

Public Comment Summary

Framework Action: Modifications to Greater Amberjack Allowable Harvest and Rebuilding Plan

75 Written Comments Received

Action 1:

- Support for Alternative 2, the ACL should be set equal to the ABC.
- Support for Alternative 3a, retain the ACL/ACT control rule to establish a 13% buffer to the commercial sector and a 17% buffer to the recreational sector.
- An ACT should be used to ensure the ACL isn't exceeded.

Action 2:

- Support for Alternative 2 – Modify the closed season to be March 1 – May 31.
- Support for Alternative 4 – Modify the recreational closed season to be January 1 – June 30. To ensure that there are no more mid-season closures which are detrimental to tourism.
- A late summer and early fall season is necessary to ensure charter customers have a mixed bag of fish to harvest.
- Dissent for a fall only amberjack season.
- Support for the season should to be open April-May and again after July.
- A fall amberjack season would be detrimental to businesses because the fleet needs a fishery in the spring.
- In the spring, amberjack are the only fish available to fishermen in the Panhandle of Florida.
- Customers come to expect certain fish during certain seasons and removing the spring amberjack season will be really harmful to charter businesses.
- Fishing in the spring for amberjack is much less dangerous than fall fishing for amberjack because of the weather.
- The Council should consider a May spring season with the remainder of the quota being harvested in the fall.
- The Council should consider closing amberjack from September through March each year.
- The season should open on January 1 so there is a fish to target at the beginning of the year.

Action 3:

- No action – the current recreational minimum size limit should not be modified because the current 34 inch size limit needs to be in place for a while before we can understand the full effect of the regulation.

Amberjack Specific Comments

- The Council should not take final action on this amendment at the August meeting

- The Council should consider creating a 1 fish for every 2 people bag limit which was shown by NMFS in Amendment 35 to reduce charter and private harvest by 45% and headboat harvest by 39%.
- Amberjack should go back to 32 inches with a 1 fish bag limit all year.
- The Council should consider capping the boat limit of amberjack at 6 fish.
- Support for a May-April spring season in conjunction with the 1-fish per 2-people bag and 6 fish boat limit.
- It's unlikely that we reached the recreational amberjack quota at the time of year, in such few days, with the worst weather.
- Recreational anglers need longer seasons.
- The amberjack population is much healthier than the science reflects.
- The early amberjack closure in conjunction with no triggerfish season and a small red snapper season is killing recreational angling.
- Commercial and for-hire sectors should have their quotas cut instead of the recreational fishermen.
- If amberjack is overfished, then commercial fishing should be severely restricted.
- If amberjack is overfished, then all fishing should be stopped, you can't make restrictions for one sector and not the other.
- Amberjack under 34 inches are plentiful around the Destin, Florida area.
- The amberjack stock is healthier than ever, this should lead to longer seasons and higher catch limits.
- Spawning season should be closed to both commercial and recreational anglers.
- Amberjack should be reallocated more in favor of the recreational sector.
- The amberjack allocation should be split 85% recreational and 15% commercial.
- The recreational size limit increase has made amberjack fishing better.
- Changes to amberjack regulations should be made to the recreational sector because they already have a majority of the fish and are allowed to harvest smaller fish during spawning.
- The Council should take a strong precautionary approach when making adjustments to the size limits and seasons for greater amberjack because the stock has struggled to rebuild.
- Amberjack needs to meet its rebuilding requirements to provide a more stable fishery.
- The Council should consider trip limits, seasons, size limits, and IFQs to manage the fishery.
- A spike in phone surveys taken from the recreational sector in the panhandle of Florida caused a false increase in the estimated amberjack landings.
- Red snapper are overpowering amberjack and pushing them off the structure.

Other Comments

- NOAA recreational harvest data is inaccurate.
- There must be a better way to accurately account for fish that are being caught on private and for-hire vessels.

- Electronic logbooks will not work in the private sector.
- Stock assessment data and techniques need to be updated.
- The Council needs to stop listening to special interest groups and lobbyists.
- Strict fishing regulations will hurt coastal communities because people won't spend their money to visit.
- Fishing regulations hurt recreational anglers and help commercial anglers.
- Fishing regulations have destroyed the for-hire captain's ability to make a living.
- The Council should not utilize recreational quota for headboats.
- Fish should not be distributed to a select few that make millions from the resource.
- Trip tickets should be used to accurately track recreational harvest.
- Law enforcement is too focused on red snapper and should consider the entire marine resource.
- Stock assessment data and techniques need to be updated.
- Public comment does no good.
- More needs to be done to ensure equal access to the public resource.
- The Council needs more recreational representatives with no commercial interest.