

Tab B, No. 6a

Review of Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan Objectives



October 23, 2018

Background

- Request from Reef Fish Committee at August 2018 Council meeting.
- Consistent with a NMFS Policy Directive and two NMFS Procedural Directives relating to allocation.
- GMFMC Fishery Allocation Policy – “All allocations and reallocations must be consistent with Gulf Council’s principles for allocation.”
- Main focus for each of the 18 current objectives – retain, modify, or remove?

Review of Objective 1

- **Objective 1:** To rebuild the declining fish stocks wherever they occur within the fishery.
- Included in the Original Reef Fish FMP.
- Red snapper and gray triggerfish in rebuilding plans.
- May develop a rebuilding plan for gray snapper.
- *IPT question:* Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 2

- **Objective 2**: To establish a fishery reporting system for monitoring the reef fish fishery.
- Included in the Original Reef Fish FMP.
- Established commercial, dealer, and recreational reporting programs.
- Many permits include mandatory reporting requirements.
- *IPT comment*: Redundancy with Objective 7 (To re-specify the reporting requirements necessary to establish a database for monitoring the reef fish fishery and evaluating management actions.).

Review of Objective 7

- **Objective 7**: To re-specify the reporting requirements necessary to establish a database for monitoring the reef fish fishery and evaluating management actions.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
- *IPT comment*: Redundancy with Objective 2 (To establish a fishery reporting system for monitoring the reef fish fishery.).
- *IPT comment*: At the time of implementation, Reef Fish Amendment 1 was essentially noting that Objective 2 had not been achieved.

Review of Objective 3

- **Objective 3: To conserve and increase reef fish habitats in appropriate areas and to provide protection for juveniles while protecting existing and new habitats.**
- Included in the Original Reef FMP.
- Established marine reserves as well as gear restrictions in reserves and HAPCs.
- Established target reduction goal for juvenile red snapper mortality.
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained?

Review of Objective 4

- **Objective 4**: To minimize conflicts between user groups of the resource and conflicts for space.
- Included in the Original Reef Fish FMP.
- Established gear restrictions.
- Placed requirements on sales of Gulf reef fish.
- *IPT comment*: Some redundancy with Objective 6 (To reduce user conflicts and near shore fishing mortality.).
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained?

Review of Objective 6

- **Objective 6: To reduce user conflicts and near shore fishing mortality.**
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
 - Action called “User Grouper Conflict Resolution”; status quo adopted.
- Established gear restrictions.
- Established stressed area boundaries.
- *IPT comment:* Some redundancy with Objective 4 (To minimize conflicts between user groups of the resource and conflicts for space.).
- *IPT comment:* Clarification on “near shore” as Council only manages the EEZ.

Review of Objective 5

- **Objective 5**: The primary objective and definition of Optimum Yield for the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan is to stabilize long term population levels of all reef fish species by establishing a certain survival rate of biomass into the stock of spawning age to achieve at least 20 percent spawning potential ratio.
- Initially included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
- Modified in Reef Fish Amendment 3, to establish a definition of OY and to establish SPR, instead of SSBR, as a status determination criterion of stock health.
- Set MSY, MSY proxy, OY, MFMT, and MSST for multiple species in the FMU.
- *IPT question*: Is this still intended to serve as the primary objective of the FMP?
- *IPT comment*: The OY definition is inconsistent with OY as defined for several reef fish species.

Review of Objective 8

- **Objective 8:** To revise the definitions of the fishery management unit and fishery to reflect the current species composition of the reef fish fishery.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
- Since the Original Reef Fish FMP, reef fish species have been added as well as removed from the FMU through multiple amendments.
- *IPT question:* Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 9

- **Objective 9**: To revise the definition of optimum yield to allow specification at the species level.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
- Set OY for greater amberjack, red grouper, red snapper, gray triggerfish, gag, vermillion snapper.
- Optimum yield is the focus of NS 1. NS 1 Guidelines state that:
 - “...Councils must include in their FMPs and FMP amendments...OY at the stock, stock complex, or fishery level.”
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 10

- **Objective 10**: To encourage research on the effects of artificial reefs.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
- Listed in the GMFMC's Updated List of Fishery Monitoring and Research Priorities for 2015-2019:
 - “Continued research is recommended to estimate the use and effect of artificial reef structures in the Gulf of Mexico on red snapper population abundance, age and length composition, and spatial distribution.”
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 11

- **Objective 11**: To maximize net socioeconomic benefits from the reef fish fishery.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 1.
 - Initially read as “To maximize net economic benefits from the reef fish fishery.”
- At the April 2014 Council meeting, “economic” was changed to “socioeconomic.”
- Analysis conducted to comply with E.O. 12866 utilizes information within amendments (RIR and Ch. 4’s Direct and Indirect Effects on the Economic Environment as well as Direct and Indirect Effects on the Social Environment).
- *IPT comment*: Redundancy with Objective 16 (To optimize, to the extent practicable and allowed by law, net benefits from the fishery.).

Review of Objective 16

- **Objective 16**: To optimize, to the extent practicable and allowed by law, net benefits from the fishery.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- *IPT comment*: Redundancy with Objective 11 (To maximize net socioeconomic benefits from the reef fish fishery.).
- *IPT comment*: If retaining this objective, the word “maximize” would be more consistent with the language in the National Standard 1 guidelines and E.O. 12866 than “optimize.”

Review of Objective 12

- **Objective 12**: To increase the stability of the red snapper fishery in terms of fishing patterns and markets.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- Commercial sector – IFQ program.
- Recreational sector – sector separation and state management.
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 13

- **Objective 13**: To avoid to the extent practicable the “derby” type fishing seasons.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- Commercial sector – IFQ programs.
- Recreational sector – sector separation and state management.
- *IPT comment*: Some redundancy with Objective 12 (To increase the stability of the red snapper fishery in terms of fishing patterns and markets.), except that Objective 12 is red snapper specific.

Review of Objective 14

- **Objective 14**: To promote flexibility for the fishermen in their fishing operations.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- Commercial sector – IFQ programs .
- Recreational sector – state management (under development).
- Commercial & recreational sectors – removed venting regulation.
- *IPT comment*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 15

- **Objective 15**: To provide for cost-effective and enforceable management of the fishery.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- Established commercial reef fish vessel permits.
- Required electronic VMS with a ‘hail-out’ requirement for “All gear-types of commercially permitted reef fish vessels.”
- Established “approved landing sites for all IFQ programs in the commercial reef fish fisheries.”
- *IPT comment*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 17

- **Objective 17**: To reduce the harvesting capacity of the red snapper fleet in an equitable manner utilizing demonstrated historical dependence on the red snapper resource as a criterion.
- Included in Reef Fish Amendment 15.
- Commercial sector – IFQ programs and limited access permits.
- Recreational sector – required for-hire vessels fishing for reef fish in the Gulf EEZ have federal for-hire permits.
- *IPT question*: For clarification, is this objective intended only for the commercial sector?
- *IPT question*: Should this objective be retained; has it been achieved?

Review of Objective 18

- **Objective 18: To maximize the available days to recreational fishermen.**
- Included in 2014, during the development of Reef Fish Amendment 28 (2015, vacated).
- Decreased recreational sector and for-hire captain/crew bag limits.
- Increased the minimum size limits for fish for the recreational sector.
- Established sector separation.
- State Red Snapper Management Exempted Fishing Permits.
- *IPT comment:* Specification of applicable constraints to this objective or insertion of “to the extent practicable” would provide clarification for guiding management.

Review of Overall Goal of the FMP

- **Overall goal of the FMP** (Reef Fish Amendment 1): **To manage the reef fish fishery of the United States within the waters of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council jurisdiction to attain the greatest overall benefit to the nation with particular reference to food production and recreational opportunities on the basis of the maximum sustainable yield as modified by relevant ecological, economic, or social factors.**
- *IPT comment:* Changing the word “modified” to “reduced” would make this consistent with National Standard 1 Guidelines.