

Summary
Reef Fish Advisory Panel
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Webinar
Thursday, May 9, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

The Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Fishery Management Council's (Council) Reef Fish Advisory Panel (AP) was convened via webinar at 10:00 A.M. on May 9, 2019. The agenda was modified to include a discussion item under Other Business, and was approved as amended.

Discussion of an Upcoming Fall Reef Fish AP Meeting

The Council intends to have the Reef Fish AP meet in the fall of 2019 to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair, and to review the SEDAR 61 stock assessment of Gulf red grouper. The AP can also take up discussion of other pertinent topics as requested by the Council or other AP members. Staff will poll the AP for the best dates for the first two weeks of October. The meeting will take place in Tampa at the Council office.

Presentation of Gulf Greater Amberjack Commercial Trip Limit Draft Framework Action

Several AP members inquired about any spatial patterns related to the commercial trip limit harvest. Dr. Larkin from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) indicated that the majority (60%) of commercial landings harvesting up to the current 1,500 pound gutted weight (lbs gw) trip limit were from western Florida. Mr. Williamson asked about the discard mortality of greater amberjack in the commercial fishery. Mr. Rindone stated that discard mortality varied by fleet, with greater amberjack harvested using hand lines being less susceptible to discard mortality than deep longline gears. Greater amberjack captured in the upper water column that also experienced shorter fight times have higher survivorship than those caught at deep water depths with longer fight times. A few AP members added that larger sized fish (34-35 inches fork length) experience higher discard mortality relative to smaller fish that recover from capture stress more quickly. Mr. Cagle asked if there was any relationship between water temperatures and discard mortality for greater amberjack, and inquired as to whether there were any within-season differences in discard mortality. Mr. Rindone stated that, like many other reef fish species, greater amberjack are more susceptible to discard mortality when water temperatures are warmer; however, data on discard mortality were not available at a monthly scale to ascertain any within-season effects of water temperature on discard mortality.

Capt. Delacruz indicated that while he supported the establishment of a 500 lbs gw commercial trip limit, he was also interested in proposing a strategy that allowed for an adjustment in subsequent fishing seasons should the preferred alternative not achieve the objective of extending the commercial fishing season into the end of December and harvesting the quota.

Motion: Recommend to the Council a 500 lb trip limit, and to add a new alternative to reduce the commercial trip limit for Gulf greater amberjack to 250 lbs gw (260-lbs ww) when 75% of the ACT is projected to be met. If the fishing season closes because the ACT was projected to be met, in the following fishing year, reduce the commercial trip limit for Gulf greater amberjack to 250 lbs gw (260-lbs ww) when 50% of the ACT is projected to be met.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Capt. Guindon proposed exploring approaches to managing the commercial greater amberjack harvest using an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program. Capt. Guindon indicated an IFQ program would be appropriate for commercially harvested greater amberjack since only a few fishery participants target the species, and an IFQ program would allow for additional flexibility. Some AP members expressed concerns about further confounding management for greater amberjack by integrating an IFQ strategy. A motion to recommend the Council explore an IFQ program for greater amberjack did not pass.

Recreational Greater Amberjack Discussion

Capt. Hubbard stated that members of the recreational sector are concerned about the recent closure of the spring season (month of May) for greater amberjack. Anticipating stakeholder input for the upcoming June Council meeting, Capt. Hubbard wanted the AP to consider a split season quota management strategy as a recommendation to the Council. Capt. Hubbard indicated that a split season strategy would avoid implementation of a fractional bag limit. Capt. Frady agreed with avoiding fractional bag limits, but also highlighted that a split season quota would reduce the fall fishing season.

Motion: To suggest the Council look into a split quota for the spring/fall season to ensure there is spring access (May 1- May 31) for the eastern gulf. The split quota would be 60% fall/ 40% spring or 70% fall/30% spring.

Motion carried with 2 abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 P.M.

Participants

Reef Fish AP Members

Troy Frady, *Vice Chair*
Jane Black-Lee
James Bruce
Patrick Cagle
Jason Delacruz
Buddy Guindon
Dylan Hubbard
Jeff McDaniel
Mike Nugent
Mike Prasek
Clarence Seymour
David Walker
Ed Walker
Troy Williamson

Council Staff

Ryan Rindone
Lisa Hollensead
Matt Freeman
John Froeschke
Carrie Simmons
Jessica Matos
Bernie Roy

Council Member

John Sanchez

Others

Eric Brazer, RFSA
Glenn Davis
Michael Drexler, OC
Johnathan Goodson
Susan Gerhart, NMFS

Topher Holmes, NOAA
Joseph Hudson
Mike Larkin, NMFS
Ben Martino
Michael Norberg, FWC
Kelli O'Donnell, NMFS
Ashford Rosenberg, RFSA
Jim Zurbrick
Clifford Borgstedt
Craig Broussard
Angela Collins, UF
Frank Helies, NMFS
Costa Kouzounis
Dennis O'Hern, RFA
George Sedberry
Laurie Stevens, SFA
Lance Parks
Lauren Waters, NMFS