



PUBLIC HEARING GUIDE

09/13/2022

Reef Fish Amendment 54: Modifications to Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations



Photos by Mike Jennings, Carrie Simmons, Ed Frekey, GP Schmahl, Troy Frady, Abby Webster, and Mark Miller.

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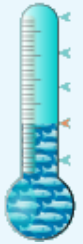
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What is a Public Hearing?

A public hearing gives you an opportunity to comment on a fishery management plan or amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is developing. Public hearings are conducted later in the amendment development process, after the Council has begun selecting preferred alternatives for proposed actions, but before taking final action. Suggestions, issues, and concerns expressed during the public hearings will be presented to the Council for review and consideration before final action is taken.

Focusing your comments on the pros and cons of specific alternatives in each action provides the most useful guidance to the Council. If you are unable to attend a public hearing in person, you are encouraged to submit your comments online. For online comment forms, video presentations, and full Amendment documents, visit our Amendments Under Development webpage at <https://gulfcouncil.org/amendments-under-development/>



How does a public hearing affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the public hearing process are reported to the full Council prior to final action. Your input is considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures to address the issue(s) at hand.

How else can I get involved?

There are many ways you can help the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identify fishery management needs and develop reasonable management alternatives, each dependent on how actively involved you want to become. The first step to becoming involved is to educate yourself about the management process by visiting our website at www.gulfcouncil.org, signing up to receive our communications, and contacting Council members and staff to discuss management concerns. You can attend meetings, serve on panels and committees that advise the Council on fishery issues, and even apply to become a Council member.

Introduction to Amendment 54

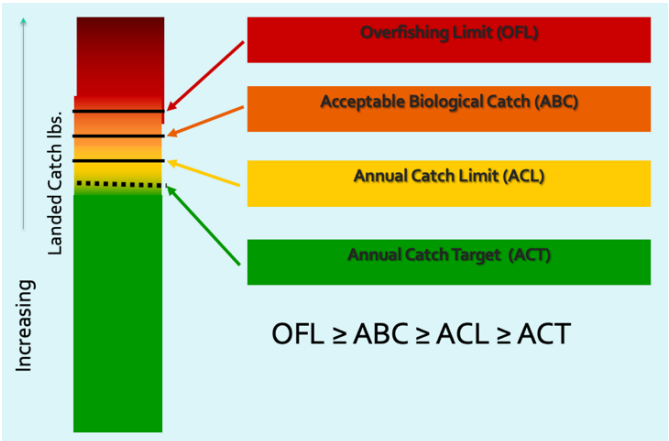
The most recent greater amberjack stock assessment (SEDAR 70) determined that greater amberjack is not making adequate rebuilding progress and is still both overfished and experiencing overfishing. This is the sixth time that the greater amberjack stock has been assessed and considered to be overfished and experiencing overfishing since 2000. This determination comes despite the relatively recent implementation of several management measures that have constrained catch and reduced the fishing mortality overall, and most recently on greater amberjack before they reach reproductive maturity.

The stock assessment incorporated recent improvements to the recreational data survey (i.e., Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey [MRIP - FES]), which is designed to measure recreational landings and effort more accurately. The current allocation between the commercial and recreational sectors was set using the Marine Recreational fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) that later transitioned to Marine Recreational Information Programs Coastal Household Telephone Survey (MRIP-CHTS) and is the basis of the current OFL, ABC, ACLs, and ACTs. The new recreational landings and effort estimates generated by MRIP-FES are accounted for back in time, recreating the historical recreational time series for private anglers and state guide boats. In comparison to previous data collection systems, the data from MRIP-FES indicate that historical recreational catch and effort are greater than previously estimated and affect estimates of historical landings, sector participation, and stock productivity.



The Council is obligated to enact management changes necessary to end overfishing and meet the current 2027 rebuilding goal.

The Council’s Scientific and Statical Committee (SSC) has recommended a significant decrease in the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) levels for greater amberjack. In this document, the Council will consider aligning greater amberjack annual catch limits (ACLs) and annual catch targets (ACTs) with the new OFL and ABC recommendations. The Council will also consider modifying the allocations between commercial and recreational sectors to align them with the new estimates of recreational harvest from the MRIP-FES program.



Action 1 – Modify Sector Allocations, OFL, ABC, and ACL

The current OFL is 2,167,000 pounds, the ABC is 1,794,000 pounds, and the total ACL is 1,794,000 pounds (all values in whole weight). These values were set using the old recreational landings estimates from MRIP-CHTS and are not directly comparable to the recommendations based on the latest stock assessment that used MRIP-FES. The Council is obligated to adjust the greater amberjack OFL and ABC based on the recommendations of its SSC. The recommended ABCs represent a drastic reduction from current catch levels that continues through the end of the rebuilding program in 2027. However, catch levels do increase each year from 2024 to 2027 as the expected recovery of the stock will allow more harvest while maintain progress toward rebuilding. The Council can set the total annual catch limit at or below the newly recommended ABCs.

The current allocation allows 27% of the annual catch limit (ACL) to be harvested commercially and 73% to be harvested by the recreational sector. The latest stock assessment, which estimated greater historical recreational catch and effort than previous assessments, prompts the Council to reconsider

allocations between sectors. The allocation selected affects the total allowable harvest because the discard rate and average size/age of harvest varies between sectors. The Council has not yet selected a preferred alternative in Action 1.

Alternative 1 - No Action: Maintain the 73% recreational and 27% commercial sector allocations derived from average landings using MRFSS data from 1981-2004. Maintain the current OFL, ABC, and ACLs. Maintain the recreational sector ACL in MRIP-CHTS units.

This is not a legally viable alternative because it is not based on the best scientific information available, and it would retain catch levels that are above those and recommended by the SSC.

Year	Rec Fishing Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL
2020+	2019/2020+	2,167,000	1,794,000	1,794,000	1,309,620	484,380
2020+ MRIP-FES Equivalent	2019/2020+	3,480,000	2,930,000	2,930,000		

Note: Expressed in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the 2020+ OFL, ABC, total ACL are based on MRIP-CHTS data. The MRIP-FES equivalent OFL, ABC, and total ACL are provided for comparison purposes only and were estimated by an supplemental analysis from the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center ([Supplemental analysis](#)).

Alternative 2: Maintain the 73% recreational and 27% commercial sector allocations. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC and set the stock ACL equal to the ABC. The reduction in the total stock ACL for 2023 would be approximately 78% relative to the current total ACL.

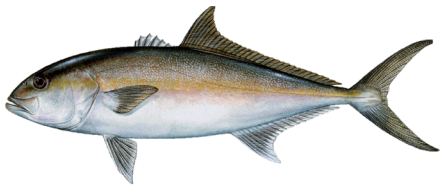
Year	Rec Fishing Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL
2023	2022/2023	2,236,000	649,000	649,000	473,770	175,230
2024	2023/2024	2,343,000	770,000	770,000	562,100	207,900
2025	2024/2025	2,419,000	875,000	875,000	638,750	236,250
2026	2025/2026	2,472,000	964,000	964,000	703,720	260,280
2027	2026/2027	2,507,000	1,035,000	1,035,000	755,550	279,450

Note: Values are in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the OFL, ABC, total ACL and ACL are based on MRIP-FES data.

Alternative 3: Revise the sector allocations using MRIP-FES adjusted average landings during 1981-2004. The allocations are 84% recreational and 16% commercial. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC and set the stock ACL equal to the ABC. The reduction in the total stock ACL for 2023 would be approximately 79% relative to the current total ACL.

Year	Rec Fishing Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL
2023	2022/2023	2,130,000	621,000	621,000	521,640	99,360
2024	2023/2024	2,234,000	739,000	739,000	620,760	118,240
2025	2024/2025	2,305,000	842,000	842,000	707,280	134,720
2026	2025/2026	2,354,000	929,000	929,000	780,360	148,640
2027	2026/2027	1,996,000	497,000	497,000	417,480	159,840

Note: Values are in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the OFL, ABC, total ACL and ACL are based on MRIP-FES data.



Alternative 4: Revise the sector allocations using MRIP-FES adjusted average landings during 1993-2007. The allocations are 78% recreational and 22% commercial. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC and set the stock ACL equal to the ABC. The reduction in the total stock ACL for 2023 would be approximately 78% relative to the current stock ACL.

Year	Rec Fishing Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL
2023	2022/2023	2,186,000	636,000	636,000	496,080	139,920
2024	2023/2024	2,292,000	756,000	756,000	589,680	166,320
2025	2024/2025	2,365,000	860,000	860,000	670,800	189,200
2026	2025/2026	2,417,000	947,000	947,000	738,660	208,340
2027	2026/2027	2,451,000	1,018,000	1,018,000	794,040	223,960

Note: Values are in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the OFL, ABC, total ACL and ACL are based on MRIP-FES data.



Alternative 5: Revise the sector allocations using MRIP-FES adjusted average landings during 1993-2019. The allocations are 80% recreational and 20% commercial. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC and set the stock ACL equal to the ABC. The reduction in the total stock ACL for 2023 would be approximately 79% relative to the current stock ACL.

Year	Rec Fishing Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL
2023	2022/2023	2,167,000	631,000	631,000	504,800	126,200
2024	2023/2024	2,272,000	750,000	750,000	600,000	150,000
2025	2024/2025	2,345,000	854,000	854,000	683,200	170,800
2026	2025/2026	2,395,000	941,000	941,000	752,800	188,200
2027	2026/2027	2,429,000	1,012,000	1,012,000	809,600	202,400

Note: Values are in pounds whole weight. The recreational portion of the OFL, ABC, total ACL and ACL are based on MRIP-FES data.

Action 2 – Modify Sector ACTs

Currently, both commercial and recreational sectors have ACL/ACT buffers. ACTs are used to account for management uncertainty and reduce the likelihood that annual catch limits are exceeded and that accountability measures are triggered. For both sectors, ACTs are used to project in-season closures. The Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule was used to determine the buffers between ACLs and ACTs. The Control Rule adjusts the buffer based on a number of factors including the number and magnitude of overages to the ACL in the reference period, accountability measures in place to account for any quota overages, and the method by which the quota is monitored. Currently, there is a 17% recreational buffer and a 13% commercial buffer between the annual catch limit and annual catch target. Landings used to calculate the buffers between ACLs and ACTs are available through 2020 however, using 2020 landings may not be representative of normal fishing practices due to the onset of COVID-19 that resulted in changes in fishing behavior and harvest monitoring programs.



Alternative 1 - No Action: Maintain the current buffer between the ACL and ACT for each sector. The recreational buffer is 17% and the commercial buffer is 13%.

Alternative 2: Apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule using the most recent time series of 2017-2020 to revise the buffer between ACL and ACT for each sector. The recreational buffer is 13% and the commercial buffer is 7%.

Preferred Alternative 3: Apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule using the years 2016-2029 to revise the buffer between ACL and ACT for each sector. The recreational buffer is 17% and the commercial buffer is 7%.

Public Hearing Meeting Information

In-Person Public Hearing meetings will be hosted beginning at 6:00pm local time at the following dates and locations:

Monday, September 26, 2022 -

Madeira Beach, FL

City Hall in The City Centre
300 Municipal Drive
Madeira Beach, FL 33708
(727) 391-9951

Monday, October 3, 2022

Marathon, FL

Marathon Government Center
2798 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
(305) 289-6036

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

Galveston, TX

Hilton Galveston Island Resort
5400 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston, TX 77551
(409) 744-5000

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Kenner, LA

Double Tree New Orleans Airport
2150 Veterans Memorial Boulevard
Kenner, LA 70062
(504) 467-3111

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Orange Beach, AL

Adult Activity Center
26251 Canal Road
Orange Beach, AL 36561
(251) 981-3440

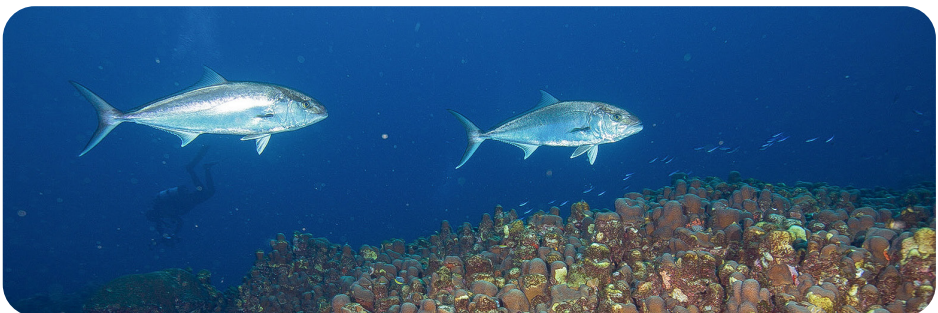
Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Via [Webinar](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/yckwmjx7>

Send Us Your Comments

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. Submit your comments online by visiting: <https://tinyurl.com/jddyekr> or scan the QR code with your mobile phone.





Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

4107 W. Spruce Street
Suite 200
Tampa, FL 33607

Tel: 888-833-1844

Fax: 813-348-1711

Email: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org

Web site: www.gulfcouncil.org

