



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 of Mexico Fishery Management Council June 2014 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Key West, Florida, June 23 - 27, 2014, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including red snapper allocation and accountability measures, and red snapper sector separation. The following are the major actions taken by the Council.

Red Snapper Allocation - Amendment 28

The Council discussed Reef Fish Amendment 28, which considers red snapper allocation between the recreational and commercial sectors, as well as recreational accountability measures.

The Council agreed to defer action on the allocation of red snapper until Amendment 40 - Sector Separation - is completed. Sector separation refers to the dividing of the recreational red snapper sector into distinct private angling and federal for-hire components. The private angling component would include private anglers and state permitted for-hire operators. The federal for-hire component would include federally permitted for-hire operators.

The Council also chose to remove the accountability measures from the document and put them in a standalone amendment, choosing the following preferred alternatives:

Action 2.1 - Setting an Annual Catch Target

Preferred Alternative 2: Apply a 20% buffer to the recreational quota. The 2015 ACT would be 4,312,000 pounds.

Action 2.2 - Quota Overage Adjustments

Preferred Alternative 2: While red snapper is under a rebuilding plan, if the recreational red snapper quota is exceeded, deduct the full amount of the overage from the recreational quota in the following season. The recreational ACT will be adjusted to reflect the previously established percent buffer.

For more information, please visit the [Council website](#).

Reef Fish Amendment 40 - Sector Separation

The Council reviewed a draft public hearing document for Amendment 40 - Sector Separation and chose the following preferred alternatives:

Action 1 - Establishment of Private Angling and Federal For-hire Components

Preferred Alternative 2: Establish a red snapper federal for-hire component. The federal for-hire component would include all for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish for-hire permit. Establish a private angling component that would include all other for-hire operators and private recreational anglers.

Action 2 - Allocation of Recreational Red Snapper Quota between the Components of the Recreational Sector

Preferred Alternative 4: Allocate the recreational red snapper quota based on average landings between 1996 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 47.1% and 52.9%, respectively.

The Council also added a new alternative that would allocate the red snapper quota based on average landings from 1986 through 2003, and excluded 2010 landings from all allocation alternatives. Finally, all alternatives that include landings through 2012 will be updated to include 2013 landings once they are finalized.

Action 3 - Recreational season closure provisions

Preferred Alternative 2: Establish separate red snapper season closure provisions for the federal for-hire and private angling components. The federal for-hire red snapper season will close when the federal for-hire red snapper quota is projected to be caught. The private angling red snapper season will close when the private angling red snapper quota is projected to be caught.

Staff will continue working on Amendment 40 and public hearings will be scheduled later this summer. Dates and locations will be announced.

Ad Hoc Red Snapper For-Hire IFQ Advisory Panel

The Council appointed members to the Ad Hoc Red Snapper For-Hire IFQ Advisory Panel. The charge of the AP is to make recommendations to the Council relative to the design, implementation and evaluation of a red snapper for-hire IFQ-type program. The Council plans to convene the panel to review the proposed federal for-hire red snapper limited access privilege program before its October meeting.

The membership list includes:

Gary Bryant	Mark Kelley	Bill Staff
Shane Cantrell	Robbie Langlinais	Mike Sullivan
Daryl Carpenter	Seth Macinko	Skipper Thierry
Troy Frady	Greg Mercurio	Edward Walker
James Green	Mike Nugent	Johnny Williams
Charles Guilford	Richard (Rene) Rice	Troy Williamson
Mark Hubbard	Scott Robson	Bob Zales

Data Collection

The Council reviewed a report from the Technical Subcommittee, which was formed to initiate work on an electronic reporting program for for-hire vessels. The Council developed a list of suggestions for the Subcommittee to consider for a potential for-hire electronic reporting program.

Council suggests that an electronic reporting program

1. Cover the entire Gulf-wide federally permitted charter fleet
2. Be a census electronic reporting system coupled with an estimation process for non-compliance
3. Be mandatory
4. Require daily trip reporting
5. Have accountability measures for compliance in reporting, including suspension of permit for delinquent reporting until trip reports are submitted and received
6. Include an allowance for paper-based reporting only during extreme events (e.g., natural disasters)
7. Must use VMS or similar system if determined more cost effective for effort validation, in addition to hail out/hail in. Also consider how incorporate dually permitted vessel who already have a VMS, if at all possible
8. Should be implemented and tested side by side with MRIP and state's method for at least three years

9. Validation should include a) Gulf MRIP pilot program methodologies, dockside validation of catch and vessel activity, and whenever practical b) at-sea observers or observations through electronic monitoring technologies, c) fine-scale discard data, d) depths of capture, e) area fished, and f) release mortality.

Red Grouper Bag Limit Reduction

The Council requested a framework amendment to reduce the recreational bag limit and modify accountability measures for red grouper for the purpose of extending the recreational season.

IFQ Share Transfer

The Council decided to consider restricting transfer of grouper/tilefish and red snapper IFQ shares to commercial reef fish permit holders beyond the first five years of the IFQ program.

Red Snapper Stock Assessment

The Council requested that a benchmark assessment for red snapper be performed as soon as possible after the 2014 update assessment scheduled for this fall.

The Council also voted to send a letter to the Southeast Fishery Science Center asking that every effort be made to complete the Red Snapper Update Assessment, including the results of the MRIP calibration workshop scheduled for September 2014. The results of the Red Snapper Update Assessment should be made available for the February 2015 Council meeting.

Gag Stock Rebuilt, but Greater Amberjack Still Overfished

The Council received the results of stock assessments on gag and greater amberjack. As of 2012 (the most recent year of data in the stock assessment), gag are no longer overfished, and are no longer undergoing overfishing. Recommendations from its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) for acceptable biological catch (ABC) beginning in 2015 will be provided at the August Council meeting. The Council requested that the SSC provide ABC recommendations that will allow an annual constant catch in order to provide stability in the fishery.

The greater amberjack stock assessment concluded that, as of 2012, the stock was still overfished and undergoing overfishing, although the rate of overfishing has decreased. The Council requested to review a framework amendment at the August Council meeting of alternatives to increase the recreational minimum size limit, move the recreational closed season from the summer to the springtime spawning season, and provide for multiple species to be available when the recreational red snapper season is open.

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.

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There is also a thermometer for each issue that lets you know where the Council is in the process for that particular amendment, whether it's the scoping phase, final action, or implementation.

