



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

*Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico*

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**For Immediate Release**

September 3, 2013

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## **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council August 2013 Council Update**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in San Antonio, Texas, August 26 - 29, 2013, to discuss a number of fishery issues. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council last week.

### **Red Snapper Recreational Fall Season**

The Council received an update from NOAA Fisheries on the landings for the 2013 recreational red snapper season. Preliminary catch estimates are significantly higher than expected. According to NOAA Fisheries representatives involved in the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), a new methodology was used to estimate catch and effort this year, which may at least partially account for the higher estimates. Over the next couple of weeks, NOAA Fisheries will calibrate the new estimates to the old methodology before making a determination on a fall recreational red snapper season.

### **Regional Management of Red Snapper - Reef Fish Amendment 39**

The Council heard summaries of the public hearings for Reef Fish Amendment 39 - Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper and reviewed the actions in the document. Amendment 39 examines dividing the recreational red snapper quota among states or regions. Red snapper would remain a federally managed stock, but regions would have more flexibility in choosing management measures.

The Council's current preferred alternatives are as follows:

#### **Action 1 - Regional Management**

Preferred Alternative 2: Establish a regional management program that delegates authority to a state or states to set management measures for the harvest of an assigned portion of the recreational red snapper quota.

#### **Action 2 - Establish regions for regional management**

Preferred Alternative 3: Establish five regions representing each Gulf state.

#### **Action 3 - Apportioning the recreational red snapper quota among regions**

No preferred selected.

#### **Action 4 - Regional Management Guidelines**

Preferred Alternative 2: Allow individual regions to set recreational red snapper season start and end dates and season structure in the Gulf.

Preferred Alternative 3: Allow individual regions to set recreational bag limits from 0 to 4 red snapper per angler per day in the Gulf.

Preferred Alternative 4: Allow individual regions to establish recreational red snapper minimum size limits from 14 inches to 18 inches TL in the Gulf.

Preferred Alternative 6: Allow individual regions to establish closed areas within the EEZ adjacent to their region.

Preferred Alternative 7: Allow individual regions to establish sub-allocations for the private and for-hire sub-sectors.

#### **Action 5 - For-hire vessel federal permit restrictions**

Preferred Alternative 2: Exclude requirement for vessels with federal charter/headboat permits to comply with more restrictive red snapper regulations when fishing in state waters.

#### **Action 6 - Post-Season Accountability Measures Adjusting for Regional Overages**

Preferred Alternative 3: If a region exceeds the apportioned regional quota, then NMFS will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the regional quota in the following year by the amount of the regional quota overage in the prior fishing year. If the total landings from all regions do not exceed the Gulf-wide recreational quota in that year, the region's quota would not need to be reduced to account for the region's overage.

Option b: Apply overages beginning two years after implementation of the plan.

#### **Action 7 - Default Regulations**

Preferred Alternative 2: During the suspension of delegation, the recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters off such state would be:

Option a: Restricted to the default regulations

Preferred Alternative 3: If a state opts out of delegation, the default regulations would apply for recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters of the state.

The Council added options to the document that consider a sunset provision for regional delegation after 5 years. Final action on this amendment is expected in October.

#### **Federal Regulatory Compliance**

The Council initiated the development of a document that will consider rescinding Section 2.13 of Reef Fish Amendment 30B for charter permits. Section 2.13 requires all vessels with federal commercial or charter reef fish permits to comply with the more restrictive of state or federal reef fish regulations when fishing in state waters.

#### **Ad Hoc Red Snapper IFQ Advisory Panel Formed**

The Council selected members to serve on the newly formed Ad Hoc Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota Advisory Panel, which is charged with proposing management measures to improve the performance of the red snapper IFQ program. Congratulations to the following applicants who were appointed to the panel:

Larry Abele	Seth Macinko
Tom Adams	Jerry Rouyea
Billy Archer	Bob Spaeth
Buddy Bradham	Bill Tucker
Jason DeLaCruz	David Walker
Bob Gill	Mike Whitfield
John Graham	Elbert Whorton
Scott Hickman	Tommy Williams
Chris Horton	Troy Williamson
David Krebs	Jim Zurbrick

#### **IFQ Inter-sector Trading**

The Council reviewed a scoping document that considers the possibility of trading Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) between commercial and recreational fishing sectors and agreed to send the document out for scoping workshops after the October Council meeting.

### Dealer Reporting

The Council took final action on Modifications to the Federally-Permitted Seafood Dealer Reporting Requirements. The amendment proposes to change the current dealer permit and reporting requirements for purchasing species managed by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils by:

- Establishing one federal dealer permit for Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Regions.
- Requiring forms to be submitted electronically on a weekly basis.
- Requiring dealers to submit "no purchase forms" for weeks when no purchases are made.

The intent is to ensure landings of managed fish are recorded accurately and in a timely manner so Annual Catch Limits are not exceeded. The amendment will be sent to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

### Amendment 28 - Red Snapper Allocation

The Council reviewed an options paper for red snapper allocation. The purpose of the amendment is to reallocate red snapper resources between the commercial and recreational sectors to increase the net benefits from red snapper fishing and improve the stability of the red snapper component of the reef fish fishery, particularly for the recreational sector.

### Mackerel

A recent stock assessment indicated that the Spanish mackerel stock is not overfished and is not experiencing overfishing. The Councils Scientific and Statistical Committee increased the acceptable biological catch. This week, the Council initiated the development of a framework action to consider increasing the annual catch limit for Spanish mackerel to reflect the increases in acceptable biological catch.

The Council heard public comment/public hearing summaries for Amendments 19 and 20 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 19 addresses sale and permit provisions for Gulf of Mexico Spanish and king mackerel. Amendment 20 addresses season length, transit provisions, allocation, and framework procedures for coastal migratory pelagics. The Council finished selecting preferred alternatives and is expected to take final action during its October 2013 meeting after the South Atlantic Council reviews the documents.

### Exempted Fishing Permits

The Council recommended that NOAA Fisheries approve an application for an exempted fishing permit that the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation Inc. submitted to the Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office. If approved, the exempted fishing permit would allow for the take of approximately 500 sublegal and/or legal fish to conduct research on bycatch reduction devices and electronic logbook data collection in the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico.

### About Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.