Reef Fish Amendment 53: Red Grouper Allocations and Annual Catch Levels and Targets



February 24, 2021

Purpose and Need Statements

- The purposes are to revise the red grouper allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors using the best scientific information available and to modify the total and sector ACLs based on results of the recent stock assessment and subsequent OFL and ABC recommendations from the SSC.
- The need is to use the best scientific information available to establish Gulf red grouper sector allocations and ACLs, ensuring that the historical participation by the recreational and commercial sectors is accurately reflected by the sector ACLs, and that recreational ACL is consistent with the data used to monitor recreational landings and trigger accountability measures (AM).



Background

- Acknowledging that the status quo sector allocations for red grouper are based on the older and no longer used MRFSS data, the Council requested that the SSC examine alternative sector allocation scenarios considering the contemporary FES calibrated MRIP data.
- The SSC reviewed these scenarios in January 2020, and after affirming that SEDAR 61 (which uses the MRIP FES recreational landings estimates) represented the best scientific information available, recommended the projections included in **Alternatives 3-5 of Action 1** as scientifically valid estimates of OFL and ABC.
 - The OFL and ABC included in **Alternative 2 of Action 1** was previously recommended at the September 2019 SSC meeting.



Recent Motions

- At its January 2021 meeting, the Council selected preferred alternatives for Actions 1 and 2. The Council also requested development of a new alternative for Action 1 that holds the commercial ACL in pounds at its current level.
- At its October 2020 meeting, the Reef Fish AP passed the following resolution:
 - Whereas we the Reef Fish AP have thoroughly considered all the options in Action 1 of Reef Fish Amendment 53 presented to us, and whereas we have been unable to reach a consensus due to a lack of confidence in the recreational data used to inform the proposed allocations in the alternatives. Therefore, be it resolved the Reef Fish AP cannot recommend any of the proposed alternatives in Action 1.



Action 1

Modify the Sector Allocations, OFL, ABC, and ACLs for Red Grouper

- **Alternative 1:** No Action – Maintain the sector allocations of the total ACL for red grouper between the commercial and recreational sectors. The allocations for red grouper are 76% commercial and 24% recreational. The allocation was derived from the average landings using Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) data from the years 1986 through 2005, established in Reef Fish Amendment 30B. Maintain the current OFL, ABC, and ACLs.
 - **Alternative 1** is not legally viable because it is not based on the best scientific information available, and would retain the current OFL and ABC, which are above the values produced by the SEDAR 61 stock assessment and recommended by the SSC.



Action 1

- **Alternative 2:** Maintain the sector allocations of the total ACL as 76% commercial and 24% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) based on Southeast Data Assessment and Review (SEDAR) 61 (2019). Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.
- **Preferred Alternative 3:** Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors as the average landings using Fishing Effort Survey (FES)-adjusted Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP FES) data during the years 1986 through 2005, based on the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) ACL monitoring datasets. The allocations for red grouper are 59.3% commercial and 40.7% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC based on SEDAR 61 (2019). Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.



Action 1

- **Alternative 4:** Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors as the average landings using MRIP FES data during the years 1986 through 2009, based on the SEFSC ACL monitoring datasets. The allocations for red grouper are 60.5% commercial and 39.5% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC based on SEDAR 61 (2019). Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.
- **Alternative 5:** Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors as the average landings using MRIP FES data during the years 1986 through 2018, based on the SEFSC ACL monitoring datasets. The allocations for red grouper are 59.7% commercial and 40.3% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC based on SEDAR 61 (2019). Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.



Action 1

- **Alternative 6:** Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors, such that the commercial ACL is retained at 3.16 million pounds gutted weight. The allocations for red grouper are 68.7% commercial and 31.3% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC to retain the commercial ACL. Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.



Action 1

	OFL*	ABC	Total ACL	Comm ACL	Rec ACL
Alt 1**	14.16	13.92	4.16	3.16	1.00
MRIP FES equivalent			(5.26)		(2.10)
Alt 2***	5.35	4.90	4.90	3.72	1.18
Preferred Alt 3***	4.66	4.26	4.26	2.53	1.73
Alt 4***	4.70	4.30	4.30	2.60	1.70
Alt 5***	4.67	4.28	4.28	2.56	1.72
Alt 6***	5.03	4.60	4.60	3.16	1.44

- *Values for OFL, ACB, total ACL, commercial ACL, and recreational ACL are in millions of pounds (mp) gutted weight (gw).
- **The recreational portion of the current OFL, ABC, and ACLs are based on MRIP CHTS data.
- ***The recreational sector ACL is in MRIP FES currency.



Action 2

Modify the Gulf Red Grouper Annual Catch Targets

- **Alternative 1:** No Action – Maintain the current buffer between the ACL and ACT for each sector. The commercial buffer is 5%, and the recreational buffer is 8%.
- **Alternative 2:** Apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule to revise the buffer between the ACL and ACT for each sector. The commercial buffer is 0%, and the recreational buffer is 9%.
- **Preferred Alternative 3:** Maintain the current buffer between the ACL and ACT for the commercial sector, and apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule to revise the buffer between the ACL and ACT for the recreational sector. The commercial buffer is 5%, and the recreational buffer is 9%.



Action 2

Commercial and recreational ACTs, based on Action 1 and Action 2 selections

		Action 2					
		Alt 1		Alt 2		Preferred Alt 3	
		Comm	Rec	Comm	Rec	Comm	Rec
Action 1	Alt 1	3.00	0.92** (1.93)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Alt 2	3.53	1.09	3.72	1.07	3.53	1.07
	Preferred Alt 3	2.40	1.59	2.53	1.57	2.40	1.57
	Alt 4	2.47	1.56	2.60	1.55	2.47	1.55
	Alt 5	2.43	1.58	2.56	1.57	2.43	1.57
	Alt 6	3.00	1.32	3.16	1.31	3.00	1.31

- * Values are in millions of pounds, gutted weight and in MRIP FES currency.
- **The recreational sector ACT for Action 1, Alternative 1 is in CHTS currency; the recreational sector ACT in MRIP FES currency is in parentheses.



Action 2

The predicted closure dates for each recreational ACT (mp gw) currently in Amendment 53 generated from predicted landings and also predicted landings upper and lower 95% confidence intervals.

Alternatives (Action 2 – Action 1)	ACL	Buffer	ACT	Predicted Closure Date	Season Length (95% Confidence Interval)
1-1	2.10	8%	1.93	No Closure	Sep 15 - No Closure
1-2	1.18	8%	1.09	July 26	June 5 - No Closure
2-2; 3-2	1.18	9%	1.07	July 23	June 3 - No Closure
1-3	1.73	8%	1.59	November 20	July 29 - No Closure
2-3; 3-3	1.73	9%	1.57	November 16	July 26 - No Closure
1-4	1.70	8%	1.56	November 14	July 25 - No Closure
2-4; 3-4	1.70	9%	1.55	November 12	July 24 - No Closure
1-5	1.72	8%	1.58	November 18	July 27 - No Closure
2-5; 3-5	1.72	9%	1.57	November 16	July 26 - No Closure
1-6	1.44	8%	1.32	August 27	June 27 - No Closure
2-6; 3-6	1.44	9%	1.31	August 25	June 26 - No Closure



Next Steps

- Revised Public Hearing draft will be brought to the Council at its April 2021 meeting
- Council staff will schedule and hold public hearing meetings (motion from January Council meeting)
- Additional steps are contingent upon Council motions and, if directed, could include the following:
 - SERO would send a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to be published with EPA
 - 45 day clock on comments; takes a week (7 days) to publish after sent



Add'l slides: FMP Objectives

At its August 2019 meeting, the Council last modified the objectives. Any allocation or reallocation must be consistent with the Reef Fish FMP objectives.

- 1. To prevent overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks.
- 2. To achieve robust fishery reporting and data collection systems across all sectors for monitoring the reef fish fishery, which minimizes scientific, management, and risk uncertainty.
- 3. To conserve and protect reef fish habitat.
- 4. To minimize conflicts between user groups.
- 5. To minimize and reduce dead discards.
- 6. To manage Gulf stocks at OY as defined in MSA.



Add'l slides: FMP Objectives

- 7. To revise the definitions of the fishery management unit and fishery to reflect the current species composition of the reef fish fishery.
- 8. To encourage and periodically review research on the efficacy of artificial reefs for management purposes.
- 9. To promote stability in the fishery by allowing for enhanced fisher flexibility and increasing fishing opportunities to the extent practicable.
- 10. To avoid to the extent practicable the "derby" type fishing season.
- 11. To provide for cost-effective and enforceable management of the fishery.
- 12. To promote and maintain accountability in the reef fish fishery.

