



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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April 17, 2024

Dr. Clay Porch, Director
Southeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
75 Virginia Beach Dr.
Miami, Florida 33149

Dear Dr. Porch:

During its April 8-11th meeting, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed the March 2024 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting outcomes, including the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's (SEFSC) effort to undergo a holistic stock assessment improvement process¹. It is well understood that resources are unlikely to increase for supporting analytical agencies such as the SEFSC and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Thus, the SEFSC outlined a process that would also target efficiency gains at current resources levels, by better matching assessment needs with available data and resources to optimize the outcomes that more fully meet fishery management needs. The Council was supportive of these efforts and echoed the need for simpler, more frequent, and timely catch advice. The Council and SEFSC discussed the difficulties in meeting the ever-evolving challenges that managers face and the inherent need for near-term catch advice. Additionally, it was also recognized that the Council is working with the Southeast Regional Office to identify tools to streamline the regulatory process.

As part of evolving and improving the stock assessment process, the SEFSC requested that the Council identify "key stocks" to begin operationalizing these efficiency gains in 2026. Below is a list of five key stocks that that Gulf Council has identified the need for catch advice at least every 3-years:

- Red snapper
- Red grouper
- Gag grouper
- Gray snapper
- Greater amberjack

The Council looks forward to future updates on stock assessment improvements identified by the SEFSC during the next SEDAR Steering Committee, scheduled May 30th, 2024, and is happy to assist in planning meetings as needed. The Council appreciates SEFSC efforts to work collaboratively to realize these efficiency gains and looks forward to informing the Council's Scientific and Statical Committee members of these improvements during their

¹ https://sedarweb.org/documents/attach3_sefsc_stock-assessment-process-improvements-pdf/

July 30 – August 1, 2024, meeting followed by the Council during its August 19 – 22, 2024, meeting.

We appreciate your efforts and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin Anson".

Kevin Anson
Council Chair

cc: Council Members
Council Staff
Jack McGovern, Ph.D.
Shannon Cass-Calay, Ph.D.
Katie Siegfried, Ph.D.
John Walter, Ph.D.
Larry Massey
Julie Neer, Ph.D.
Jim Nance, Ph.D.
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SEDAR Steering Committee members