

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

Agenda Item IV: Discussion: Reef Fish Amendment 60: Individual Fishing Quota Programmatic Distributional Issues

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: Staff will give a presentation on Reef Fish Amendment 60, a regulatory action considering methods to distributing shares and annual allocations in the red snapper and grouper/tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs. The continued development of Reef Fish Amendment 60 is consistent with an April 2024 Council motion which proposed a draft purpose and need statement and outlined management actions to include in the amendment. Reef Fish Amendment 60 addresses the sources of IFQ shares and annual allocation to distribute including, shares held by NMFS (from Reef Fish Amendment 36A), shares and annual allocation recovered from inactive IFQ shareholders accounts, shares and allocation recovered from divestment by shareholders who do not meet permit and activity requirements that will be set in Reef Fish Amendment 59, and annual allocation collected from future IFQ quota increases. Reef Fish Amendment 60 should also detail the recipients of the shares and allocation to distribute, the methods of distribution, and an appeals process. The Committee should discuss the information presented, suggest revisions as needed, and recommend next steps.

Agenda Item V: Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 59: Requirements for Participation in Individual Fishing Quota Programs

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: Staff will give a presentation on the diverse entities holding shareholders accounts in the red snapper and grouper/tilefish IFQ programs and discuss the business models adopted by participants in the IFQ programs. Business models discussed range from simple ownership, i.e., a single fisherman with one shareholder account, to business entities with multiple shareholder accounts.

Staff will also give a presentation on Reef Fish Amendment 59, a regulatory action addressing participation requirements in red snapper and grouper/tilefish IFQ programs. Participation requirements discussed include the ownership of valid or renewable commercial reef fish permits and requirements to land predetermined proportions of their annual allocations. The Committee should discuss the information presented, suggest revisions as needed, and recommend next steps.

Agenda Item VI: Presentation and Discussion on the 20-Fathom Recreational Seasonal Closure for Shallow-water Grouper

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: At its April 2024 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on a document to explore the removal of the recreational 20-fathom closure for the harvest of red grouper and other shallow-water grouper species (scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper, and yellowfin grouper). This time-area closure is currently in place seaward of the 20-fathom boundary from February 1 through March 31 annually. Council staff will review the management history of the closure and discuss some of the data available on fishing effort in space and time. The Council’s Reef Fish Advisory Panel (RFAP) met on April 23, 2024, and discussed the closure. The RFAP recommended that the Council remove the 20-fathom seaward closure for the recreational sector in February through March. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to staff as appropriate.

Agenda Item VII: Discussion: NMFS Letter to Gulf Council on Lane Snapper Overfishing

Action: Discussion and recommendations

Council input and next steps: On April 9, 2024, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) sent a letter to the Council stating that Gulf lane snapper was subject to overfishing in 2023. The annual catch limit (ACL) for lane snapper has been exceeded in three of the last four years. However, the 2023 ACL overage exceeded the 2023 overfishing limit (OFL) and was greater than the new OFL in place for 2024. Under the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (50 C.F.R. § 600.310(g)(7)), the Council should reevaluate the system of ACLs and accountability measures (AMs) for lane snapper and make modifications, if necessary. NMFS intends to closely monitor landings in 2024 and take a precautionary approach in determining whether an in-season closure is necessary. The RFAP discussed the letter at its April 2024 meeting and recommended that the Council evaluate a minimum size limit for lane snapper in federal waters. The Committee should discuss the letter from NMFS and the motion by the RFAP and make recommendations to staff as appropriate.

Agenda Item VIII: Review: Reef Fish AP Charter For-hire Buffer and Fishing Season for Red Snapper, and Other Business

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council input and next steps: At its April 2024 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on a document to explore reducing or removing the buffer between the federal for-hire ACL and annual catch target (ACT) for red snapper, which is currently set at 9%. Council staff used the Council’s ACL/ACT Control Rule to evaluate the recent landings data, and determined that using that same method, the buffer could be revised down to 5%. Concurrently, the Council also directed staff to begin work on a document to explore modifying the federal for-hire fishing

season for red snapper. Public testimony at the April Council meeting suggested that for-hire operators could benefit from modifications to the current construct of their fishing season. At its April 2024 meeting, the RFAP provided recommendations on both measures, which will be presented by Council staff and the Chair of the RFAP. The Committee should consider the information presented and provide recommendations to staff as appropriate.

Council staff and the RFAP Chair will then review Other Business items discussed by the RFAP, including commercial electronic reporting and an Other Business item added to the meeting on Reef Fish Amendment 53. The Committee should consider the RFAP's motions and provide recommendations to staff as appropriate.

Agenda Item IX: Update and Next Steps on Recreational Initiative

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Dr. Willy Goldsmith and Andrew Loftus (Private Consultants for the Recreational Initiative) will present a status report on the work of the Recreational Steering Committee to date. This will include proposed scope of objectives for the working group meetings, proposed make-up of the working group, and anticipated deliverables and timeline for the Committee's consideration and feedback. The Committee should ask questions and provide feedback as needed.

Agenda Item IX: 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.
