

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

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**Agenda Item IV:** SSC Review of 2023 Gulf Vermilion Snapper Interim Analysis

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Dr. Luiz Barbieri (Vice Chair, Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC]) will review a presentation by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) on the 2023 Gulf vermilion snapper interim analysis (IA), using data through 2022. These data were prepared to help inform the SSC about the general condition of the Gulf vermilion snapper stock, which was estimated to be healthy as of 2017 by the SEDAR 67 stock assessment. The Committee will also receive a summary of comments and motions for vermilion snapper from the Reef Fish AP. The Committee should consider the information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item V:** SSC Review of 2023 Gulf Lane Snapper Catch Analysis

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Dr. Barbieri will review a presentation by the SEFSC on the 2023 Gulf lane snapper catch analysis, using data through 2022. These data were prepared to help inform the SSC about the general condition of the Gulf lane snapper stock, which is currently evaluated periodically using an index-based method from the NOAA Data Limited Toolkit (iTarget). The Committee will also receive a summary of comments and motions for lane snapper from the Reef Fish AP. The Committee should consider the information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate, including whether to modify catch advice for lane snapper.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Review of IFQ Program Goals and Objectives

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will give a presentation on the red snapper and grouper/ tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) program goals and objectives selected by Council during the June 2023 meeting. With an emphasis on Goal 1, i.e., improve opportunities for participants to enter the program, the presentation will include data and information pertaining to the evolution and current state of the red snapper and grouper/ tilefish IFQ programs. Council staff will discuss potential approaches to developing management measures to address the specific objectives identified under Goal 1. The Committee is expected to review the data and information presented, ask questions and, determine the alternative approaches for developing management measures to be included in an amendment addressing Goal 1. Staff will also

discuss a tentative timeline for the development of the amendment. The Committee is expected to review the timeline, suggest revisions and make recommendations as warranted.

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**Agenda Item VII:** FINAL ACTION: Draft Framework Action: Modifications to Recreational and Commercial Greater Amberjack Management Measures

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will review a presentation considering modifications to recreational (fixed closed seasons) and commercial management measures (trip limits) for greater amberjack. Both Actions 1 and 2 of the document have been updated to reflect the Council's current preferred alternatives and all pertinent sections have been included in the latest revision. Council staff will also review public comments received, and the Southeast Regional Office will review the proposed codified text of the regulations. The Committee will also receive a summary of comments and motions for greater amberjack from the Reef Fish AP. The Committee should evaluate the Council's preferred alternatives and make any modifications as necessary. The framework can be considered for final action and the Committee may recommend the document for transmittal, if desired.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Draft: Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 / Reef Fish Amendment 55: Catch Level Adjustments and Allocations for Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will review the proposed management alternatives for Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 / Reef Fish Amendment 55, which evaluates modifications to Southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper management. Staff will update the Committee on actions and recommendations made by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council at its September 2023 meeting, including a motion to re-evaluate catch advice based on the 2022 SEDAR 64 Interim Analysis once the State Reef Fish Survey data from Florida are available in 2024. The Committee will also receive a summary of comments and motions for yellowtail snapper from the Reef Fish AP. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and provide feedback to staff and the SSC as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item IX:** SSC Discussions on Recent Gag Grouper Research and Implications for Gag Grouper Management

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Dr. Barbieri will summarize presentations from several researchers on Gulf gag grouper, which were given to the SSC during its September 2023 meeting. Dr. Sue Lowerre-Barbieri presented *Reproductive resilience in the protogynous gag*

*grouper*; Dr. Angela Collins presented *Effects of Recreational Catch and Release Angling on the Survival of Gag, and Gear and Strategies Designed to Reduce Barotrauma*; Dr. Dave Chagaris presented *Age-specific Mortality of Gag from Red Tide on the West Florida Shelf*; and, Ms. Beverly Sauls presented *Discard Mortality of Gag on the West Florida Shelf*. These presentations were intended to inform the SSC and assist it in providing recommendations to the Council in keeping with the Council’s goals for the Gulf gag stock: to reduce fishing mortality on male gag; to constrain future harvests to the ACL; to increase the probability of rebuilding the stock; to avoid increasing discards; and, to reduce vulnerability of gag during spawning to increase spawning success. The Committee should evaluate the information presented and consider how it may be used to inform the Council with regard to its goals for gag. The Committee will also receive a summary of comments about this research from the Reef Fish AP.

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**Agenda Item X:** SSC Discussions on 2023 Gulf Gag Grouper Health Check

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Dr. Barbieri will review a presentation by the SEFSC on the 2023 Gulf gag grouper IA, which used video data through 2021 and recruitment data through 2022. These data were prepared to help inform the SSC about the condition of the Gulf gag grouper stock, for which the catch limits were greatly reduced following the 2022 SEDAR 72 stock assessment. SEDAR 72 estimated the stock to be overfished and undergoing overfishing as of 2019. This IA for Gulf gag grouper was provided as a “health check” of the stock, since the catch limits for gag grouper were modified via Reef Fish Amendment 56 in June of 2023, but have not yet been implemented. The Committee will also review a summary of comments about this IA from the Reef Fish AP.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Draft Options: Gag and Black Grouper Management Measures

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Council staff will review revised options for gag and black grouper management modifications, including reducing the recreational daily bag limit for gag, establishing a recreational vessel limit for gag and black grouper, and establishing a commercial spawning season closure. Black grouper was included in this document due to a possibility for misidentification of black grouper and gag. The Committee will also review a summary of comments and motions about this framework action from its Reef Fish AP. The Committee should consider the information presented and make recommendations to the Council about the types of management options it would like to explore further. Staff will plan to continue to develop the document for final action in January 2024.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings, and State Program Landings for Red Snapper

**Action:** Presentations and discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** SERO staff will review the status of reef fish and IFQ program landings relative to catch limits, which is provided for the Committee's information only. Council representatives from the five Gulf States will also review their 2023 private angling seasons for red snapper and offer projections for the rest of the 2023 fishing season as appropriate. These data are part of an ongoing report to the Council that requires no action by the Committee. The states will also characterize available data for observed mean lengths and weights. Committee members should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Other Business

**Action:** Additional items that can be brought up for discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** 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.

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