

**Reef Fish Committee  
Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab B**

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**Agenda Item IV:** Review of Reef Fish, For-hire, and IFQ Program Landings

**Action:** Information only

**Council input and next steps:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff will review the status of reef fish, for-hire red snapper, and individual fishing quota (IFQ) program landings relative to catch limits, which is provided for the Committee’s information only. These data are part of an ongoing report to the Council that requires no action by the Committee.

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**Agenda Item V:** Draft Amendment 56: Modifications to the Gag Grouper Catch Limits, Sector Allocations, and Fishing Seasons

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** SERO staff will review the timeline for implementation for the Council’s requested interim rule for gag grouper, which is intended to reduce fishing mortality ahead of the development and implementation of Amendment 56, which will be a rebuilding plan for gag grouper. The Council is developing Amendment 56 in response to the results of the alternative run of SEDAR 72 using the State of Florida’s State Reef Fish Survey landings data for private recreational vessels. This assessment determined that Gulf gag is overfished and undergoing overfishing as of 2020. Council staff will present options for revising status determination criteria, modifications to catch limits based on the sector allocation and rebuilding timeline, changes to the definitions of the recreational and commercial annual catch targets and the commercial quota, and for modifying the recreational fishing season using SRFS catch and effort data. The Committee should ask questions and select preferred alternatives as appropriate. The Committee should consider approving the document to go out to public hearings, which will be held throughout the state of Florida and via webinar during the month of May 2023. Council staff will plan to bring a final draft of the amendment to the Council’s June 2023 meeting.

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~~**Agenda Item VI:** Draft Framework Action: Modifications to Recreational and Commercial Greater Amberjack Management Measures~~

~~**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations~~

~~**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will review a presentation considering modifications to recreational and commercial management measures for greater amberjack, including modifying recreational fixed closed seasons, recreational minimum size limits and commercial trip limits. These measures are being considered to reduce the exploitation rate of~~

~~greater amberjack while continuing to allow access to the stock. The Committee should evaluate the measures proposed and recommend modifications as appropriate.~~

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**Agenda Item VII:** IFQ Objectives

**Action:** Presentation, discussions, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present the goals and objectives in IFQ programs to assist the Council with revising the programs' goals and objectives by June 2023. The presentation addresses catch shares and limited access privilege programs broadly, IFQ program goals and examples of program provisions from other programs outside of the Gulf of Mexico, and ends by posing several questions for the Committee to consider regarding the future of the IFQ programs. The Committee should ask questions and be prepared to discuss future goals of the program at the June 2023 Council meeting.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** SSC Summary Report from the March 2023 Meeting

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Dr. Jim Nance (Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC] Chair) will present the SSC's deliberations and recommendations on several items from its January 2023 meeting in Tampa, FL. Dr. Nance will review updated projections for scamp and yellowmouth grouper based on the SEDAR 68 stock assessment, which evaluated both stocks together and estimated them to be healthy. The SSC recommended an overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, but not for black grouper or yellowfin grouper, the other two species in the shallow-water grouper complex. The SSC will evaluate these two remaining species in May 2023. Dr. Nance will review a presentation on *Evaluating Bottom Fishing Seasonal Closures in the Recreational Fishery*, which used models to explore the potential effects of temporally explicit bottom fishing closures on the spawning stock biomass of several key reef fish species. The SSC also reviewed contemporary research on greater amberjack discard mortality, which is being explored in conjunction with the Great Amberjack Count. Dr. Nance will discuss the latter, which is a regional collaborative research project between state, federal, academic, and other partners to estimate the absolute abundance of greater amberjack in the Gulf. Lastly, Dr. Nance will discuss the SSC's evaluation of historical wenchman landings in the northern Gulf trawl fisheries. These data were rife with confidentiality issues due to the limited number of fishermen catching, and seafood dealers buying, wenchman, and changes in reporting that occurred in 2012 with the Generic ACL/AM Amendment. The Committee should evaluate the information presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate. Specifically, the Committee should: consider how best to manage the shallow-water grouper complex in the future; consider the utility of exploring alternative bottom fishing management strategies; and, whether to consider wenchman an ecosystem component species, or whether wenchman is still in need of federal fisheries management.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Draft Options: Recalibration of Red Snapper Recreational Catch Limits and Modification of Gray Snapper Catch Limits

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Council staff will present a draft options document considering changes to red snapper state private recreational calibrations and modifying gray snapper catch limits. For red snapper, the states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida used more contemporary private recreational catch data to update their private recreational calibration ratios. The methods used to update the ratios have been reviewed and approved by the SSC. The updates to the calibration ratios would adjust the red snapper private recreational annual catch limits (ACLs) for each of those states.

For gray snapper, results from the most recent stock assessment (SEDAR 75) provided projections and updated catch advice, including updating private recreational data to FES. The SSC has reviewed and approved the assessment results. The SSC has recommended two catch level options. The first option would implement catch level projections directly informed by SEDAR 75. These projections set OFL to the yield at  $F_{26\%SPR}$  and the ABC at 75% of  $F_{26\%SPR}$  for the period of 2024-2028. The ACL is set using the ACL/ACT Control with a buffer of 8% between the ABC and ACL. The second option would set a constant catch level calculated using a 5-year average of the projected yield  $F_{26\%SPR}$  for the OFL and ABC. The ACL would still be set using the ACL/ACT Control Rule with a buffer of 8% between the ABC and ACL. The Committee should review the document, ask questions of staff, and provide input on the range of alternatives in the document so that a final draft can be developed for the June Council meeting.

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**Agenda Item X:** Other Business

**Action:** Additional items that can be brought up for discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Additional items may be brought up for discussion by Committee members during the adoption of the agenda, time permitting. If the Committee wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future Council meeting.

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