

**Reef Fish Advisory Panel
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Meeting Summary
October 11, 2022**

The meeting of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Reef Fish Advisory Panel (RFAP) was convened at 8:30 AM EDT on October 11, 2022. The agenda for this meeting, and the minutes from the January 5 – 6, 2022, meeting were approved as written. [Minutes and materials from past meetings can be reviewed here.](#)

Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings

Mr. Dan Luers (National Marine Fisheries Service [NMFS] Southeast Regional Office [SERO]) reviewed reef fish recreational, commercial, and individual fishing quota (IFQ) for stocks to be discussed during the RFAP meeting.

Presentation: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Expansion Proposal

Mr. Steve Werndli (FKNMS Staff) presented an overview of the Proposed Rule for the FKNMS expansion. The RFAP originally provided recommendations on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in 2019 and these recommendations were included in the Council's letter to the Sanctuary in 2020. Mr. Werndli presented portions of the Proposed Rule that directly incorporated comments from the public and Council.

In addition to summarizing the contents of the Proposed Rule and describing the modifications to the management zone descriptions, Mr. Werndli highlighted sections of the Proposed Rule where extra clarification had been recommending during public scoping. These include the incorporation of more contemporary data for the socioeconomic analysis and updating the FKNMS Management Plan. The majority of the modifications to the FKNMS boundaries would expand protection areas for increased conservation connectivity, create new designations to particular areas depending on management goals, and standardize regulations across protection areas to reduce confusion for the public and improve enforcement.

The RFAP Chair commended the Sanctuary for incorporating the public comments received in 2019-2020 into the Proposed Rule, while maintaining its conservation goals. A RFAP member asked whether lobster traps would no longer be allowed in areas that were prohibited to anchoring and Mr. Werndli indicated that was correct. He also added that these regulatory designations (i.e., no anchoring, idle speed, no motor, etc.) were specifically implemented to individual areas to best achieve conservation goals. A RFAP member asked for clarification on the regulations in the areas surrounding Woman Key and Boca Grande Key Wildlife Management Areas including anchoring and fishing for bait. Mr. Werndli indicated that the marine zone designation would not change and that the 100 ft expansion into deeper waters would provide a buffer to protect sea turtle

and bird habitat. The expansion would not include an area of the beach popular to the public. He continued that exemptions for bait fishing would be removed in areas closed to fishing for consistent implementation of that regulation to avoid confusion and increase enforcement. A RFAP member asked if the economic analysis conducted was localized and Mr. Werndli replied that the scope of those analyses was used to broadly examine economic effects at an industry level (i.e., tourist diving, recreational fishing, etc.) and it is possible that some individuals may be more affected than others. Another RFAP member inquired about potential increases in large *Sargassum* mats that wash ashore and how algal decay could affect the local coral reefs. After the meeting, Mr. Werndli contacted staff and indicated these effects are currently being researched by Dr. Brian Lapointe at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute.

Review of Public Hearing Draft Amendment 54: Modifications to the Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations, and other Rebuilding Plan Modifications

Dr. John Froeschke (Council staff) provide a presentation outlining a document that would update catch levels and allocation scenarios along with the Annual Catch Target (ACT) for greater amberjack informed by the most recently completed stock assessment (SEDAR 70). The results of the assessment indicated the stock to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. The stock has not demonstrated any recovery despite recent management measure and marked reductions in harvest are required to achieve rebuilding of the stock by 2027. Additionally, SEDAR 70 incorporated data obtain through MRIP-FES which has indicated that recreational fishing effort has been underestimated for some time, and this modification to the recreational fishery data survey could affect allocation scenarios. All proposed catch level alternatives would reduce harvest approximately 78-79%. The Council has not yet selected a preferred alternative for the catch level and allocation action but has selected a preferred for setting a buffer between the ACL and ACT (Action 2 Alternative 3)

A RFAP member asked why the annual catch level values increased over the considered five years. Dr. Froeschke stated that the catch levels were calculated relative to Maximum Sustainable Yield which represents harvest at a long-term stock population equilibrium. The increase in catch levels over time is a result of the model assuming a static recruitment, constant catchability, and achieving rebuilding by 2027. He continued that, at times, the SSC has recommended a constant catch that is calculated by averaging several years of catch limits, but that outcome can result in an undesirably high catch levels in the earlier projected years which may not be beneficial for a stock in a rebuilding plan. A RFAP member proposed that setting more conservative and constant catch level reflected in an early year (i.e. 2023) would work best at achieving management goals and this proposal was supported by the RFAP.

Motion: In Action 1, to make a new Alternative 6, that would retain the current 73% recreational and 27% commercial allocation. The ACLs would correspond to the 2023 recommendations in Alternative 2, for the years 2023 through 2027. Make this alternative the preferred.

Alternative 6: Maintain the sector allocations as 73% recreational and 27% commercial. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) based on SEDAR 70 (2020). Set the total stock ACL equal to the ABC.

Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Rec ACL	Com ACL	Allocation (Rec:Com)
2023+	2,236,000	649,000	649,000	473,770	175,230	73:27

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

Motion carried unanimously.

The RFAP discussed setting a buffer for the ACT. The RFAP was in general agreement that the recreational sector should be buffered more relative to the commercial sector. They provided rationale that the data collection requirements for the commercial sector allowed for more liberal monitoring. For the recreational sector, the stock is subject to in-season closures when the recreational ACT is projected to be exceeded and the fishing season can be short, especially with marked cuts in harvest. They agreed with the council that the recreational ACT should have a larger buffer than the commercial ACT.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative in Action 2.

Preferred Alternative 3: Apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule (years 2016-2019) to revise the buffer between the ACL and ACT for each sector. The recreational buffer is 17%, and the commercial buffer is 7%.

Motion carried unanimously.

Presentation: Modifications to Greater Amberjack Recreational and Commercial Management Measures

Dr. Froeschke presented options being considered for a framework action for greater amberjack to modify commercial and recreational management measures, with the intent of balancing stakeholder access while remaining below the new catch limits during the rebuilding plan. Many management changes have occurred for greater amberjack in the last 10 years; however, under the measures proposed in Amendment 56, further season and retention limit modifications will be needed to sustain meaningful fishing seasons for both fishing sectors. Dr. Froeschke first discussed a modification to the recreational closed season, and the rationale behind the proposed measures based on the projected pace of landings for each option. An AP member asked about opening the fishing season on August 15 through October 15, to ensure access between the return to school and fall break fishing trips. If projected landings wouldn't sustain the season through that time period, the AP member thought that opening on September 1 through October 15 would be acceptable. Another AP member thought Alternative 4 (open September 1 – October 31) would likely address this concern, and would keep the fishing effort within the same MRIP wave (wave

5). AP members also discussed how the weather begins to worsen beginning in October, which usually results in a decrease in fishing effort offshore.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 3 in Action 1 as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: September 1 – October 31

Motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Froeschke continued by discussing an increase to the recreational minimum size limit to 36 inches fork length (FL), which would correspond to the length at which approximately 97% of greater amberjack are sexually mature. AP members discussed the issue of discards, with many expressing concern about the effect increasing the minimum size limit will have. Dr. Froeschke discussed a study by Murie et al. (2020; SEDAR 70 RD-02¹), which suggested that a slot limit for greater amberjack may prove beneficial for the stock by protecting the immature fish and the large, important members of the spawning stock. AP members expressed strong reservation about the discard mortality of large greater amberjack, due to observations of discard mortality on those fish. An AP member did think a slot limit might reduce discard mortality from spearfishing. High-grading was viewed as a pervasive issue for private angling and for-hire trips. Generally, as fish length increases, post-release mortality is projected to increase. An AP member thought removing or greatly reducing the minimum size limit might reduce dead discards, which might ultimately result in more benefits to the stock; other AP members expressed interest in this approach. An AP member noted that some regions, like off Mississippi, have to go further to find any greater amberjack, and that removing the minimum size limit might shift landings to other regions.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council consider a full-retention fishery for greater amberjack for both fishing sectors.

Motion carried 8 to 5 with two abstentions and 1 absent.

Dr. Froeschke discussed commercial trip limit, which is currently set at 1,000 lbs gw until 75% of the commercial ACT is met; thereafter, the commercial trip limit is 250 lbs gw until the commercial ACT is met. RFAP members discussed a shift in the commercial fishery to a bycatch fishery, not dissimilar to the current approach used for commercial gray triggerfish. An AP member thought that there was variability in the weights observed of greater amberjack such that five fish could weigh 200 pounds, or 265 pounds, and that setting a trip limit in number of fish instead of pounds would be easier for fishermen to follow.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council add an alternative that establishes a five-fish trip limit for greater amberjack until 75% of the commercial ACT is met; thereafter, the commercial trip limit is two fish.

Motion carried unanimously.

¹ <https://sedarweb.org/documents/sedar-70-rd-02-is-the-bofff-big-old-fat-fecund-females-hypothesis-applicable-to-gulf-of-mexico-greater-amberjack/>

The AP discussed the difference (approximately 70,000 lbs gw) between the recommended stock ACT and the projected landings, and whether a way to ensure that harvest should be considered. Some AP members were apprehensive about leaving potential harvest behind, while others noted the depleted condition of the stock and its failure to rebuilding recent years. Council staff also commented on the relative uncertainty of the season duration projections, and cautioned on assuming those to be precise.

Review: SEDAR 64 Interim Analysis for Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper and SSC Recommendations

Mr. Chris Swanson (Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute [FWRI] Staff) presented a summary of the findings of SEDAR 64, which was a benchmark assessment of southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. The stock was estimated to be healthy as of 2017. FWRI updated the SEDAR 64 assessment with landings and discards through 2020, performed bias adjustments, and updated yield projections. The Gulf and South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC) reviewed the results of the updated assessment, done as an interim catch analysis, at their August 4, 2022, webinar, and found them to be consistent with the best scientific information available. The Councils are considering those catch recommendations at upcoming Council meetings as they develop Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 / Reef Fish Amendment 55, which is being developed as a joint Council document since the Councils share yellowtail snapper management.

The majority of the southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper stock is allocated to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council), based on historical landings. In the South Atlantic, landings of yellowtail snapper come primarily from the recreational sector; the opposite is true in the Gulf, but recreational landings are increasing there. Discards in both regions come primarily from the recreational sector. Recruitment has been consistent in recent years. While spawning stock biomass (SSB) has generally increased over time, there has been a slight decrease in the last few years. Mr. Swanson reviewed the OFL and retained yield projections, which decrease with time to a lower level consistent with the yield at the proxy for maximum sustainable yield (MSY), which currently uses a fishing mortality at a 30% spawning potential ratio ($F_{30\%SPR}$). Under the constant catch scenarios (3- and 5-year), exploitation eventually drives the stock biomass below the SSB at MSY, or $SSB_{30\%SPR}$.

Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 56: Modifications to Gulf of Mexico Gag Grouper Stock Status Determination Criteria, Sector Allocation, Catch Limits, and Fishing Seasons

Mr. Ryan Rindone (Council Staff) reviewed the options being considered in Reef Fish Amendment 56, which will establish a rebuilding plan for gag grouper. The RFAP reviewed the results and SSC recommendations from the original SEDAR 72 stock assessment for gag grouper in January 2022, which estimated that the stock was overfished and experiencing overfishing as of 2019. Low recruitment and consistent red tide events in the last decade are thought to be contributing factors to the stock's decline, with the latter possibly attributable to a low proportion of males in

the population. The Council requested an alternative run of SEDAR 72 using the Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) to inform recreational landings and discards for the private angling and state for-hire fleets, in place of the same as produced by the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES). This alternative SRFS run, determined to be consistent with the best scientific information available by the SSC in July 2022, uses a revised proxy for fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}) of a 40% spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$). This revised F_{MSY} proxy is expected to allow gag grouper to rebuild into a more robust stock that will be capable of producing more consistent recruitment and of being more resilient to future red tide events. Draft Amendment 56 will use the catch limits proposed by the SSC using projections from the SRFS run, based on the Council's proposed sector allocation alternatives, and will also consider modifications to the recreational fishing season.

An AP member asked whether F_{MAX} or $F_{30\%SPR}$ were still being considered as proxies for MSY. Mr. Rindone relied that F_{MAX} was removed from consideration when the SSC reviewed the initial SEDAR 72 assessment using MRIP-FES and recommended $F_{30\%SPR}$ as consistent with the best scientific information available, which will be used for the interim rule. Likewise, when the SSC reviewed the SRFS run of SEDAR 72 and recommended $F_{40\%SPR}$ as consistent with the best scientific information available, $F_{30\%SPR}$ was removed from consideration.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council adopt the $T_{Min} * 2$ rebuilding timeline for Action 1 in Amendment 56.

Motion carried unanimously.

An AP member noted that commercial handline vessels are seeing a larger proportion of presumably male fish in this year's landings. They thought the stock may be rebounding at a currently underestimated degree. The AP member asked about the lag between the terminal year of data for management and management modifications, and how that might be resolved. Council staff replied that interim analyses would be one way to close the gap between the data and management to some degree, and increased resolution on the health of the stock may be beneficial for the management of a stock that is estimated to be overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council request annual interim analyses for gag, to be reviewed by the SSC, and be considered for revisions to catch advice.

Motion carried unanimously.

An AP member asked another about their observations of discard mortality of gag on the West Florida Shelf. The other AP member replied that shallower than 50 feet, discard mortality is near zero, with discard mortality increasing thereafter with depth. He added that males are virtually non-existent shallower than 150 feet, based on extensive observations and research conducted on the stock. The males are almost exclusively found deeper than 150 feet, and discard mortality on those fish would be expected to be quite high. Another AP member thought that discards would be a problem for all fleets. Other AP members agreed, and stated that the Council needed to do more to address discards, especially for the private angling fleet.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2 in Action 1 as its preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Revise the catch limits for gag. The OFL, ABC, ACLs, and ACTs will use the MSY proxy of the fishing mortality at a 40% spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$). The sector allocation is 61% recreational, 39% commercial, using the average landings from 1986 – 2005, as specified in Amendment 30B to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Resources in the Gulf of Mexico (Reef Fish FMP). The catch limits will be set using, and monitored in, the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) data currency units for recreational private angling and state charter vessel landings. Establish a rebuilding timeline for rebuilding the gag stock from an overfished condition.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Rindone discussed the options for the recreational fishing season. Later season opening dates correspond to better gag fishing closer to shore, in waters shallower than 60 feet typically. This shift also may redirect fishing effort away from the males in deeper water. An AP member thought an October 1 opening date would work best for striking a balance between having a long fishing season and having the fishing season open at the opportune time to fish for gag closer to shore. Another AP member noted that there existed the possibility that the recreational ACL could be caught by the end of October, and that may result in an increased probability also of exceeding the ACL due to uncertainty around when to close the fishing season. An AP member noted that warmer weather fishing was likely to see fishermen go to deeper water, where there is a higher probability of interacting with males and also higher discard mortality. AP members generally agreed that managing for the health of the fish should be a main consideration, especially since gag is overfished. An AP member thought the cooler water beginning in October may result in less bycatch because can be better targeted, and because they are caught in cooler water, discard mortality may be lower. Another AP member recalled that the interim rule had options for recreational seasons beginning in October 1 and November 1 that had corresponding season closure dates. Mr. Rindone replied that those projected season end dates could be superseded by NMFS at any time, closing the fishery to prevent the ACL from being exceeded.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2 in Action 2 as its preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Modify the current recreational fishing season for gag. The recreational fishing season will be closed from January 1 – August 31 and open on September 1. The recreational fishing season will close on November 10 for the remainder of the year, or when the recreational ACL is projected to be met, whichever occurs first.

Motion carried 12-2 with two absent.

Review: SEDAR 68 Operational Assessment for Gulf of Mexico Scamp

Mr. Rindone reviewed the data and results from the SEDAR 68 operational assessment on Gulf scamp and yellowmouth grouper. SEDAR 68 used updated recreational catch and effort information from MRIP-FES, which results in increases in estimates of recreational landings, and in the uncertainty about those estimates. The SSC determined that the SEDAR 68 base model from the research track assessment was appropriate for use in this operational assessment, and that the operational assessment was consistent with the best scientific information available. The SSC refrained from recommending any catch advice until more direction was given by the Council. Scamp and yellowmouth grouper are estimated to be healthy, with no overfishing occurring as of 2020. Both species are components of the shallow-water grouper complex, and are included in the Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The SSC stated that the Council should determine how it wants to move forward with managing these species before catch projections are completed: either these species need to continue to be managed as they have and projections need to be updated for all species combined in the shallow-water grouper complex; or, these species need to be removed from that complex, and projections need to be generated for scamp and yellowmouth, and for the remaining species in the complex, respectively.

An AP member recalled years when landings for scamp were unusually high, and thought the RFAP should review the proportional landings of shallow-water grouper species by species, by year. Another AP member asked about the distribution of scamp and yellowmouth in the Gulf. Mr. Rindone replied that both species are caught throughout the Gulf. AP members remarked on the ability to land scamp under shallow-water grouper and deep-water grouper quota, and to land speckled hind and warsaw grouper under both deep-water and shallow-water grouper quota. AP members thought there was not enough information presented to fully consider the dynamics of changing the shallow-water grouper complex composition, given the interconnectivity of these two share categories within the Grouper-Tilefish IFQ program.

Review: Development of Electronic Reporting for the Commercial Coastal Logbook

The Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) is interested in transitioning to an electronic reporting platform for the commercial coastal logbook program. This transition would allow fishermen with federal commercial Gulf reef fish and/or coastal migratory pelagic permits to report logbooks electronically rather than by completing paper forms. Program participants would still have 7 days to submit their logbooks. A policy document is currently being developed in partnership with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to implement this change throughout the southeastern U.S.

Ms. Sarah Privoznik (SEFSC staff) presented an overview of the commercial coastal logbook program, outlined the modifications required to transition from paper logbooks to an electronic submission platform, and provided a demonstration using the e-Trips software. The transition to an electronic platform would reduce the reporting burden for vessels dually permitted across regions, allow for reporting discards within the logbook report, and continue the collection of supplementary economic data. Modifications to the data fields will allow for integration to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and in many cases allow for more efficient reporting. For example, drop-down menus and the creation of “favorites” list allow for

quicker input relative to paper logbooks. Additionally, built-in validations would reduce entry errors for users.

The RFAP applauded the work of the SEFSC staff on the development of an electronic reporting for the commercial logbook program. A RFAP member asked if it would be possible to test the e-Trips software. SEFSC staff replied that a test account could be requested of ACCSP to try out the software, but that a paper logbook would still need to be submitted. A RFAP member asked if there would be a period of time where paper and electronic logbooks would be submitted simultaneously. SEFSC indicated that concurrent submissions would likely be required initially but that, at some point, only electronic submissions would be accepted. The RFAP reached a consensus that transition to electronic submissions would be beneficial for coastal commercial program participants.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Commercial Coastal Electronic Logbook Program be implemented as soon as possible.

Motion carried unanimously.

Review: Management Options: Gray Triggerfish Commercial Trip Limits

Ms. Carly Somerset (Council Staff) provided a presentation on management options for modifying the commercial gray triggerfish trip limits. The Council approved a framework action to increase the gray triggerfish annual catch limits (ACLs), which was implemented in July of 2021, and the RFAP had previously indicated that it was in favor of increasing commercial gray triggerfish trip limits. Ms. Somerset provided the five alternatives that will be presented to the Council at its next meeting: trip limits of 16, 20, 25, 30 or 40 gray triggerfish. The current trip limit is 16 fish. An AP member inquired about estimated landings for season projections to help determine the likelihood that an increased trip limit (specifically the 40 fish trip limit) would cause the commercial sector to overharvest its quota and close the season prematurely. Ms. Somerset stated that SERO staff continues to analyze the data and will work to provide quota estimates rather than just trip estimates. Another AP member stated that, upon observation of the current landings with a 16-fish trip limit, landings are below expected for this time. A 25-fish limit would be a conservative recommendation and could be revisited at a later date.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council make Alternative 3 its preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Increase vessel trip limit to 25 fish

Motion carried unanimously.

There seemed to be consensus amongst the AP that the trip limit needs to be increased to allow commercial fishermen the opportunity to harvest more gray triggerfish that they encounter without increasing the limit so much that it becomes a target fishery with the potential to have a shortened season, payback overages, or increased discards. An AP member asked why the percentage of fish

harvested in Florida is increasing while the other states have decreased harvest. Mr. Rindone said it is not likely an issue with the health of the population. Ms. Somerset added that there are still some data issues to reconcile such as inclusion of other triggerfish species in the estimates and a portion of South Atlantic fish attributed to the Gulf.

Review: For-hire Trip Declaration Modification

Ms. Somerset presented management options for modifications to the federal for-hire trip declaration requirements. Since the implementation of the Southeast For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program, participants have described aspects of the program, such as the hail-out provision, as unduly burdensome. A trip declaration must occur whenever the vessel leaves the dock even for short non-fishing activities. The Council is developing a framework action to address this issue to allow for an exemption to the hail-out provision. Ms. Somerset reviewed three options that exempt the vessel owner and/or operator from declaring when moving a for-hire vessel for non-fishing related tasks within a prescribed timeframe, and one that only requires a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of fishing or charter activity. An AP member inquired as to when the exemption time frame begins. Ms. Somerset clarified that the time begins when the vessel begins to move on the water and ends when the vessel stops transiting. The exemption time is dock to dock, not round-trip. He also asked for clarification on fishing activity without clients onboard (e.g., when fishing for bait prior to picking up clients). Ms. Somerset responded that trip declarations are required for all fishing activity. The trip type may be different (recreational vs. for-hire), but still requires declaration. Ms. Somerset added that Council staff is working with SEFHIER staff to develop infographics to provide clarifications to questions such as these. Another AP member stated that NMFS seemed to prefer the 60-minute exemption (Option 1) when discussed at a previous Council meeting; however, he would support whichever option provides the longest exemption timeframe. Option 4 has no exemption time limit but is explicit in requiring declarations for chartered activities, in addition to fishing activity.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP recommends that the Council select Option 4 as its preferred alternative.

Option 4: Require federally-permitted for-hire vessel owners and/or operators to submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of charter or fishing activity.

Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment (Please listen to meeting recording for full public comment)

Eric Schmidt:

- Supports full retention in greater amberjack fishery
- SEFHIER program (with the use of VMS) has departed from the original intent of the program. It is more detrimental now than helpful.

- Gag grouper should have good recruitment this year, especially near Ft. Myers, where fishing will be limited because of Hurricane Ian. He wants the season to open in June to help reduce discards.

Other Business

US Coast Guard Inspection Requirements for Gulf Federal Commercial Reef Fish Permits

Mr. Martin Fisher discussed an issue of a disparity between a required U.S. Coast Guard inspection, valid for 5 years, and the commensurate sticker indicating the inspection is valid, which itself is only valid for two years. The U.S. Coast Guard indicated that a certificate of compliance is being developed to replace the sticker, and will be valid for 5 years, like the required inspection.

Establishing a Fixed Opening Date for the Federal For-hire Red Snapper Season

Capt. Dylan Hubbard discussed the need for the federal for-hire fleet to know if/when its red snapper fishing season will be reopened in the event the fleet does not harvest its ACL in a fishing season. The intention would be that the federal for-hire fleet would know when its season would reopen in the event the federal for-hire ACL for red snapper was not harvested during the initial open season, which begins June 1 each year.

Motion: The Reef Fish AP requests that NMFS monitor the federal for-hire fishing quota for red snapper such that the fishing season will reopen on November 1 each year, using any remaining quota determined to be available after the end of the initial projected fishing season, which starts June 1.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm eastern time on October 11, 2022.

Meeting Participants

Reef Fish AP Members

Ed Walker, *Chair*

Troy Frady, *Vice Chair*

Brenda Ballard

Charles Bergmann

Jane Black-Lee

Douglass W. Boyd

Steve Buckner

Ronald Chicola

Harold Dauterive

Jason DeLaCruz

Martin Fisher

Keith “Buddy” Guindon

Dylan Hubbard

Chris Jenkins

Gregory Mercurio

John Marquez, Jr

Mike Prasek, Jr

Council Representative

Billy Broussard