



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 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Key West, Florida June 6 – 10, 2011, to address numerous fishery issues, including Reef Fish Amendment 32 and a generic amendment to set annual catch limits and accountability measures. During the weeklong meeting, the Council took the following actions:

Red Grouper Rerun

The Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council was presented with the results of the rerun of the red grouper projections using the actual 2009 and 2010 landings data. The red grouper catches were below the Total Allowable Catch in both 2009 and 2010. As a result of the rerun, the Scientific and Statistical Committee recommended that the red grouper Acceptable Biological Catch be set at 7.93 million pounds. Based on that recommendation, the Council has initiated a regulatory amendment that will increase the red grouper Total Allowable Catch for 2011 through 2016. This will increase the Total Allowable Catch as follows:

Year	old Total Allowable Catch	new Total Allowable Catch
2011	5.68 Mp	6.88 Mp
2012	5.90 Mp	7.07 Mp
2013	6.19 Mp	7.27 Mp
2014	6.38 Mp	7.41 Mp
2015	6.54 Mp	7.52 MP
2016	6.69 Mp	7.72 Mp

The Council initially requested a rerun for both red grouper and gag; however, the gag projections were not rerun because the difference between the 2010 estimated landings and the actual landings for gag was less than 1%.

Gag and Red Grouper- Reef Fish Amendment 32

The Council postponed final action on Reef Fish Amendment 32 until its August 2011 meeting in Austin, Texas. The Council representative from the state of Florida requested the delay in order to allow the state commission to review the Council's preferred alternatives before final action is taken. The Council has also decided to hold three additional public hearings in Florida to gather more public input on the actions proposed in Amendment 32. Meeting dates, locations, and materials will be provided as soon as possible.

Red Snapper Rerun

In April 2011, the Council requested a rerun of the red snapper projections that included the 2009 and 2010 actual landings data. The results of that rerun indicated that the overfishing limit could be increased. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee reviewed the rerun results and determined that the 2011 Total Allowable Catch could be increased by 345,000 pounds. As a result, the Council requested that NOAA Fisheries Service develop an emergency rule that would suspend the September 30 closure date and assign the entire 345,000 pounds of increased total allowable catch to the recreational sector for the 2011 season. The Council will also request that the SEDAR steering committee schedule a benchmark red snapper stock assessment in 2012.

Red Snapper Fall Season

The Council was presented with an options paper for an amendment that would revise the structure of the fall recreational snapper season. The three actions contained within the options paper are:

- Revise or eliminate the October through December fixed closed season. Currently, the recreational red snapper season must end by September 30. Pushing back or eliminating the closure date will provide the Council with more red snapper season management options.

- Provide for weekends only or weekdays only fishing periods. This would provide the Council with more options for in-season management or during a supplemental season if the fishery is reopened after being prematurely closed.
- Increase the 2012 red snapper total allowable catch based on the 2011 red snapper re-run analyses.

Public hearings for this regulatory amendment will be held sometime after the August 2011 Council meeting.

Generic Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures Amendment

The Council postponed final action on the Generic Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures Amendment until the August 2011 Council meeting in Austin, Texas.

Greater Amberjack

In April 2011, the Council was presented with the results of the latest greater amberjack update stock assessment, which concluded that the greater amberjack stock continues to be overfished. Meanwhile, the end of 2011 marks the 10th and final year of the amberjack rebuilding plan. National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires that overfished stocks be managed under rebuilding plans that will rebuild stocks in 10 years or less. It is unlikely that the greater amberjack stock in the Gulf will be rebuilt by the end of 2011. As a result, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee adjusted the Acceptable Biological Catch levels for greater amberjack through 2013 to adhere to the National Standards.

The Council also reviewed an options paper that includes actions to:

- Modify the greater amberjack rebuilding plan
- Adjust recreational management measures including vessel limits, minimum size limits, and closed seasons
- Adjust commercial management measures including trip limits and closed seasons

Staff will develop a public hearing draft for review during the August Council meeting. Public hearings will be scheduled sometime before the Council meets in October 2011.

Earned Income and Crew size Amendment

The Council reviewed an options paper on the proposed amendment to consider the temporary suspension, modification, or elimination of the earned income requirements necessary for commercial reef fish vessel permit renewal; and potentially increasing or eliminating the crew size requirement that limits the number of crew allowed on dually permitted vessels. The Council directed staff to develop a public hearing draft of the amendment for future consideration.

Yellowedge Grouper benchmark Stock Assessment

A recent benchmark stock assessment for yellowedge grouper concluded that the stock is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring.

Spiny Lobster Amendment 10

The Gulf and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils took final action on Amendment 10 to the Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan. Actions contained within the amendment include:

- Removal of some lobster species from the fishery management plan
- Setting of biological and management reference points
- Using undersized lobster as lures
- Modifying tailing requirements

This amendment will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

Mackerel- Amendment 18

The Council approved the public hearing draft for Amendment 18 to the Mackerel Fishery Management Plan. The Amendment contains actions to set Annual Catch Limits, Annual Catch Targets, and Accountability Measures for Gulf-group king mackerel, Gulf-group Spanish mackerel, and Gulf group cobia. It also contains measures to remove cero, little tunny, dolphin, and bluefish from the fishery management plan; to revise the framework procedure; and to separate cobia into Atlantic and Gulf migratory groups. Public hearings will be scheduled prior to the August, 2011 Council meeting.