



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 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Baton Rouge, Louisiana October 25 – 29, 2010, to address numerous fishery issues, including a framework action for greater amberjack and a regulatory amendment for red snapper total allowable catch in 2011. During the weeklong meeting, the Council took the following actions:

Greater Amberjack

The Council received an update on MRIP amberjack landings through August and headboat data through July. The projected landings for all of 2010 are 1.1 to 1.2 million pounds, resulting in no quota overages. If the projections hold true, there will be no need for a recreational closure in 2010.

The Council also took final action on a regulatory framework action that creates a recreational season closure of June 1 through July 31. However, an update assessment for greater amberjack is underway, and if that update assessment reveals the total allowable catch can be increased, the Council intends to reconsider the June 1 through July 31 season closure.

Red Snapper

A regulatory amendment to set red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) for 2011 was approved by the Council and will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation. The amendment sets the 2011 TAC to 7.185 million pounds, resulting in a commercial quota of 3.664 million pounds and a recreational quota of 3.521 million pounds. The increase in TAC is contingent upon the 2010 landings not being exceeded.

The Council also requested staff begin developing a new regulatory amendment for red snapper that will change the September 30 recreational season closure to December 31, and explore a possible fall, weekend only, season. While the official red snapper season is currently June 1 – September 30, accountability measures for the red snapper fishery require NOAA Fisheries Service Regional Administrator to close the fishery when the quota has been met or is projected to be met. The Council requested this amendment because it provides additional management options, including a potential fall season.

Red Grouper

The Council directed staff to include options in Reef Fish Amendment 32, that will allow for an increase in the recreational bag limit for red grouper. The rationale was that the recreational fishery has not been meeting its allocation, even with reduced total allowable catch. The new options will be presented to the Council during its February meeting.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program

The Council is recruiting members for an Ad Hoc Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota Program Five-Year Review Panel. Appointments will be made during the February Council meeting. Anyone interested in serving on the panel should send a resume and letter of interest to Phyllis.Miranda@gulfcouncil.org

Other Plan Amendments

The Council will move forward with a plan amendment to address the crew size requirements for vessels with both a commercial and charter reef fish permit. A generic plan amendment to address issues related to the earned income requirement, including an option to eliminate the requirement altogether, will also be developed.