



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

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

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Gulf Council Update – August 2014

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Biloxi, Mississippi, August 25 – 28, 2014, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including recreational red snapper sector separation and accountability measures. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council.

Red Snapper Sector Separation – Reef Fish Amendment 40

Reef Fish Amendment 40 considers dividing the recreational red snapper sector into two distinct components – a private angling component and a for-hire component.

During the August meeting, the Council reviewed recommendations made by its Red Snapper Advisory Panel, which met in June. Staff also presented public hearing and public comment summaries, along with a revised Sector Separation document for Council discussion. The Council had a lengthy discussion about Action 2 – Allocation of the Recreational Red Snapper Quota between the Components of the Recreational Sector, and decided to change its preferred alternative to Alternative 7, which would allocate the recreational red snapper quota based on 50% of the average percentages landed by each component between 1986 and 2013 (2010 excluded) and 50% of the average percentages landed by each component between 2006 and 2013 (2010 excluded). Preferred Alternative 7 would result in a federal for-hire allocation of 44% and a private angling allocation of 56%.

The Council is expected to take final action on Amendment 40 during its October meeting in Mobile, Alabama.

Red Snapper Accountability Measures Framework Action

A recent court ruling found that National Marine Fisheries Service did not have accountability measures in place that were adequate to constrain the recreational harvest of red snapper to within the quota. In June, the Council initiated a temporary rule to establish an annual catch target using a 20% buffer to the recreational quota. This week the Council permanently established the annual catch target and initiated an average adjustment that deducts any overages from the recreational quota from the next year's quota when red snapper is under a rebuilding plan. The Framework Action will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

Red Grouper Framework Action

After the National Marine Fisheries Service announced a 2014 in-season closure for red grouper due to the 2013 annual catch limit being exceeded, the Council initiated a framework action to consider changing the current red grouper accountability measures. During its August meeting the Council reviewed a framework action that aims to reduce the likelihood of future in-season closures by reducing the bag limit and/or establishing a fixed recreational closed season during the year to prevent the season from closing early. The Council reviewed the draft framework action, but no preferred alternatives were selected. The Council is expected to take final action on the framework action during its October meeting. To learn more about the framework and send us your comments visit:

http://www.gulfcouncil.org/council_meetings/comment_forms/RedGrouperFramework.php

Red Drum

The Council reviewed a scoping document that considers modifying the red drum closure in federal waters to give offshore access to recreational anglers. A red drum working group is scheduled to meet in September to discuss available data, appropriate data-poor methods for assessing red drum Gulf-wide, and the manner by which the States determine juvenile escapement. The Council will receive recommendations from the working group meeting during its October meeting. Public scoping workshops may be scheduled later this fall.

Greater Amberjack ACL/ACT Framework Action

The greater amberjack stock assessment was recently reviewed by the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), which determined that greater amberjack was overfished and experiencing overfishing and the stock did not meet the 10-year rebuilding plan that ended in 2012. Additionally, the greater amberjack stock ACL has been exceeded twice in the last four years. To address this, the Council initiated a framework action to adjust the greater amberjack ACL/ACT to address overfishing and to rebuild the stock.

At the August meeting, the Council reviewed a draft framework action that considers modifying the greater amberjack allowable harvest and other management measures. The document contains three management actions:

1. Modifications to annual catch limits and annual catch targets
2. Modifications to the recreational size limits and closed seasons
3. Modifications to the commercial trip limit

A revised document will be presented to the Council in October.

Reef Fish Amendment 36 – Red Snapper IFQ Modifications

The Council received an update on the referenda requirements for Amendment 36. A referendum is required if the Council wants to consider auctions for IFQ shares. The Council agreed to move forward with developing a scoping document for Amendment 36, excluding any auction alternatives.

Shrimp Amendments 15 and 16

The Council reviewed two shrimp amendments:

1. Shrimp Amendment 15 – Status Determination Criteria for Penaeid Shrimp and Adjustments to the Shrimp Framework Procedure, which considers revising the status of brown, white, and pink shrimp to ensure that the overfished and overfishing thresholds are consistent with the outputs of the new model being used to determine stock status.
2. Shrimp Amendment 16 - Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures for Royal Red Shrimp.

Neither amendment will negatively affect permit holders in terms of quotas, seasons, or permit requirements. The Council is currently gathering input online at www.gulfcouncil.org and will hold a public hearing on the amendments during the October Council meeting.

About the 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 designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.