



# 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, 2015**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in New Orleans, Louisiana, August 10 – 13, 2015, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including red snapper reallocation, regional management for recreational red snapper, management plans for charter vessels and headboats, and the shrimp permit moratorium.

### **Red Snapper Allocation – Reef Fish Amendment 28**

The Council reviewed and took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 28 which reallocates a portion of the commercial red snapper quota to the recreational sector. The Council's preferred alternative - Alternative 8 – would allocate the increase in allowable harvest due to the recalibration of MRIP catch estimates to the recreational sector. The resulting allocation for 2016 – 2017 would be 48.5% commercial and 51.5% recreational.

The Council also took final action on a related framework action to retain a portion of the commercial red snapper quota in 2016 to ensure that the IFQ quota intended for reallocation is not distributed among commercial fishermen before Amendment 28 is implemented.

### **Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper – Reef Fish Amendment 39**

The Council continued discussions on Amendment 39 which looks at dividing the recreational red snapper quota among regions to allow for the creation of different management measures that better suit each area. During this meeting, the Council changed its preferred alternative for Action 1 to Alternative 4 which would establish a regional management program whereby regions would develop management proposals and submit those proposals to a technical review committee. Proposals would then either go back to the region for revision or be forwarded to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for final review. Any region that chooses not to participate or that does not satisfy the conservation equivalency requirements would be subject to the default federal regulations for red snapper.

The Council will conduct another round of public hearings throughout the Gulf coast later this year. Final action is expected in early 2016.

### **Reef Fish Amendments 41 and 42**

The Council reviewed draft options papers for Reef Fish Amendments 41 and 42. Amendment 41 explores the design and implementation of flexible measures for the management of red snapper by the charter for-hire fleet; and Amendment 42 explores the design and implementation of flexible measures for the management of reef fish for the headboat fleet. Both options papers will go out for public scoping in the coming months.

### **Gag and Black Grouper Framework Action**

The Council reviewed an options paper on modifications to the gag and black grouper recreational minimum size limits and recreational season for gag. For both gag and black grouper, the Council proposed an increase in the recreational minimum size limit from 22 inches to 24 inches total length as a preferred alternative. The Council reviewed possible recreational season lengths for gag under either a 22 inch or 24 inch minimum size limit, including possible changes to the season start and end dates. Final action on this framework action is expected during the October Council meeting.

### **Coastal Migratory Pelagics (Mackerel)**

The Council reviewed options papers for CMP Amendment 26: Modifications to Allocations, Stock Boundaries, and Sale provisions of King Mackerel and CMP Amendment 28: Separating Permits for Gulf and Atlantic Migratory Groups of King Mackerel. Revised documents for both amendments will be reviewed during the October Council meeting.

### **Shrimp**

The Council reviewed a draft options paper for Amendment 17 that addresses the expiration of the shrimp permit moratorium. The Council decided to split Amendment 17 into two documents – Amendment 17A and 17B in order to address related issues without jeopardizing the timely approval and implementation of actions directly addressing the moratorium. Amendment 17A will address the permit moratorium and royal red shrimp endorsements, and Amendment 17B will consider other permit issues such as setting a target number of Gulf shrimp vessel permits and whether to

create a Gulf shrimp vessel permit reserve pool, specification of optimum yield, and issues about transiting in federal waters.

Public hearings will be held around the Gulf coast in the coming months.

### **Data Collection**

The Council reviewed a public hearing draft of a joint amendment between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils which considers modifying the frequency and method of reporting for charter and headboats fishing for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagics in the Gulf of Mexico, and snapper, grouper, dolphin, wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagics in the South Atlantic.

The Council requested that the Technical Subcommittee of the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils on Electronic Logbook Reporting Guidelines, in coordination with GulfFIN, ACCSP, SEFSC and Council staff develop a reference document that describes specific catch and effort reporting elements, data standards, and protocols to standardize implementation of Southeast region-wide electronic monitoring initiatives.

The Council also chose a preferred alternative that would require federally permitted for-hire vessels to use a NMFS approved electronic device that automatically records vessel location at specified time intervals for later transmission in the Gulf (both headboat and charter vessel).

### **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, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.