

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management

**Date:** February 10, 2016

**Subject:** Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Report

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**Purpose:**

Staff will provide Commissioners with a review of actions and discussions from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) January 25-28, 2016, meeting in Orange Beach, AL.

**Summary:**

The Council is scheduled to take final action on regional management for the recreational red snapper fishery and an amendment that would require federally-permitted for-hire vessels to report fishing trip information electronically. The purpose of the Council's regional management proposal is to provide management flexibility by restructuring federal recreational red snapper management to allow for regional management measures that better account for biological, social, and economic differences throughout the Gulf. At the November FWC meeting, the Commission directed staff to continue to work with the Council and other Gulf states on a more favorable regional management proposal. The Council is considering requiring for-hire fishing trip information (including location) to be reported electronically at the end of each trip to provide more accurate and timely harvest data for management decisions. The concept of electronic reporting is supported by a large portion of the federal for-hire industry in the Gulf of Mexico. If this proposal is approved by the Council, it is unclear if and when it would be implemented because funding for administering this data collection program has not been identified. The Council could also take action to address the federal shrimp permit moratorium, which is scheduled to expire in 2016. Extension of this moratorium is supported by many in the shrimp industry throughout Florida and the Gulf.

Other expected discussions include possible changes to the red snapper commercial IFQ program, potential expansion of the commercial IFQ program to other reef fish species, and creating a new rebuilding plan for gray triggerfish. The Council will also discuss options for separate management of red snapper for charter vessels and separate management of reef fish for headboats. Reducing the buffer between the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) and annual catch target (ACT) for recreational red snapper management is also scheduled for discussion. Finally, at the request of stakeholders, the Council will consider raising the minimum size limit for Gulf hogfish.

Outcomes from Council meeting decisions and discussions will be provided in the presentation to the Commission.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff may request direction on Council-related items following the Council meeting.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Martha Bademan, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

**Briefing points:**