

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: November 17, 2016
Subject: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Report

Purpose:

Staff will provide Commissioners with a review of actions and discussions from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) Oct. 17-20, 2016 meeting in Biloxi, MS.

Summary:

In October, the Council will continue discussions on allocation-based management options for red snapper harvest on charter vessels and reef fish harvest on headboats, including IFQ-type programs. The Council is scheduled to take final action to define which Gulf headboats may vote on the Council's proposed IFQ program for headboats in a referendum, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The Council will also discuss electronic monitoring options for federally-permitted for-hire vessels that could improve data collection. The Council's current preferred alternatives would require all federally-permitted for-hire vessels in the Gulf to have a vessel monitoring system (VMS) to track the locations of their vessels and report their landings and trip information before returning to the dock at the end of each trip. Many captains oppose the VMS requirement and the Commission has directed staff to advocate for options that allow captains to use other devices to send their trip reports.

The Council will also review a list of areas with deep-water corals and consider additional protections for these areas. Some of these areas occur off Florida, and additional gear or harvest restrictions could affect fishing activity within these areas. So far, the Council has been working with its advisory panels and coral scientists to better understand which areas may warrant protection and whether fishing occurs in these areas. Following the October Council meeting, the Council is expected to hold scoping meetings to get feedback from the public.

Other Council discussions will include:

- Gray triggerfish rebuilding plan options including possible changes to harvest limits, seasons, and size limits;
- Potential federal mutton snapper regulations that are consistent with the new regulations approved by the Commission for state waters at the September FWC meeting;
- Logistical changes for the commercial red snapper, grouper, and tilefish IFQ programs; and
- Options for sharing king mackerel allocation among the recreational and commercial sectors.

Outcomes from October Council meeting will be provided in the presentation to the Commission.

Staff Recommendation:

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

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management