

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Date: September 3, 2015

Subject: Gulf Council Report

Purpose:

Staff will provide Commissioners with a review of actions and discussions from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) August 10-14, 2015, meeting in New Orleans, LA.

Summary:

The Council is slated to take final action on red snapper sector reallocation (Amendment 28) at its August meeting. The Commission directed staff to support options that would reallocate based on updated recreational harvest (MRIP) information (Alternative 8 – resulting in allocation of 51.5% for recreational, 48.5% commercial) or updated MRIP information and changes in recreational harvest selectivity (Alternative 9 – resulting in allocation of 57.5% recreational and 42.5% commercial). The Council has been divided on reallocation, but its current preferred alternative is Alternative 8. If the Council votes to reallocate at its August meeting, the Council will also consider final action to withhold a portion of the commercial red snapper quota in 2016 to account for the newly-approved allocation shift so that the new allocations can take effect in 2016. Staff will provide the results of these decisions in the presentation for the Commission meeting.

The Council is also anticipated to discuss management of gag grouper, red snapper, and king mackerel. For gag grouper, the Commission directed staff to support the Council-preferred management alternatives, which would remove the Dec. 3-31 portion of the recreational closed season and maintain the current annual catch limit. The Commission also supported considering raising the recreational minimum size limit from 22 to 24 inches (this is a new option being considered by the Council and this change will also be considered for black grouper). The Council will review the public hearing draft Amendment 39 on regional management of the recreational red snapper. At past meetings, the Commission has recommended a cautious approach to recreational red snapper regional management but has supported continued development of this potential management approach. Council public hearings will be held on Amendment 39 in Florida in October. The Council will also discuss potential separate management of charter for-hire and headboats for red snapper and other reef fish species. For king mackerel, the Council will discuss potential changes to allocations, stock boundaries, and sale provisions. More details on the outcomes of the Council meeting will be provided in the presentation to the Commission.

Staff Recommendation:

No action is requested at this time; however, staff may request direction on Council-related items following the Council meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Bademan, Division of Marine Fisheries Management