

## Review of Gulf of Mexico Black and Yellowfin Grouper Landings Data

Black and yellowfin grouper are managed as part of the Other Shallow Water Grouper complex that includes scamp and yellowmouth grouper. At its May 2023 SSC meeting, the SSC reviewed historical landings data for Gulf of Mexico black and yellowfin grouper and provided a combined OFL and ABC recommendation. The SSC noted that black and yellowfin grouper are data poor with considerable uncertainty in the landings. The SSC used Tier 3a of the ABC Control Rule to set the OFL (mean + 2 Standard Deviations) and ABC (mean + 1.5 Standard Deviations) for both stocks (combined landings) using MRIP-FES data units, using a reference period from 2010 through 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1. OFL and ABC recommendation for black and yellowfin grouper (combined) from the SSC at its May 2023 meeting.

Catch Level	Pounds gutted weight
OFL	359,255
ABC	307,752

Subsequent to the SSC review, Council staff requested an updated landings history for black grouper while working on a document considering changes to recreational management measures for gag and black grouper<sup>1</sup>. During review of the updated data, Council staff identified a large discrepancy between the data pulled for the gag and black grouper management action<sup>2</sup> and landings data reviewed by the SSC at its May 2023 meeting. Council and SERO staffs worked collaboratively to determine the cause of the discrepancy and provide and updated landings data for review by the SSC at this February 2024 meeting. A summary of the landings from the May 2023 SSC meeting are provided in Table 1. In December 2023, SERO provided updated data for black and yellowfin grouper for both the recreational and commercial sectors. For this summary document, the landings for black and yellowfin grouper were combined for each sector. Yellowfin grouper landings are very low in both the recreational and commercial sectors. This pattern is consistent across both of the data queries and is consistent with prior knowledge of the fishery for this species.

**Table 1.** Combined black and yellowfin grouper landings (lbs gw) as presented at the May 2023 SSC meeting.

Year	Commercial	Recreational	Total
2010	22,299	7,808	30,107
2011	35,915	29,736	65,651
2012	48,276	179,370	227,646
2013	57,606	92,493	150,099
2014	61,123	144,829	205,952
2015	55,273	285,933	341,206

<sup>1</sup> Work on this document ceased at the January 2024 Council meeting and is not expected to be developed further.

<sup>2</sup> <https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/B-12-RF-FA-Gag-and-Black-Grouper-Mgmt-Measures-10132023.pdf>

2016	49,497	241,936	291,433
2017	37,184	28,220	65,404
2018	35,246	16,532	51,778
2019	26,011	20,101	46,112
2020	25,411	158,681	184,092
2021	25,937	153,507	179,444

In December 2023, SERO staff reviewed the update landings data for black and yellowfin grouper (Table 2). Council and SERO staffs identified that the commercial landings estimates were identical for both the May 2023 and December 2023 data sets (Table 3). However, the recreational landings provided in the December 2023 data pull (Table 2) were substantially lower than the data provided at the May 2023 meeting (Table 1). Council and SERO staffs noted that a substantial proportion of black grouper landings are harvested in Monroe County, Florida (i.e., Florida Keys); however, for management purposes, landings from Monroe County should be assigned to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s region and not included as part of the Gulf’s historical landings. SERO staff further partitioned the landings data from Monroe County. This allowed for a comparison between the difference in recreational landings (i.e., recreational data in Table 1 vs. Table 2) and the Monroe County Landings (Table 4). Results indicate that the May 2023 data inadvertently included Monroe County landings and this was subsequently corrected in the December 2023 data set (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Updated black and yellowfin grouper landings (lbs gw) for review at the February 2023 SSC meeting.

Year	Commercial	Rec Total	Total
2010	22,299	334	22,633
2011	35,915	565	36,480
2012	48,276	51,314	99,590
2013	57,606	5,911	63,517
2014	61,123	826	61,949
2015	55,273	3,807	59,080
2016	49,497	8,182	57,679
2017	37,184	8,814	45,998
2018	35,246	358	35,604
2019	26,011	356	26,367
2020	25,411	2,098	27,509
2021	25,937	199	26,136

**Table 3.** Difference in landings (lbs gw) by sector between the data presented in May 2023 in comparison to an updated data provision.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>Rec Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
2010	0	7,474	7,474
2011	0	29,171	29,171
2012	0	128,056	128,056
2013	0	86,582	86,582
2014	0	144,003	144,003
2015	0	282,126	282,126
2016	0	233,754	233,754
2017	0	19,406	19,406
2018	0	16,174	16,174
2019	0	19,745	19,745
2020	0	156,583	156,583
2021	0	153,308	153,308

**Table 4.** Monroe County recreational landings (lbs gw). These landings were responsible for the difference in the landings between the May 2023 and December 2023 data pulls.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Monroe County, FL Rec Landings</b>
2010	7,483
2011	29,192
2012	128,188
2013	86,649
2014	144,085
2015	282,166
2016	234,045
2017	19,449
2018	16,242
2019	19,833
2020	156,700
2021	153,319

Council staff are requesting that the SSC reconsider its previous OFL and ABC recommendations for black and yellowfin grouper. Using updated landings data (Table 2) with the same methodology (i.e., Tier 3a [2010-2021 as reference years]) would result in OFL and ABC of 91,997 and 80,717 lbs gw, respectively.

**Table 5.** OFL and ABC values calculated using Tier 3a of the ABC Control Rule to set the OFL (mean + 2 Standard Deviations) and ABC (mean + 1.5 Standard Deviations) for both stocks (combined landings)

using MRIP-FES data units, using a reference period from 2010 through 2021 with the updated recreational landings data as presented in Table 2.

Catch Level	Pounds gutted weight
OFL	91,997
ABC	80,717