



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 October 2013 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in New Orleans, Louisiana, October 28 - 31, 2013, to discuss a number of fishery issues. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council last week.

[Regional Management of Red Snapper - Reef Fish Amendment 39](#)

Amendment 39 examines dividing the recreational red snapper quota among states or regions and delegating authority to establish certain management measures for the harvest of a region's portion of the quota. Red snapper would remain a federally managed stock, but regions would have more flexibility in choosing management measures.

After reviewing the latest version of Amendment 39, the Council chose additional preferred alternatives, which include allowing delegation to sunset after five calendar years of the regional management program, and allowing individual regions to establish a maximum recreational red snapper size limit.

Staff will continue to develop the document and bring it back to the Council in February for further discussion.

[Amendment 28 - 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.

The Council heard a status report on red snapper allocation analysis and directed staff to work with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to develop supporting material necessary for consideration of Amendment 28 in time for the February 2014 Council meeting.

[Sector Separation](#)

For the purposes of this amendment, sector separation refers to dividing the recreational red snapper quota into separate private angler and for-hire components. Council reviewed previous sector separation documents and discussed the potential use of red snapper IFQ shares donated by the commercial sector to for-hire operators.

Staff will include a voluntary sector separation option in Reef Fish Amendment 40 - Red Snapper Sector Separation.

Amendment 30B Permit Conditions

The Council reviewed a preliminary draft of alternatives to modify or rescind the provision adopted under Amendment 30B that requires federally permitted charter vessels and headboats to comply with the more restrictive federal regulations when fishing in state waters. The Council requested stronger rationale for the proposed action, additional alternatives, and an analysis of the impact the proposed changes would have on the projected length of the recreational fishing season.

Mackerel

This week, the Council took final action on Amendments 20A (formerly 19) and 20B (formerly 20) to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 20A addresses sale and permit provisions for Gulf of Mexico Spanish and king mackerel. Amendment 20B addresses season length, transit provisions, allocation, and framework procedures for coastal migratory pelagics. The Council voted to send both documents to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation; however, the South Atlantic Council will need to review Amendment 20B once more before it is transmitted to the Secretary. If approved by the Secretary, here is what is included in each amendment:

Amendment 20A

- In the Gulf of Mexico, prohibits the sale of king and Spanish mackerel caught under the bag limit, with the exception of for-hire trips in which the vessel also holds a federal king and/or Spanish mackerel commercial permit. Prohibits all sales during a commercial closure.
- Allows king or Spanish mackerel harvested during a fishing tournament to be donated to a dealer who will sell those fish and donate the proceeds to a charity, provided that the tournament organizers have the appropriate state permits to conduct the tournament, and that the transfer and reporting requirements are followed.
- Eliminates the income requirements for commercial king and Spanish mackerel permits.

Amendment 20B

- Sets the trip limit at 3,000 pounds with no reduction for the western zone.
- Sets the commercial hook-and-line trip limit at 1,250 pounds with no reduction for both the eastern zone, northern subzone, and the eastern zone, southern subzone.
- Changes the fishing year for Gulf group king mackerel for the western zone to 9/1 through 8/31, and for the eastern zone, northern subzone to 10/1 through 9/30.
- Allows transit through areas closed to king mackerel fishing for vessels possessing king mackerel that were legally harvested in the EEZ off of areas open to king mackerel fishing.

- Increases the ACL for Gulf migratory group cobia.

[Ad Hoc Red Snapper IFQ Advisory Panel Charge](#)

The Council developed a charge for the newly formed panel, which is to review the Red Snapper IFQ management program and to recommend to the Council management and administrative measures to improve the performance of the red snapper IFQ program. The panel is scheduled to meet November 5 - 6, 2013 in Tampa, Florida.

[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.