

**Reef Fish Committee Report  
January 26 – 27, 2021  
Ms. Martha Guyas – Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab B, No. 1**). The minutes (**Tab B, No. 2**) from the November/December 2020 meeting were approved as written.

*Review of Reef Fish Landings, and IFQ Program Landings (Tab B, No. 4)*

Only commercial landings data were presented because recreational landings data are not available for 2020. Landings for 2020 are considered preliminary, and are cumulative by month. The Committee noted that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the price-per-pound realized for IFQ species was similar to that observed in 2019 (2020 data are not yet adjusted for inflation). Carryover of red grouper and red snapper was discussed, with resistance expressed by the Committee for carrying over red grouper in light of the stressed condition of that stock. A Committee member advocated for carrying over uncaught quota from 2020 to 2021 to shareholder accounts for red snapper. NOAA General Counsel advised the Committee to not lose sight of the ongoing calibration work for the recreational sector, and that the calibration work may confound this issue. A Committee member thought that supporting the commercial red snapper fishermen by allowing the carryover of uncaught 2020 quota to specific IFQ accounts in 2021 would go a long way to support those fishermen. Another Committee member countered that many fisheries have foregone allocation every year, and yet the Council has not taken similar action to the same effect.

*Final Action: Framework Action: Modification of Gray Triggerfish Catch Limits (Tab B, No. 6)*

At its November 2020 meeting, the Council moved to split a framework action on vermilion snapper and gray triggerfish catch levels and gray triggerfish recreational fixed closed seasons into multiple documents. Council staff brought a new draft framework action to modify gray triggerfish catch levels before the Committee for final action, and Council staff reviewed public comments on the document.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 1, to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative.**

**Alternative 2:** Modify the ABC, ACLs, and ACTs for gray triggerfish based on the results of the 2020 interim analysis, the recommendations of the Council’s SSC, and Reef Fish Advisory Panel (Reef Fish AP). Apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule to determine the buffer between the ACL and ACT for the recreational and commercial sectors, respectively.

Year	OFL	ABC	Recreational ACL	Recreational ACT	Commercial ACL	Commercial ACT
2021+	1,220,000	456,900	360,951	274,323	95,949	88,273

Note: Values are in pounds whole weight. Units are in MRIP-CHTS. The OFL reflects the SSC’s January 2016 recommendation.

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

A Committee member asked why there was such a large buffer between the overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC), and inquired when the ABC could be reviewed again. Council staff explained that the last completed stock assessment (SEDAR 43 2015) provided high and low recruitment scenarios to generate catch advice for the rebuilding plan established in Amendment 46 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The resultant catch recommendations considered lower recruitment, and set the ABC at the fishing mortality rate required to rebuild the stock by 2025 ( $F_{Rebuild}$ ). Council staff explained that the next interim analysis for gray triggerfish is tentatively scheduled for 2023 based on the SSC’s recommendations; however, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) indicated that analysis could be moved up to 2022.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to approve the Framework Action: **Modification of Gray Triggerfish 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.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

*Final Action: Framework Action: Modification of the Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper Catch Limits and Accountability Measures (Tab B, No. 7)*

At its November-December 2020 meeting, the Committee selected preferred alternatives for the Framework Action to Modify Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper Catch Limits and Accountability Measures. Council staff reviewed these preferred alternatives, and the public comments received on this action since the previous meeting. One Committee member reminded the Committee that the preferred alternative in Action 1 would nearly double the catch limits for lane snapper, which is considered a “data-poor” species. They noted that while the stock appears healthy, there is a possibility the Council would need to revisit the lane snapper catch limits should future harvests indicate a stock decline. The Committee also discussed that while a portion of this increase is associated with the increase in stock size, the majority of the increase results from the use of MRIP-FES recreational data in the update assessment.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to approve the Framework Action: **Modification of the Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper Catch Limits and Accountability Measures 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.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

*Final Action: Framework Action: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Recreational Data Calibration and Recreational Catch Limits (Tab B, No. 8)*

Dr. Joe Powers (SSC) reviewed the summary results of the Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC) presented to the SSC at its January 2021 webinar meeting. The GRSC is a comprehensive and multifaceted study over a large geographic area; however, many questions about the analyses have not yet been answered, as the final project report is still outstanding. The summary estimate of the coefficient of variation (CV) about the total estimate of absolute abundance of 11% was queried, and the SSC would like more information about how the CVs by strata were determined. The SSC recommended an expedited review of the GRSC results by an independent panel, including independent reviewers and this review will take place from March 30 – April 2, 2021. This review will determine the appropriateness of the GRSC as an estimate of absolute red snapper abundance, and the SSC will determine whether to use the GRSC in a survey-informed catch analysis for providing management advice. The SSC had noted that the effort to use GRSC data in an interim analysis would be quite different from a typical “interim analysis”, and as such, ought not be labeled the same. Dr. Powers noted that the final project report is needed for a thorough review of the GRSC, and anticipated many of the SSC’s questions being answered therein.

The Committee questioned the timing of the independent review of the GRSC, and the immediate completion of the GRSC-informed catch analysis using the same for management advice. Dr. Greg Stunz (lead investigator for the GRSC) clarified that the priority for the GRSC team was to ensure the accuracy of the science of the GRSC, with accommodations for generating management advice coming second to that effort. Dr. Clay Porch (SEFSC) clarified that the designation of “best scientific information available” necessitates that the information be available, and without the full report, that designation is not yet possible. The SEFSC is working with the GRSC team on the data available to date, and is working to fill any gaps using other survey data as appropriate. The SEFSC intends to have the GRSC-informed catch analysis available for SSC review at the tail-end of the review of the GRSC at the end of March 2021.

The Committee discussed using the Gulf state-generated recreational catch and effort data for the private angling component in the GRSC-informed catch analysis, with runs both including and not including the GRSC abundance data. A Committee member thought the state-generated data were more accurate than those data generated by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), and would result in a more accurate estimate of the condition of the red snapper stock than using only MRIP-calibrated catch and effort data. Dr. Porch clarified that a research track assessment would be best equipped to consider the state-generated data, and that the proposed GRSC-informed catch analysis being prepared for the SSC to review at the end of March 2021 is

not designed for this sort of effort. Further, considering these data in the GRSC-informed catch analysis by the end of March 2021 will not be possible due to time constraints. The Committee questioned the continued use of MRIP-generated catch and effort data for generating management advice, noting the greater precision being achieved by the state surveys. State surveys are used to inform recreational catch and effort in Washington, Oregon, and California; however, MRIP does not operate in those states.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move, to request the SEFSC add two additional analysis runs to the research track red snapper assessment that would replace federal recreational survey data with state recreational survey data with and without GRSC data.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

Public comment on the draft framework action was reviewed. Staff then reviewed the action and alternatives in the document. Dr. Frazer offered modifications to Alternatives 2 and 3 that would consider quota adjustments expected from the completion of the GRSC-informed catch analysis on red snapper, using data from the GRSC. Dr. Frazer presented a table showing the proportion of red snapper occurring off each Gulf state, according to the estimate of absolute abundance from the GRSC. Noting the current state-specific allocations and the calibration ratios generated by the NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST), Dr. Frazer showed, using the proportion of the total biomass (in numbers of fish) occurring off each state as a guide, how the state-specific catch limits might be modified based on an increase in the ABC. The proposed modifications would conclude at the end of the 2022 fishing season, with the expectation that the catch limits would be revisited by the Council before that point. Dr. Frazer also presented socioeconomic considerations for modifications to the state-specific sector allocations for inclusion in a future plan amendment.

The Committee noted the work that went into determining the current state-specific allocations for the private angling component in Amendment 50A to the Reef Fish FMP. NOAA General Counsel asked whether there would be any adjustment in the event that the GRSC-informed catch analysis for red snapper did not result in an increase in the ABC of 25%. Dr. Frazer clarified that depending on which alternative is selected as preferred, that alternative would take effect regardless of any increase to the ABC from the GRSC-informed catch analysis. SERO and NOAA General Counsel both clarified that the language for the motion should state that the modification would remain in place until changed, rather than reverting back to the currently incompatible status quo of Alternative 1. Some Committee members expressed support for using the GRSC as a tool for examining the state-specific allocations, and for modifying the ABC in the GRSC-informed catch analysis. Acknowledgement of the uncertainty around the estimate of absolute abundance was made known, and that the Committee could not know by how much the ABC might change as a result of the results of the GRSC-informed catch analysis. SERO noted that some adjustment to the state catch limits would need to occur, regardless of whether Alternative 2 or 3 is selected as preferred. Committee members acknowledged an effort to not purposefully inflict disproportionate catch limit reductions to any one state, while also working towards becoming compliant with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). For the proposal for modifying Alternative 2, if no

increase in ABC results from the GRSC-informed catch analysis, then under this motion, Alternative 2 would be in effect until modified by the Council.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 1, to add a series of options under Alternative 2 that would incorporate an increase to the overfishing fishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) based on the results of the Interim Analysis as informed by the Great Red Snapper Count. If the results of the review by the SSC result in a minimum of 0% or 25% increase in ABC, the state-specific ACLs would be calibrated based on Alternative 2 for the 2021 and 2022 recreational fishing seasons. Regardless of the results of the Interim Analysis, the state specific ACLs will be reviewed in 2022 or as soon as practicable.**

*Example:*

**Option a:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased

**Option b:** Apply the ratio conversion in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased by 25% or more

*Motion carried with one opposed.* **SEE APPENDIX FOR REVISED ALTERNATIVES.**

The Committee asked whether final action could be taken at this meeting, including the proposed modifications. NOAA General Counsel advised that, if the Council did not change the alternatives currently in the document, and acknowledging that Council and SERO staff would still have to complete the National Environmental Policy Act analyses for those alternatives, that the Council could, take final action.

Dr. Frazer then detailed a proposal for Alternative 3 that would apply the 23% buffer for all states, but would modify the catch limits based on the ratio calibrations in Alternative 2 in the event the GRSC-informed catch analysis resulted in an increase in the ABC of either greater than 0% or 25%. The ratio calibrations would be applied to any increase in the ABC directed to the states, and would only apply to the increase above the status quo. If no increase in ABC results from the GRSC-informed catch analysis, then under this motion, Alternative 3 would be in effect until modified by the Council. SERO expressed concern about whether the motion was tantamount to reallocation, which would require a plan amendment. To provide clarity for this hybrid approach, the aforementioned proposal for Alternative 3 would manifest in a newly proposed Alternative 4.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 1, to add a new Alternative 4.**

**Alternative 4:** To add a series of options that would incorporate an increase to the overfishing fishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) based on the results of the Interim Analysis as informed by the Great Red Snapper Count. If the results of the review by the SSC result in a minimum of 0% or 25% increase in ABC, the newly added quota would be incorporated into the state-specific ACLs using the calibrations indicated in Alternative 2 for the 2021 and 2022 recreational fishing seasons. Regardless of the results of the Interim Analysis, the state specific ACLs will be reviewed in 2022 or as soon as practicable.

*Example:*

**Option a:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2 to any additional quota if the ABC is increased

**Option b:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2 to any additional quota if the ABC is increased by 25% or more

*Motion carried with no opposition.* **SEE APPENDIX FOR REVISED ALTERNATIVES.**

Dr. Frazer then proposed modifying Alternative 3 to state that a 23% reduction would be applied to any increase in the catch limits across all states. NOAA General Counsel added that the Council will need to address more than just the private angling component when faced with any increase in the ABC resulting from the GRSC-informed catch analysis. NOAA General Counsel added that the previously proposed hybrid approach in the new Alternative 4 hasn't been viewed yet by the public, hasn't been analyzed, and therefore, would preclude the document from going final on Thursday.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 1, Alternative 3, apply 23% reduction and any quota increase across each of the states.**

**Alternative 3:** Modify the state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs by establishing a “State Management ACL” that is 23% below the private angling component quota and applying the allocation percentages established in Amendment 50A of the Reef Fish FMP. The resulting state ACLs are as follows:

State	ACL (lbs ww) (State Currency)
Alabama	864,450
Florida	1,473,357
Louisiana	628,499
Mississippi	116,694
Texas	204,131

*Motion carried with four opposed.* **SEE APPENDIX FOR REVISED ALTERNATIVES.**

Dr. Frazer then proposed initiating a plan amendment to modify the catch limits for red snapper based on the GRSC-informed catch analysis. The plan amendment should also consider, amongst other alternatives, options for reallocation of the private angling component ACLs between the Gulf states, considering biomass estimates from the GRSC, and also NOAA socioeconomic data. The Committee acknowledged the need for such a plan amendment, but also recognized the considerable body of work that went into the state-specific allocations under Amendment 50A to the Reef Fish FMP. Dr. Stunz clarified that the GRSC was tasked with providing a count of the number of red snapper in the Gulf, but not the biomass in weight. The SEFSC would be expected to apply the abundance in numbers to a weight estimation procedure to generate a biomass estimate in weight.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, to direct staff to initiate an Amendment to adjust the OFL and ABC based on the results of the Interim Analysis for Red Snapper (as informed by the GRSC) and SSC recommendations. The private recreational ACLs should include but not be limited to a range of alternatives that consider reallocation based on state specific biomass estimates derived, in part, from the GRSC and NOAA’s socio-economic data. Allocation for the commercial and CFH sectors will also be considered in this amendment.

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

The Committee then considered selecting a preferred alternative from those presented in the draft framework action. The Committee asked about the consequences of selecting Alternative 1 as preferred, given that it is not compliant with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. NOAA General Counsel noted that it would make the approval of any future increases in catch limits difficult for NMFS, since the Reef Fish FMP would not comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act. As such, neither NOAA General Counsel nor SERO advised the selection of Alternative 1 as preferred.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, in **Action 1**, to make **Alternative 2** the preferred.

CHANGES TO ALTERNATIVE 2 DURING COMMITTEE REFLECTED IN **YELLOW**.

**Alternative 2:** Modify the state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs using the ratio calibrations developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Office of Science and Technology (OST) and the respective Gulf states. These ratios and the resulting ACLs in each state’s currency are as follows:

State	Ratio	ACL (lbs ww) (State Currency)
Alabama	0.4875	547,298
Florida	1.0602	2,028,641
Louisiana	1.06	865,207
Mississippi	0.3840	58,195
Texas	1.00	265,105

For any subsequent increase in the state-specific ACLs for the recreational private angling component for red snapper:

**Option 2a:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased

**Option 2b:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased by 25% or more

*Motion carried 10-5 with two abstentions.*

*Review: SEDAR 70 – Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack Stock Assessment (Tab B, No. 9)*

Dr. Powers reviewed the SEDAR 70 stock assessment of Gulf greater amberjack, which has a terminal data year of 2018. The majority of harvest of greater amberjack is by the recreational sector, specifically by the charter for-hire and private vessel fleets. Discards are also primarily from the recreational fleets. The stock has been overfished since about 1985, and spawning stock biomass (SSB) has been below  $SSB_{MSY}$  since 1980. The stock has been undergoing overfishing on and off since 1980 and SSB does not appear to have yet been affected by previous management actions to reduce fishing mortality and rebuild the stock. The SSC found that SEDAR 70 represents the best scientific information available; however, the SSC stated that it is unclear what effect the historical recreational landings are having on the model results. Additionally, a recent study indicating that a large proportion of the stock is associated with offshore oil rigs was not incorporated in the assessment; the SSC recommended that this study be considered in a future assessment. Projections begin in 2022, with the OFL defined as the fishing mortality at the MSY proxy of 30% of the spawning potential ratio ( $F_{30\%SPR}$ ), and the ABC at  $F_{Rebuild}$  to rebuild the stock by 2027. The SSC recommended that the OFLs and ABCs for 2022 – 2024 be, in millions of pounds, whole weight:

OFL mp ww		ABC mp ww	
2022	1.637	2022	1.255
2023	2.223	2023	1.767
2024	2.781	2024	2.270

A Committee member asked what was driving the biomass down in the early years from when the model begins. Dr. Powers clarified that the estimates of early catches reflect a trend in harvest leading to the biomass levels for when most of the harvest data in the model are available. He added that the SSC acknowledged the uncertainty in the data in this time period, and the effect that this has on estimates of stock productivity.

Council staff reviewed the results of the Something’s Fishy tool. Overall, the results indicated a generally positive sentiment about greater amberjack abundance, but some fishermen also expressed a negative sentiment regarding management measures. A Committee member inquired why sector-specific sentiment results indicated higher positive responses from the private vessel fleet. Council staff indicated that those positive comments were associated mostly with fish abundance. Another Committee member noted a regional variance in sentiment was also present in the results where fishermen in Louisiana expressed an overall positive sentiment.

A Committee member asked if it were possible to spatially identify the areas where overfishing was occurring. The SEFSC noted that SEDAR 70 is a Gulf-wide assessment that examines fishing mortality throughout the Gulf, but that regional fishing mortality differences may be able to be identified. SERO added that addressing fishing mortality spatially may not be possible due to data deficiencies. Committee members suggested two documents: one to modify the rebuilding plan and catch limits; and, another to modify the sector allocations. Staff noted that changes to the sector allocations (73% recreational, 27% commercial) are likely to modify the

projections, meaning that the catch limits would need to be modified again once the sector allocations were modified. NOAA General Counsel commented that, when using catch limits established using the MRIP-FES data currency, not reallocating between the sectors would be a *de facto* reallocation to the commercial sector, since the additional catch and effort estimated by MRIP-FES is attributable to the recreational sector.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **to direct staff to work on a plan amendment to update rebuilding plan for GAJ and revise catch limits and sector allocations based on the MRIP-FES data.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

*White Paper: Sector Separation for Four Reef Fish Species (Tab B, No. 10)*

This agenda item was not reviewed due to time constraints.

*Review of SEDAR 64: Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper (Tab B, No. 11)*

Dr. Powers reviewed the results of the SEDAR 64 stock assessment on southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper, which used a terminal data year of 2017. Combined landings in the Gulf and South Atlantic were made up of a more even mix of commercial and recreational harvest, with most discards coming from the recreational fleets. Generally, SSB has been increasing over the last 20 years, and SSB in 2017 was above SSB<sub>MSY</sub>. Southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper is not overfished or undergoing overfishing as of 2017. The SSCs requested projections based on average landings from 2017 – 2019; the most recent years for which landings data were available. The Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs used a P\* of 37.5% for determining the ABC, and recommended the Councils adjust the ACLs and ACTs based on projections at 75% of F<sub>SPR30%</sub>, which is the MSY proxy for the stock. The SSCs recommended the following values for the stock OFL and ABC for 2021 – 2025:

	OFL mp ww	ABC mp ww
Year	F <sub>30%SPR</sub>	P* = 0.375
2021	4.754	4.655
2022	4.301	4.242
2023	4.028	3.991
2024	3.863	3.836
2025	3.756	3.736

*Due to time constraints the Committee was unable to consider directing staff to initiate a joint document to implement the new catch levels for yellowtail snapper.*

Council staff reviewed the results of the Something's Fishy Tool for yellowtail snapper. Most of the responses were received from the southeastern Gulf. Generally, sentiment was more positive in the northern Gulf, while sentiment was relatively more varied in proximity to the Florida Keys. Generally, comments were quite varied in sentiment but some emergent themes suggested that larger fish were observed in the northern Gulf, that yellowtail snapper distribution appears to be expanding northward, and several anglers reported catching larger fish in deeper water.

The Committee asked how the results of the Something's Fishy Tool were being used during the stock assessment process. Council staff indicated that the report is given to the stock assessment analysts before conducting the assessment to allow researchers to investigate any anomalies by referencing fishermen observations. Additionally, the yellowtail snapper version of the tool was promoted through partnering with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which bolstered responses and created more data with which to derive more precise examinations. Council staff indicated that continued standardization of data collection methodologies will allow for additional analyses in the future. The Committee recommended restructuring the report presentation by first presenting overall emergent themes gathered from all comments before reviewing results to aid in interpreting the tool's findings.

### *Public Hearing Draft Amendment 53: Red Grouper Allocations and Annual Catch Levels and Catch Target (Tab B, No. 12)*

Staff reviewed the actions and alternatives in Amendment 53 to the Reef Fish FMP and discussed potential next steps. Staff also noted that the Reef Fish Advisory Panel reviewed the document in October 2020, and will be getting an update on the document at its February 2021 meeting. Dr. Powers reviewed the SSC's discussion at its January 2020 meeting and noted that they were tasked with discussing the discrepancies in recreational landings between the stock assessment and the ACL Monitoring Dataset. The main discrepancy is that SEDAR 61 (2020) used recreational landings in numbers of fish and the weights are estimated within the stock assessment model. The model also assumes uncertainty in the recreational landings, as well as in the commercial landings, which means that predicted landings are not identical to input landings.

A Committee member commented that she listened to the SEFSC presentation and resulting SSC discussion. She stated that she sees a need for additional discussion of the average weights used and how it is calculated from MRIP in comparison with the length-weight procedure in the stock assessment model to convert inputs in numbers to model outputs in weight. NOAA OST responded that a previously shared presentation on this methodology could be given again and that the issue is that they are using data from MRIP's Access Point Angler Intercept Survey for converting lengths to weights. SERO noted that the SEFSC calculates a different average weight than is used by the MRIP. Another Committee member asked if the input is in numbers of fish for other species, not just red grouper. The SEFSC responded that the input is typically in numbers of fish.

**The Committee recommends, and I so move, to request a presentation on the process for arriving at yearly red grouper average weight via MRIP and include sample sizes per strata, PSEs, and other relevant data for each year.**

*Motion carried without opposition.*

SERO asked about timing of Amendment 53. Staff responded that public hearings via webinar could be completed prior to the April 2021 Council meeting, and that the Council could likely take final action on the amendment then. SERO added that if the Council took final action on the amendment as late as the June 2021 Council meeting, the proposed management measures could still be in effect prior to 2022. Staff also noted that the interim analysis for red grouper is expected to be presented to the SSC in May 2021, but the results of this analysis would not be considered in the current amendment. A Committee member asked if the sector allocations in Action 1, Alternative 3 would be the closest to those in Alternative 1, which uses the MRIP-FES data. Dr. Freeman responded that Alternative 3 uses the same time series as Alternative 1, in terms of determining the sector allocations.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 1, to make Alternative 3 the preferred.**

**Alternative 3:** Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors as the average landings using Fishing Effort Survey (FES)-adjusted Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP FES) data during the years 1986 through 2005, based on the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) ACL monitoring datasets. The allocations for red grouper are 59.3% commercial and 40.7% recreational. Revise the OFL and ABC as recommended by the SSC based on SEDAR 61 (2019). Set the stock ACL equal to the stock ABC.

*Motion carried 9 to 5, with 3 abstentions.*

The Committee discussed that, in Action 2, the commercial buffer in Alternative 3 accounts for multi-use allocation, while still utilizing the ACL/ACT Control Rule for the recreational sector.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **in Action 2, to make Alternative 3 the preferred.**

**Alternative 3:** Maintain the current buffer between the ACL and ACT for the commercial sector, and apply the ACL/ACT Control Rule to revise the buffer between the ACL and ACT for the recreational sector. The commercial buffer is 5%, and the recreational buffer is 9%.

*Motion carried without opposition.*

A Committee member inquired if public hearings would be held virtually or in-person. She noted that this document deals with reallocation, an important issue, and that public testimony has been limited during virtual meetings. Council staff noted that while a hybrid Council meeting is planned for April 2021, that any in-person meetings will be further explored after the January 2021 meeting. She added that staff would plan on holding two virtual public hearing webinars and could also consider a mail-out. The Committee member indicated her support for a

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mail-out, while another Committee member expressed concern for that approach. Council staff acknowledged the potential for bias if a mail-out was sent to commercial permit holders. She suggested asking the Gulf states to help contact private anglers via email and that the Fish Rules recreational regulations mobile application could push a notification to private anglers.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **to take Amendment 53: Red Grouper Allocations and Annual Catch Levels and Catch Targets to Public Hearing.**

*Motion carried without opposition.*

### *Remaining Items from SSC Summary Report (Tab E, No. 5a)*

This agenda item was not reviewed due to time constraints.

### *Other Business*

No other business was discussed by the Committee.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

**Appendix:**

**Revised Alternatives from Action 1 in:  
Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Recreational Data  
Calibration and Recreational Catch Limits**

**2.1 Action 1: Modification of Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) State-specific Red Snapper Private Angling Component Annual Catch Limits**

*IPT Note: Items added to these alternatives by the Council’s Reef Fish Committee on 26 January 2021 are highlighted in yellow. Strikethrough items are not in compliance with the MSA, and are not viable.*

**Alternative 1:** No Action – Retain the state-specific red snapper private angling component annual catch limits (ACL) established in Amendment 50A for the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Reef Fish Resources in the Gulf (Reef Fish FMP). The state specific allocation percentages and ACLs are as follows:

State	Allocation	ACL (lbs ww) (MRIP-CHTS)
Alabama	26.298%	1,122,662
Florida	44.822%	1,913,451
Louisiana	19.120%	816,233
Mississippi	3.550%	151,550
Texas	6.210%	265,105

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Modify the state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs using the ratio calibrations developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Office of Science and Technology (OST) and the respective Gulf states. These ratios and the resulting ACLs in each state’s currency are as follows:

State	Ratio	ACL (lbs ww) (State Currency)
Alabama	0.4875	547,298
Florida	1.0602	2,028,641
Louisiana	1.06	865,207
Mississippi	0.3840	58,195
Texas	1.00	265,105

For any subsequent increase in the state-specific ACLs for the recreational private angling component for red snapper:

**Option 2a:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased

**Option 2b:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2, if the ABC is increased by 25% or more

**Alternative 3:** Modify the state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs by establishing a “State Management ACL” that is 23% below the private angling

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component quota and applying the allocation percentages established in Amendment 50A of the Reef Fish FMP. The resulting state ACLs are as follows:

State	ACL (lbs ww) (State Currency)
Alabama	864,450
Florida	1,473,357
Louisiana	628,499
Mississippi	116,694
Texas	204,131

The 23% buffer will be applied to any subsequent increase in the state-specific ACLs for the recreational private angling component for red snapper.

**Alternative 4:** Modify the state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs by establishing a “State Management ACL” that is 23% below the private angling component quota and applying the allocation percentages established in Amendment 50A of the Reef Fish FMP. If the SSC recommends an increase in the OFL and ABC for red snapper, the resulting difference between the status quo and revised combined state-specific ACLs for the private angling component would be incorporated into the respective state-specific ACLs using the ratio calibrations indicated in Alternative 2. The Council will review the state specific ACLs in 2022, or as soon as practicable.

**Option 4a:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2 to any additional quota if the ABC is increased

**Option 4b:** Apply the ratio calibration in Alternative 2 to any additional quota if the ABC is increased by 25% or more