

**Sustainable Fisheries Committee:** Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab E

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**Agenda Item IV:** Options Paper – Draft Modifications to the Sea Turtle Release Protocol and Gear for the Reef Fish Fishery

**Timeline Status:** Presentation and Options Paper

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Staff will provide an overview of the draft Options Paper that considers modifications to the sea turtle release protocol and gear for the reef fish fishery. The document currently has two draft actions, the first action considers including the three new approved sea turtle release gears for commercial and charter vessels/headboat with federal Gulf reef fish permits to use. The second action would modify the framework procedure to allow new gears to be approved for use without a full amendment to the fishery management plan. The Committee should provide feedback on the purpose and need and the range of actions and alternatives. Staff will take any suggestions into consideration and bring a revised draft to the Council in January.

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**Agenda Item V:** Options Paper – Framework Action to Require Either Descending Devices or Venting Tools on Board Vessels Possessing Reef Fish

**Timeline Status:** Reconsideration of Options Paper

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Staff will present an options paper that considers either requiring venting tools or descending devices (or both) on board vessels possessing reef fish, or developing an outreach program in conjunction with Sea Grant programs, to educate anglers on the availability and correct use of venting tools and descending devices. The Council previously reviewed this options paper in June, but did not provide guidance to staff on how to proceed with development. The Committee is asked to recommend whether to proceed with development of the document and if the range of alternatives is ready for further development.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Discussion on Dead Zone Regarding RESTORE Act

**Timeline Status:** Discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** This year’s hypoxic zone (dead zone) off Louisiana and Mississippi has been reported to be the largest ever. The size of this dead zone is primarily influenced by agricultural runoff from interior states. Mr. Glenn Constant will lead a discussion on potential efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to address this issue through their Natural Resource Damage Assessment process. No action is required by the Council. However, the Committee may choose to recommend that the Council draft a letter regarding the use of RESTORE Action funds on this issue.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Presentation – Proposes Lionfish Gear and Modification to the List of Allowable Gears

**Timeline Status:** Initial presentation of a proposed new gear type and 90 day consideration period

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Mr. Bruce McCormack will present a proposal to add a new gear type to the list of authorized fisheries and fishing gear [64 FR 67511]. The proposed gear is designed to harvest lionfish. Neither the proposed gear nor lionfish are currently on the list. Under the provisions of the list, an individual fisherman may notify the appropriate Council of the intent to use a gear or participate in a fishery not already on the list. Ninety days after such notification, the individual may use the gear or participate in that fishery unless regulatory action is taken to prohibit the use of the gear or participate in the fishery (e.g., through emergency or interim regulations). The Committee should recommend whether the Council should take action to prohibit the proposed gear. If the Council decides to allow the gear, no Council action is needed.

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