

Reef Fish Advisory Panel
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Scope of Work
January 5-6, 2022
Hybrid (Webinar & In-Person)

Agenda Item III: Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Action: Discussion

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Ryan Rindone (Council staff) will guide the Reef Fish Advisory Panel (RFAP) in electing a new Chair and Vice Chair. These elections occur whenever an AP is reappointed. The Chair of the RFAP is tasked with working with staff to create meeting agendas, review meeting summaries, leading discussions during RFAP meetings, and representing the interests of the RFAP to the Council and the public as requested.

Agenda Item VI: Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings

Action: Presentation and discussion

Committee input and next steps: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff will review the status of reef fish and individual fishing quota (IFQ) program landings relative to catch limits, which is provided for the RFAP's information only.

Agenda Item VII: SEDAR 72: Gulf of Mexico Gag Grouper Stock Assessment

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will summarize the findings of the SEDAR 72 stock assessment of Gulf gag grouper, including subsequent Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations about yield projections based on the stock assessment. Among other modifications, SEDAR 72 used updated recreational catch and effort information from the Marine Recreational Information Program's (MRIP) Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS) and Fishing Effort Survey (FES); the latter results in increases in estimates of recreational catch and effort, and in the uncertainty about those estimates. SEDAR 72 found Gulf gag grouper to be overfished and undergoing overfishing, due to variables including successive episodic mortality from red tide events, and generally lackluster recruitment over the last decade. In evaluating SEDAR 72, the SSC determined that the current proxy for fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}) was likely not appropriate for Gulf gag grouper, and recommended a new proxy that will need to be considered by the Council. The SSC also recommended using the Ecospace model results to estimate the severity of the 2020/2021 red

tide event in the yield projections. Ms. Emily Muehlstein (Council staff) will present the findings of the Council's Something's Fishy tool (now, Fishermen Feedback) for Gulf gag grouper. The RFAP should consider the information and SSC recommendations presented, and make recommendations to the Council with respect to the pace of rebuilding for the Gulf gag grouper stock following the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The RFAP may also discuss possible measures for the Council to consider to appropriately constrain fishing mortality, based on the pace of rebuilding recommended by the RFAP.

Agenda Item VIII: SEDAR 68: Gulf of Mexico Scamp Research Track Assessment

Action: Presentation and discussion

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will summarize the results of the SEDAR 68 research track stock assessment of Gulf of Mexico scamp. This assessment type does not yield management advice, and is used to create the model framework necessary to evaluate the stock in the future. SEDAR 68 used updated recreational catch and effort information from MRIP APAIS and FES; the latter results in increases in estimates of recreational catch and effort, and in the uncertainty about those estimates. The SSC determined that the SEDAR 68 base model was appropriate for use in the subsequent operational assessment for scamp, which begins in January 2022. Ms. Muehlstein will present the findings of the Council's Something's Fishy tool (now, Fishermen Feedback) for Gulf scamp. The RFAP may discuss the results of the assessment, understanding that actionable management advice will not be available until the completion of the subsequent operational assessment later in 2022.

Agenda Item IX: SEDAR 70: Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack Projections

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will briefly summarize the results of the SEDAR 70 stock assessment for Gulf greater amberjack, which found the stock to be overfished and undergoing overfishing; the stock has retained these status determinations across several stock assessments since 2011. Among other modifications, SEDAR 70 used updated recreational catch and effort information from MRIP APAIS and FES; the latter results in increases in estimates of recreational catch and effort, and in the uncertainty about those estimates. The SSC evaluated updated projections from SEDAR 70, which corrected previous modeling errors and used a revised projection code. Mr. Rindone will walk the RFAP through the projections for each sector allocation scenario requested by the Council. Ms. Muehlstein will present the findings of the Council's Something's Fishy tool (now, Fishermen Feedback) for Gulf greater amberjack. The RFAP should consider the information presented and make recommendations about appropriate options for sector allocations. Given the reduction in landings expected, the RFAP may also consider recommendations which further constrain fishing mortality.

Agenda Item X: Draft Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 / Reef Fish Amendment 55: Modifications to the Southeastern U.S. Yellowtail Snapper Catch Limits, Jurisdictional Allocation, South Atlantic Sector Allocation, and South Atlantic Commercial Management Measures

Action: Presentation, discussion and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Mr. Rindone will present a brief summary of proposed management actions under consideration for Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 / Reef Fish Amendment 55, which will be a joint amendment to both fishery management plans for the Councils' management of southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. The yellowtail snapper stock was found to be healthy during the Councils' SSC review of the SEDAR 64 stock assessment, which used data through 2017 and incorporated recreational catch and effort data from MRIP-FES. At its December 2021 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council recommended updating the SEDAR 64 stock assessment with data through 2020 to ensure that subsequent actions considered by the Councils were using the most recent data available; the Gulf Council will consider the same decision at its January 2022 meeting. The RFAP should consider the information presented, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Agenda Item XI: Discussion: Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program Proposed Rule Changes

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Michelle Masi from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will provide a progress update on the Southeast For-Hire Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program. Phase I of the program was implemented on January 5, 2021, and established new reporting requirements for the federal for-hire industry. Phase II of the program will require the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and is expected to be implemented in March of 2022. The presentation will provide an update on the program status, and report preliminary information regarding the program's implementation to date. The RFAP should be prepared to discuss this information, ask questions regarding details of the program, and offer insights on how these changes would affect the for-hire industry in the Gulf.

Agenda Item XII: Discussion: Framework Action: Modification to Location Reporting Requirements for For-Hire Vessels

Action: Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Ms. Carly Somerset (Council staff) will present a draft framework action that considers modifications to location reporting requirements in the new For-Hire Reporting program. Staff will present management alternatives under consideration to provide flexibility to for-hire operators in the event of VMS equipment failure. While expected

to be rare, a VMS failure could result in trip loss and socioeconomic impacts. Alternatives presented will consider variations in the duration of temporary exemption periods, as well as an annual cap on the number of exemptions that can be granted during a year. The RFAP is requested to provide feedback and recommendations on the alternative that best balances the need to reduce negative effects from potential VMS failures with the need to provide high quality location data that will be used to estimate effort from the for-hire fleet.

Agenda Item XIII: Draft Framework Action: Modifications to Vermilion Snapper Overfishing Limit, Acceptable Biological Catch and Annual Catch Limits

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Assane Diagne (Council staff) will review a framework action that considers modifying the Gulf vermilion snapper overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, and annual catch limit in response to the SEDAR 67 stock assessment. SEDAR 67 found vermilion snapper to be healthy in all respects, with 2015 and 2016 representing the best years of recruitment on record. The RFAP should consider the information presented and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XIV: Updates to Commercial Electronic Logbook Program

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Committee input and next steps: Dr. Julie Brown from the Southeast Fishery Science Center (SEFSC) will present a progress update on the modifications to the commercial electronic logbook program. A similar presentation provided by the SEFSC at the September 2021 Data Collection AP meeting indicated that the program would allow for voluntary electronic submission of the paper logbook forms in the fall of 2021. The RFAP should ask questions of SEFSC staff, discuss how to address potential future modifications to the program (i.e., additional data collection fields, reporting timing, etc.).

Agenda Item XV: Public Comment

Action: Information

Committee input and next steps: Members of the public will be able to address the RFAP directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

Agenda Item XVI: Other Business

Action: Discussion

Committee Input and Next Steps: Additional items may be brought up for discussion by RFAP members, time permitting. If the RFAP wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future RFAP meeting.

Captain Josh Ellender will discuss the retention of reef fish species harvested recreationally by captain and crew.