

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: September 27, 2018
Subject: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Report

Purpose:

To report on actions from the GMFMC's June 18-21 meeting in Key West, FL, and August 20-23 meeting in Corpus Christi, TX.

Summary:

The Council took final action to reduce the Gulf hogfish annual catch limit (ACL) based on a recent stock assessment. The Council is also considering potential cobia management changes, including increasing the minimum size limit from 33 to 36 inches and reducing possession limits.

Recreational harvest of gray triggerfish in Gulf federal waters closed on August 17 for the remainder of 2018 due to harvest projections indicating that the recreational ACT has been caught. NOAA Fisheries requests the Commission close Gulf state waters to recreational harvest of gray triggerfish to be consistent with the federal closure.

The Council increased ACLs for red snapper based on the most recent stock assessment, which indicates the Gulf stock is not overfished or undergoing overfishing. The Council also took final action to reduce the buffer between the ACL and annual catch target (ACT) for the federal for-hire component from 20% to 9% for 2019, which could result in a longer for-hire season. The private angling ACT buffer would remain at 20%. These actions are pending approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

The Council continued discussions on revisiting red snapper sector allocations and updating commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs for red snapper and grouper/tilefish.

The Council also continued discussions on state management of the recreational red snapper fishery. At its October meeting, the Council will select preferred management options for public hearings including: 1) how to apply state management (private anglers only or private anglers and federal for-hire), 2) state-by-state allocations, and 3) which specific management measures should be delegated to each state. Staff will be requesting Commission direction on these items. Lastly, staff will provide an update on the 2018 Florida Exempted Fishing Permit and recreational season in Gulf state and federal waters.

Staff Recommendation:

Close recreational harvest of gray triggerfish in Gulf state waters for 2018 to be consistent with the federal closure.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management