

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: September 8, 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) meetings on June 20-24 in Clearwater, FL and August 15-19 in New Orleans, LA.

Summary:

At its June 2016 meeting, the Council took final action to approve to extend sector separation in the recreational red snapper fishery for an additional five years (If approved by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, sector separation will expire in 2022 instead of 2017). Based on Commission direction, FWC staff supported extending sector separation by three years and did not support the five year option. The Council also took final action to increase the minimum size limit for hogfish harvest in the Gulf of Mexico from 12 to 14 inches fork length. This increase in size limit is broadly supported by both recreational and commercial fishermen. The Council also agreed to work jointly with the South Atlantic Council to consider revising catch limits for spiny lobster based on recommendations from the councils' scientific advisors and representatives from the spiny lobster industry.

In August, 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 will also discuss electronic monitoring options for federally-permitted for-hire vessels that could improve data collection. The Council is also expected to discuss ways to carry over unharvested red snapper ACL to the following season. For gray triggerfish, which continues to be overfished and undergoing overfishing, the Council will review rebuilding plan options including possible changes to harvest limits, seasons, and size limits. Finally, the Council will consider options sharing or redistributing the king mackerel allocation among the recreational and commercial sectors.

In late July, NOAA Fisheries announced that the recreational annual catch target for greater amberjack was projected to be met and that the fishery would remain closed through the end of the year rather than reopening on August 1. NOAA Fisheries has requested Florida adopt consistent regulations and close Gulf state waters to recreational harvest of greater amberjack for the remainder of the year.

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

Staff Recommendation:

Staff will request direction from the Commission regarding the recent recreational closure of greater amberjack in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Staff may request direction on Council-related items following the August Council meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management