

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

Agenda Item IV: **FINAL ACTION:** Draft Framework Action: Modification of Gray Triggerfish Commercial Trip Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: Council staff will present management measure changes to modify the commercial gray triggerfish trip limit, noting the Council’s current preferred alternative to increase the trip limit from 16 fish per trip to 25 fish per trip. The Council’s decision to increase the gray triggerfish annual catch limits (ACLs) was implemented in July of 2021. Since then, commercial fishermen have requested that a potential increase in the commercial trip limit be explored to allow the commercial sector to reach its Annual Catch Target (ACT). Council staff will also review written public comments received, and SERO staff will review the codified text for the proposed regulations. The Committee should consider the information presented, ask questions, and determine whether the document is ready for final action. If so, the Committee should recommend that the Council deem the regulations as necessary and appropriate, and that they be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation.

Agenda Item V: IFQ Focus Group

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: The second facilitated meeting of the IFQ Focus Group was held November 30 – December 1, 2022. One of the meeting facilitators will make a presentation and be available to answer questions. The focus group members noted their interest, but lack of time, to further explore the idea of adaptive catch shares management. Dr. Ropicki, the Knowledgeable Non-Participant member of the IFQ Focus Group, will make a presentation on adaptive catch share management. Next, SERO staff will present its proposed IFQ-related issues list of potential changes supported by the agency. The Committee should discuss the information and 1) determine the top 3-5 issues to prioritize, and 2) decide whether a special Council meeting is needed or more time on a future Reef Fish Committee agenda to discuss the highest priority issues and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item VI: 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. At its July 2022 meeting, the Council’s SSC reviewed the alternative run using the SEDAR 72 base model, but supplanting the previously used Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) calibrated recreational catch and effort data with the same from the State of Florida’s State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS Run). The SRFS Run also found gag grouper to be overfished and undergoing overfishing, and was determined by the SSC to be consistent with the best scientific information available using a proxy for maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of the fishing mortality rate at 40% of the spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$). The SSC thought this higher target MSY proxy would allow the stock to rebuild to a more robust population size, which would allow the stock to better weather episodic mortality events like red tide. In October 2020, the Council requested that staff explore several other measures in the development of Amendment 56; staff will review the result of this exploration in a presentation to the Committee. Council staff will also present options for modifications to catch limits and the sector allocation, and for modifying the recreational fishing season using SRFS catch and effort data. The Committee should ask questions and make recommendations as appropriate. Council staff will plan to bring a public hearing draft of the amendment to the Council’s April 2023 meeting.

Agenda Item VII: Draft Options: 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.

Agenda Item VIII: Revised Recreational Red Snapper Calibration Ratios

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Dr. Jim Nance (SSC Chair) will present the SSC’s deliberations and recommendations on its review of the revised recreational red snapper calibration ratios, as presented to the SSC by representatives from Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi at the SSC’s January 2023 meeting. Each state presented a proposal to revise calibrations for its respective estimates of private vessel and state charter for-hire landings of red snapper to MRIP’s Coastal Household Telephone Survey (CHTS; Mississippi and Alabama) or MRIP’s Fishing Effort Survey (Florida). These proposals are updates to the methods, years, and waves considered by the SSC in August 2020. The states provided justification for their recommended selection of year(s) and wave(s) within year(s). The SSC considered the following terms of reference for each state’s proposal:

1. Is the proposed revised calibration ratio calculated in a method that is not dissimilar from that which was approved as consistent with the best scientific information available (BSIA) by the SSC in August 2020?

2. Is the justification for the year(s) and waves(s) recommended for calculating the proposed revised calibration ratio sufficient? If not, describe why and if possible, offer alternatives.

3. Are there any additional clarifications necessary for considering a state's proposed revised calibration ratio as being consistent with BSIA?

Dr. Nance will review the SSC's evaluation of the presentations and background materials provided by each state, and any resultant recommendations to the Council. The Committee should consider the information presented, and determine whether it is necessary to recommend new calibration ratios to the Council for calibrating the state surveys to MRIP.

Agenda Item IX: January 2023 Gulf SSC Summary Report and Presentation

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Dr. Nance will review the SSC's discussions on the SEDAR 75 stock assessment of Gulf gray snapper. SEDAR 75 was an operational assessment that included updated recreational landings data calibrated to MRIP-FES, and made many improvements to the previous SEDAR 51 model. The SSC found SEDAR 75 to be consistent with the best scientific information available, and determined that the stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing as of 2020. Dr. Nance will review the SSC's recommendations for OFL and ABC. The Committee should review this information for gray snapper and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate. Dr. Nance will also review the SSC's discussions of the 2023 interim analysis (IA) for Gulf red grouper. This is part of a standing request for annual IAs for red grouper, to be reviewed by the SSC. The last IA from 2022 was used as a health check, as the 2021 IA was used to revise the catch limits for red grouper. The SSC evaluated the NMFS Bottom Longline (BLL) index, which selects more so for larger and older red grouper than those selected by the commercial vertical line fleet and the private angling and for-hire fleets from the recreational sector. The NMFS BLL was relatively flat over the last 10 years. Given the age of the last stock assessment (SEDAR 61 had a terminal year of 2017), and that any change in catch limits would not take effect until 2024 (when the next operational assessment of red grouper is to begin), the SSC did not think it had the data to support increasing the OFL and ABC based only on the NMFS BLL. The SSC acknowledged the increased recreational landings of red grouper in 2021 and 2022; however, without having more data to evaluate, like those generated from a stock assessment, to determine the reason for and effects of that spike in landings, the SSC could not recommend catch limit modifications for red grouper at this time. The Committee should review this information for red grouper and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item X: Other Business

Action: Additional items that can be brought up for discussion

Council Input and Next Steps: Dr. Stunz will lead a brief discussion of transfer of federal for-hire reef fish permits with input from NOAA General Counsel. 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.
