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Reef Fish Committee Report August 21-22, 2018 Martha Guyas – Vice Chair

The agenda was modified to add two items under Other Business. The amended agenda and the minutes of the June 19, 2018, Committee meeting were approved.

Review of Reef Fish Landings (Tab B, No. 4)

SERO staff provided updated landings of selected reef fish species. For the commercial sector, 2018 preliminary landings estimates through August 13, 2018, indicate that 78% of the gray triggerfish ACL has been caught. Greater amberjack commercial harvest closed April 3, and 103% of the ACL was taken. Preliminary 2018 recreational harvests were presented for several species including private recreational red snapper landings for all Gulf states except Florida. Recreational landings for other reef fish species included data from MRIP through April 30, 2018, and LA Creel data through July 28, 2018.

Final Action: Framework to Modify Red Snapper and Gulf Hogfish ACLs (Tab B, Nos. 5a-d)

Staff reviewed public comments received on red snapper and west Florida Gulf hogfish. Action 1 examines increasing red snapper catch limits in response to the SSC’s review of the recent SEDAR 52 stock assessment, which found that red snapper are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. The SSC provided both a declining yield stream for 2019 – 2021 and subsequent years, and a constant catch scenario, and recommended both equally. Committee members agreed that stability in catch levels was preferable over catch levels which changed each year.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Modify the red snapper ACLs and recreational ACTs based on the constant catch ABC recommendations of the SSC for 2019 – 2021 and subsequent years as determined from the SEDAR 52 stock assessment. The total ACL is equal to the ABC, and allocations and ACTs are applied as appropriate.

Year	OFL	ABC	Total ACL	Comm ACL	Rec Total ACL	Private Angling ACL	For-hire ACL	Rec Total ACT	Private Angling ACT	For-hire ACT
2019-2021+	15.5	15.1	15.100	7.701	7.399	4.269	3.130	5.919	3.415	2.504

* Values are in millions of pounds, whole weight.

Action 2 examines decreasing west Florida hogfish ACLs in response to the SSC’s review of the recent SEDAR 37 Update stock assessment, which found that west Florida hogfish are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing. However, due to increased uncertainty in the assessment, widely variable landings data, and inconsistent recruitment, the resultant catch advice from the stock assessment represents a decrease from the status quo. The Committee noted that the proportional standard error of the recreational landings varied from 17.9 to 47.4 between 2008 and 2017, and total landings for the stock (which is managed without sector allocations) ranged from ~61,000 lbs to ~306,000 lbs between

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2001 and 2017. The SSC thought a constant catch scenario was unnecessary for west Florida hogfish, since the yield stream would be increasing over the projection period of 2019 – 2021.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 2, to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2: Modify the West Florida hogfish OFL, ABC and ACL based on the recommendations of the SSC for 2019 – 2021 and subsequent years as determined from the 2018 SEDAR 37 update stock assessment. The ACL is equal to the ABC.

Year	OFL	ABC	ACL
2019	151,500	129,500	129,500
2020	163,700	141,300	141,300
2021+	172,500	150,400	150,400

* Values are in pounds whole weight.

SERO staff advised the Committee that they would receive an updated version of the codified text for this document, which would reflect the decisions made during Committee discussions and the updated catch levels considered in this document. The codified text would also include the framework action modifications to the recreational red snapper ACT buffers.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Council approve the Reef Fish Framework Action: Modification of Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper and West Florida Hogfish Annual Catch Limits, and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

The Committee encouraged staff to continue providing the species-specific “hot sheets” during committee meetings.

Draft Amendment 36B: Modification to Commercial IFQ Programs ACLs (Tab B, No. 6)

Staff reviewed the draft actions and alternatives and noted that more guidance on the purpose and need would help to further develop the actions and alternatives. Action 1.1 would establish new requirements for program eligibility. Following discussion, the Committee passed two motions.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move, in Action 1.1, Alternatives 2 through 5, remove the Option b from all alternatives.

Option b: A valid Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic dealer permit with an IFQ dealer account.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move, in Action 1.1 to amend Alternative 3 to say:

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Alternative 3: In order to obtain (transfer into an account), or maintain shares (hold existing shares in an account), all shareholders who entered the IFQ programs after January 1, 2015, must possess one of the following:

Action 1.2 addresses share divestment in the event shareholders are unable to meet new requirements established through the previous action. The Committee discussed the proposed amount of time to allow shareholders to comply with any new permit requirement and passed the following two motions.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move, in Action 1.2 to remove Option 2a.

Option 2a: On the effective date of the final rule implementing this amendment.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends and I so move, in Action 1.2 to remove Option 2b from Alternative 2 and Option 3a from Alternative 3.

Option 2b: Before the beginning of the calendar year following the effective date of the final rule implementing this amendment.

Option 3a: Before the beginning of the calendar year following the sale or termination of the permit.

The Committee discussed the remaining sections of the amendment including development of a quota bank and the accuracy of weight estimates in landing notifications, but made no additional motions.

Final Action: Modification to the Recreational Red Snapper ACT Buffers (Tab B, Nos. 7a-d)

Staff reviewed the framework action to modify the recreational red snapper component ACT buffers. The Council currently prefers Alternative 3, which sets the for-hire component's ACT at 9% below that component's ACL while leaving the private angling component's ACT at 20% below that component's ACL. The Council also prefers Alternative 4, which would sunset the change in the for-hire component's buffer between the ACT and ACL established in Alternative 3 at the end of the 2019 red snapper fishing season. The Committee heard public comments received about this framework action. SERO staff reminded the Committee that the framework action, if it is approved for final action, would be reviewed with due consideration of how the recreational components for red snapper have been managed in the last few years, and with deference to Section 407(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which states that the recreational sector for red snapper will be managed under a single recreational ACL.

Without opposition, the Committee recommends, and I so move, that the Council approve the Reef Fish Framework Action: Modification to the Recreational Red Snapper Annual Catch Target Buffers, and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

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Gulf of Mexico Allocation Review Triggers (Tab B, No. 8)

Staff gave a presentation on the fisheries allocation review policy and the procedural directive addressing review triggers, which are criteria for initiating allocation reviews. The presentation described the three steps included in the adaptive management process recommended by the policy. Allocation review triggers, including public interest-based, time-based, and indicator-based triggers were discussed. Fisheries resource allocations between sectors, states, and Councils were presented. Staff noted that the Council should identify review triggers by August 2019, or as soon as practicable. The Committee inquired about the South Atlantic Council's progress in developing triggers and stressed the importance of a collaboration between Councils to set triggers for shared stocks. Ms. Beckwith indicated that the South Atlantic Council is in the preliminary discussion phase.

Comparison of Council's Allocation Policy with NMFS Allocation Review Policy (Tab B, No. 9)

Staff reviewed the side-by-side comparison of the current Gulf Council Fishery Allocation Policy with NMFS Procedural Directive 01-119-02. The Committee discussed that the current Gulf Council's Policy appears flexible enough in its approach, particularly with suggested methods for determining (re)allocation, and that the Council would not need to modify the current Gulf Council's Policy.

Scoping Document: Reallocation of the Red Snapper ACL (Tab B, No. 10)

Staff noted that the section on Allocation Reviews had been expanded in the scoping document since the June 2018 Council meeting. Staff requested guidance from the Committee on developing the Purpose and Need. The Committee noted that the recalibration of landings data needs to be part of the Purpose and Need, yet recalibration did not seem to fit with any specific Reef Fish FMP objective. Ms. Levy noted that part of the allocation review process involves reviewing the FMP objectives to determine whether they are still relevant, and if not, the Council should revise the objectives. In order to assist with evaluating current objectives, the Committee requested that Council staff provide an analysis of the Reef Fish FMP objectives in terms of background information, context, and relevant amendments, so the Council could evaluate the extent to which those objectives have been achieved.

Revised Draft Amendment 50: State Management Program for Recreational Red Snapper and Individual State Amendments (Tab B, Nos. 11a-g)

Staff provided a presentation highlighting implications of state management alternatives. In the program amendment, the current preferred alternatives are not compatible with one another, as the preferred alternative for Action 1 would include for-hire vessels in state management, but the preferred alternative in Action 2 for allocation applies to the private angling component only. The Committee discussed the alternatives to allocate red snapper among the states, and made a motion to deselect Alternative 6 in Action 2 as preferred, followed by two substitute motions to modify the preferred alternative to Alternative 2, Option 2d and to Alternative 5, Options 5b and 5e. However, all three motions failed.

The Committee then discussed the inclusion of the federal for-hire component in state management programs. It was noted that inclusion of the for-hire component may not allow for the implementation of state management by 2020. Following discussion, the Committee passed two motions.

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By a vote of 7 to 5, the Committee recommends and I so move, to leave charter for-hire vessels under federal management, and select in Action 1, Alternative 2 as preferred.

Alternative 2: For a state with an approved state management program, the state will manage its private angling component only, and must constrain landings to the state's private angling component ACL as determined in Action 2. The federal for-hire component will continue to be managed Gulf-wide. For states without an approved state management program, a private angling fishing season will be estimated using the remainder of the private angling component ACL, reduced by the established buffer. The sunset provision ending the separate management of the private angling and federal for-hire ACLs (currently 2022) is removed.

By a vote of 10 to 2, the Committee recommends and I so move, to instruct staff to begin an amendment for state management for the federal for-hire industry.

The Committee discussed the timeline for the amendment and will review public hearing drafts at the next Council meeting. The Council should consider recommending public hearing locations for this amendment.

The Great Red Snapper Count (Tab B, No. 12)

Dr. Greg Stunz provided an update of the progress and planned work on the Great Red Snapper Count. The project is a large scale, collaborative project to produce an estimate of the red snapper abundance in the Gulf of Mexico. He stated that the project will be completed at the end of 2019 and the results of this work will be used in the upcoming red snapper stock assessment. To date, the research group has developed some outreach materials and the most up to date information can be found at www.snappercount.org. Dr. Stunz is willing to provide subsequent updates to the Committee when requested.

SSC Summary Report (Tab B, No. 13)

Procedure for Red Grouper Interim Analysis

Dr. Luiz Barbieri provided a summary of the SSC's recommendations from its August 2, 2018 meeting. The SSC supported the proposal for the red grouper interim analysis, which will provide interim management advice for the stock in between scheduled operational assessments. The SEFSC is preparing a management strategy evaluation to further review the proposed interim analysis approach. The SEFSC will present the updated analysis at the October 2018 SSC meeting.

Gray Snapper Global SPR Analysis

The SSC reviewed the gray snapper global SPR analysis that considered a range of F_{MSY} proxies ranging from 23 to 40%. The SSC recommended an F_{MSY} proxy no less than $F_{30\% SPR}$, considering fishery characteristics and life history of each species. At $F_{30\% SPR}$, gray snapper was experiencing overfishing in 2015 (terminal year of the assessment) but overfishing is expected to end by 2019.

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The SSC was also requested to recommend an MSST value for gray snapper. The SSC considered two methods for determining MSST: $(1 - M) * SSB_{MSY}$; and $0.5 * SSB_{MSY}$. Using $F_{30\% SPR}$, and $MSST = (1 - M) * SSB_{MSY}$, gray snapper is overfished but is expected to be rebuilt in 2024. If $MSST = 0.5 * SSB_{MSY}$ is selected, then no corrective action is required.

SSC members recommended the use of $(1 - M) * SSB_{MSY}$ as a proxy for MSST, based on guidance given in Restrepo et al. (1998)¹, and because of its traditional use as a proxy for several snapper species. Dr. Porch noted that using $(1 - M) * SSB_{MSY}$ as a proxy could lead to overfished declarations based only on natural variation in the stock size.

Draft Reef Fish Amendment 48/Red Drum Amendment 5

Dr. Barbieri noted that this is a complex document with a long development timeline. He indicated that the SSC will remain engaged in evaluating the amendment and will review and provide guidance to the Council as requested.

Other Business

Ad Hoc Red Snapper Charter For-Hire and Ad Hoc Reef Fish Headboat Advisory Panels Meeting

The Council requested staff to jointly convene these advisory panels to review the decision tools developed by SERO for reef fish amendments 41 and 42. Staff is still working to find a suitable date when a quorum can be met. Staff anticipates that this meeting will be held before the January 2019 Council meeting.

Greater Amberjack

The Committee discussed the draft framework action that considers changes to recreational and commercial management measures for greater amberjack. The Committee last reviewed this document at its April 2018 meeting and requests that staff prepare a revised draft with only the action addressing commercial trip limits for Committee review at the October 2018 Council meeting.

Madam chair, this concludes my report.

¹ Restrepo, V. R., G. G. Thompson, P. M. Mace, W. L. Gabriel, L. L. Low, A. D. MacCall, R. D. Methot, J. E. Powers, B. L. Taylor, P. R. Wade, and J. F. Witzig. 1998. Technical guidance on the use of precautionary approaches to implementing National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-F/SPO-31. NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland.
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/NSGtkgd.pdf>