

January 2023 Council Meeting

Full Council: Other Business

Motion: Initiate development of a recreational fisheries management initiative for reef fish in 2023. The goal of this initiative is to evaluate the efficacy of current Federal recreational reef fish management in the Gulf of Mexico and develop future management approaches and guidance intended to prevent overfishing, address discards and/or discard mortality, account for uncertainty in recreational data, and provide for innovative new management approaches to regulate Federally managed recreational fisheries.

The initiative would include:

1. Development, review, and revision of goals and objectives for recreational fisheries management;
2. A review of the status of Federally managed species in the Gulf of Mexico that are highly sought after by recreational anglers, including recreational sources of directed and bycatch mortality;
3. A review of recreational management measures, including how management measures have changed over time;
4. Assessment of the performance and efficacy of recreational accountability measures and recommended improvements;
5. Evaluation and consideration of harvest control rules (i.e., pre-agreed guidelines) for setting bag, size, and season limits;
6. Scientific recommendations to the Council for addressing variability and uncertainty in recreational catch estimates, including use of multiple years of data, identification of catch estimates that are the result of low sample sizes or outliers, and statistical recommendations and guidance for how such approaches could be implemented; and,
7. Exploration of innovative new management strategies, including but not limited to: regional management, sector separation, a bottom-fish season, effort rationalization, and management approaches for reducing discards and discard mortality.

Motion carried to 13 to 3 with 1 abstention.