

**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

**SERO**

# Interim Measures for Gag in the Gulf of Mexico

June 2022 GMFMC Meeting

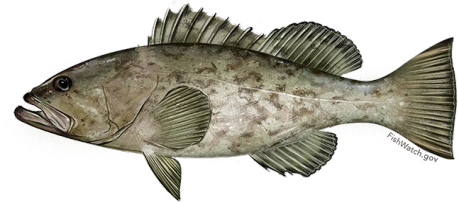


# Review: Interim Measures

- Under MSA section 304(e)(6), Council may request the Secretary implement interim measures to reduce overfishing until such measures can be replaced by a plan, amendment, or regulations
- Limited to 180 days duration
- May be extended one time for up to 186 more days (366 total days)

# Timeline

- Council notified of stock status on January 26, 2022
- Interim measures in place to reduce or end overfishing for 2023 fishing year
- Action to end overfishing and implement rebuilding plan by 2024 fishing year



# Council Motion from April Meeting:

- Request that SERO provide to the Council at its June 2022 meeting an analysis of data needed to develop an interim rule to reduce overfishing of gag grouper in the Gulf of Mexico for the 2023 fishing year. The analysis will include:
  - (1) options for distributing quota to the recreational and commercial fishery sectors in an equitable manner (e.g., proportional reduction in catch using data from 2017-2019) given an ABC of 660,000 lbs ww based on a rebuilding time frame of  $T_{min} * 2$ , and
  - (2) options to maximize the number of fishing days for the recreational sector based on various fishing season start dates in 2023, including October 1 and November 1.

# Council Decision Points - Interim Rule

- **Action 1: Alternatives for:**
  - New catch limits + catch targets
  - Allocation decision
  - Decision on red grouper multi-use provision (for this interim rule only)
- **Action 2: Alternatives for:**
  - Season starting date
  - Length of season based on starting date

# Review: Status Quo Management

## Recreational

- ACT = 90% of recreational ACL
- Open June through December unless or until landings projected to reach ACL
  - Note that in Florida waters, off Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson and Taylor counties: Open April 1–June 30, & Sept 1–Dec. 31.
- Minimum size limit = 24" total length
- Bag limit = 2 per person within 4 grouper aggregate
- If ACL exceeded, ACT used the following year to project closure; payback if overfished and ACL exceeded

## Commercial

- IFQ program
- Minimum size limit - 24" total length
- The IFQ program serves as the AM

# Action 1: Potential Alternatives

## Alternative 1: No Action

Stock ACL	3,120,000
Commercial ACL (39% of Stock ACL)	1,217,000
Commercial Quota	939,000
Recreational ACL (61% of Stock ACL)	1,903,000
Recreational ACT	1,708,000

- **Alternative 1** would allow gag fishing at the same effort/catch levels; would not reduce or prevent overfishing.
- **Alternative 1** catch levels would allow for continued overfishing of gag.
- For these reasons, **Alternative 1** is **not viable because it is incompatible with the purpose of the interim rule.**

# Action 1: Alternative 2: Tmin\*2, Allocation 61% Rec/ 39% Comm

Stock ACL	661,901
Commercial ACL (39% of Stock ACL)	258,142
Commercial Quota	199,157
Recreational ACL (61% of Stock ACL)*	403,759

\*Recreational landings in FES units

- **Alternative 2** would set the 2023 stock ACL based on the “Tmin\*2” rebuilding scenario.
- Would use the current allocation split (61% Rec / 39% Comm).
- Large cuts to catch limits for both sectors.
- Because SRFS landings are more similar to CHTS than FES, this alternative would avoid shifting the allocation toward the recreational sector in 2023, and then shifting the allocation back toward the commercial sector in 2024 using the new SRFS-based stock assessment and catch data.



# Action 1: Alternative 3: Tmin\*2, Allocation 79.5% Rec/ 20.5% Comm

Stock ACL	611,578
Commercial ACL (20.5% of Stock ACL)	125,374
Commercial Quota	97,726
Recreational ACL (79.5% of Stock ACL)*	486,204

\*Recreational landings in FES units

- **Alternative 3** would set the 2023 stock ACL based on the “Tmin\*2” rebuilding scenario.
- Would use the allocation split based on MRIP-FES revised landings for the 1986-2005 reference period (79.5% Rec/20.5% Comm).
- Large cuts to catch limits for both sectors.
- **Lower** allocation to commercial sector relative to **Alternative 2**.
- **Lower** stock ACL relative to **Alternative 2**.

## Action 1: Alternative 4: Tmin\*2, Allocation 82% Rec/ 18% Comm

Stock ACL	605,165
Commercial ACL (18% of Stock ACL)	108,930
Commercial Quota	84,039
Recreational ACL (82% of Stock ACL)*	496,235

\*Recreational landings in FES units

- **Alternative 4** would set the 2023 stock ACL based on the “Tmin\*2” rebuilding scenario.
- Would use the 2017-2019 recreational and commercial landings to set allocation
  - Results in an allocation split of 82% Rec / 18% Comm.
  - Would proportionally reduce harvest for both sectors consistent with the Council’s motion from its April 2022 meeting.
- Large cuts to catch limits for both sectors.
- **Lowest** allocation to commercial sector of the Alternatives.
- **Lowest** stock ACL relative to all other Alternatives in Action 1.
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# Gag Commercial and Rec Landings, 2010-2020

Gag Grouper (gw)									
	Commercial			Recreational			Total		
Year	Total Reported	ACL	ACL %	Total Reported	ACL	ACL %	Total Reported	ACL	ACL %
2020	475,714	1,217,000	39.1	909,703	1,902,999	47.8	1,385,417	3,120,000	44.4%
2019	532,015	1,217,000	43.7	859,828	1,903,000	45.2	1,391,843	3,120,000	44.6%
2018	492,934	1,217,000	40.5	1,008,468	1,903,001	53	1,501,402	3,120,000	48.1%
2017	492,095	1,217,000	40.4	832,960	1,903,000	43.8	1,325,055	3,120,000	42.5%
2016	910,996	1,217,000	74.9	796,430	1,903,000	41.9	1,707,426	3,120,000	54.7%

- All recreational landings are in MRIP-CHTS units.
- The gag combined comm/rec ACL has not changed since 2015.
- Fishermen have not harvested more than 50% of this ACL since 2016.
- In 2020, commercial gag harvest was the lowest since 2011.

# Action 1: Summary of Alternatives

	Stock ACL	Rec ACL	Comm ACL	Commercial Quota	Allocation Split (Rec/Comm)
<b>Alt. 1</b>	3,120,000	1,903,000	1,217,000	939,000	61% / 39%
<b>Alt. 2</b>	661,901	403,759	258,142	199,157	61% / 39%
<b>Alt. 3</b>	611,578	486,204	125,374	97,726	79.5% / 20.5%
<b>Alt. 4</b>	605,165	496,235	108,930	84,039	82% / 18%

\*Recreational catch limits for Alt. 1 are in MRIP-CHTS units. Recreational catch limits for Alts. 2-4 are in MRIP-FES units.

- Recreational ACT for 2022 is 1,708,000 lb (~89.75% of ACL), and may be set at the same percentage of the quota in this interim rule.
- The recreational ACT is an accountability measure that would not be used for management purposes in 2023.

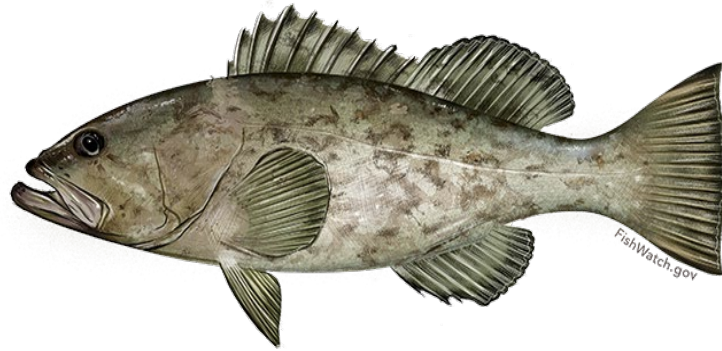
# Eliminate Red Grouper Multi-Use

- Red Grouper multi-use is currently set at 11.5% of the commercial ACL.
- When gag is under a rebuilding plan, red grouper multi-use is set at zero.
- For this interim rule, setting the RG multi-use at zero may:
  - Decrease gag harvest and overall mortality
  - Increase RG discards (including dead discards)

# Percentage applied to create multi-use allocation

Action 1	RGM %	GGM %
Alternative 1	9.9%	15.9%
Alternative 2	2.1%	75.3%
Alternative 3	1.0%	100%
Alternative 4	0.8%	100%

# Action 1: Questions and Discussion



# Action 2: Change Recreational Fishing Season

Options for changing recreational fishing season assuming different start dates and using 2017-2019 MRIP-FES landings (by wave).

- Shifts in fishing effort could considerably change landings and result in overharvest or underharvest of catch limits.
- All season lengths would be **based on NMFS projections only** because season lengths are too short to monitor in-season (under MRIP-FES).
- Options for beginning season
  - June 1
  - September 1
  - October 1
  - November 1



## Action 2: Alternative 1: June 1 Start Date (No Action)

	Rec ACL (Action 1 Alt)	Start Date	Number of Days	Projected End Date	Range*	Earliest Season End Date**
Action 2 Alternative 1	403,759 (Alt 2)	June 1	16	June 16	June 14 - June 18	June 15
	486,204 (Alt 3)		19	June 19	June 17 - June 21	June 18
	496,235 (Alt 4)		19	June 19	June 17 - June 22	June 18

\*95% upper confidence limit (UCL) based on 2017-2019 landings.

\*\*Based on highest observed landings 2017-2021.

- June 1 open = 16-19 day season (15 day minimum season).
- **Alternative 1** provides the **shortest** season of any alternative.
- If the Rec ACL is not met during the June season, NMFS may receive landings data in time to reopen the season and allow for harvest of the remaining ACL.
- **Alternative 1** is the only option allowing for the season to reopen due to underharvest.

# Action 2: Alternative 2: September 1 Start Date

	Rec ACL (Action 1 Alt)	Start Date	Number of Days	Projected End Date	95% UCL Season End Date*	Earliest Season End Date**
Action 2 Alternative 2	403,759 (Alt 2)	Sep 1	80	Nov 19	Nov 10	Sep 27
	486,204 (Alt 3)		86	Nov 25	Nov 15	Oct 3
	496,235 (Alt 4)		90	Nov 29	Nov 15	Oct 3

\*95% upper confidence limit (UCL) based on 2017-2019 landings.

\*\*Based on highest observed landings 2017-2021. Note that projected end dates are based on data from a June 1 season start date.

- September 1 open = 80-90 day season (27 day minimum season).
- **Alternative 2** provides the **longest** season of any alternative.
- Estimates for season lengths are based on 2017-2019 effort during the given months.
- September effort and landings for gag are historically **very low**. These projections **assume very low September landings**.
- *Implementing a Sept 1 start date could increase effort, which may increase landings.*
- Delaying the season start date to Sept 1 may shift effort and landings, and past average landings may not be a good predictor of the 2023 season length.

## Action 2: Alternative 3: October 1 Start Date

Action 2 Alternative 3	Rec ACL (Action 1 Alt)	Start Date	Number of Days	Projected End Date	95% UCL Season End Date*	Earliest Season End Date**
	403,759 (Alt 2)	Oct 1	55	Nov 24	Nov 16	Oct 27
	486,204 (Alt 3)		61	Nov 30	Nov 20	Nov 1
	496,235 (Alt 4)		62	Dec 1	Nov 20	Nov 2

\*95% upper confidence limit (UCL) based on 2017-2019 landings.

\*\*Based on highest observed landings 2017-2021. Note that projected end dates are based on data from a June 1 season start date.

- October 1 open = 55-62 day season (27 day minimum season).
- **Alternative 3** provides the **second longest** season of any alternative.
- October effort and landings for gag are historically **very low**. These projections **assume very low October landings**.
- *Implementing an Oct 1 start date could increase effort, which may increase landings.*
- Delaying the season start date to Oct 1 may shift effort and landings, and past average landings may not be a good predictor of the 2023 season length.

# Action 2: Alternative 4: November 1 Start Date

	Rec ACL (Action 1 Alt)	Start Date	Number of Days	Projected End Date	95% UCL Season End Date*	Earliest Season End Date**
Action 2 Alternative 4	403,759 (Alt 2)	Nov 1	29	Nov 29	Nov 21	Nov 19
	486,204 (Alt 3)		35	Dec 5	Nov 26	Nov 23
	496,235 (Alt 4)		36	Dec 6	Nov 26	Nov 23

\*95% upper confidence limit (UCL) based on 2017-2019 landings.

\*\*Based on highest observed landings 2017-2021. Note that projected end dates are based on data from a June 1 season start date.

- November 1 open = 29-36 day season (19 day minimum season).
- **Alternative 4** provides the **second shortest** season of any alternative.
- November effort and landings for gag are historically **high**. These projections assume similar November effort/landings to recent years.
- *Implementing a Nov 1 start date could increase effort, which may increase landings.*
- Delaying the season start date to Nov 1 may shift effort and landings, and past average landings may not be a good predictor of the 2023 season length.

# Action 2 Summary

Action 2 Alternative	Rec ACL (Action 1 Alt)	Start Date	Number of Days	Projected End Date	Earliest Season End Date*
1	403,759 (Alt 2)	June 1	16	June 16	June 15
	486,204 (Alt 3)		19	June 19	June 18
	496,235 (Alt 4)		19	June 19	June 18
2	403,759	Sept 1	80	Nov 19	Sep 27
	486,204		86	Nov 25	Oct 3
	496,235		96	Nov 25	Oct 3
3	403,759	Oct 1	55	Nov 24	Oct 27
	486,204		61	Nov 30	Nov 1
	496,235		62	Dec 1	Nov 2
4	403,759	Nov 1	29	Nov 29	Nov 19
	486,204		35	Dec 5	Nov 23
	496,235		36	Dec 6	Nov 23

\*Based on highest observed landings 2017-2021.

# Questions?

# Gag Rec Accountability Measures

Without regard to overfished status, and in addition to the measures specified in [paragraph \(d\)\(2\)\(i\)](#) of this section, if gag recreational landings, as estimated by the SRD, exceed the applicable ACLs specified in [paragraph \(d\)\(2\)\(iv\)](#) of this section, the AA will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to maintain the gag ACT, specified in [paragraph \(d\)\(2\)\(iv\)](#) of this section, for that following fishing year at the level of the prior year's ACT, unless the best scientific information available determines that maintaining the prior year's ACT is unnecessary. In addition, the notification will reduce the length of the recreational gag fishing season the following fishing year by the amount necessary to ensure gag recreational landings do not exceed the recreational ACT in the following fishing year.