

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: October 2, 2019
Subject: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Report

Purpose:

To report on actions from the GMFMC's August 12-15 meeting in New Orleans, LA.

Summary:

At its August meeting, the Council took final action to reduce the federal for-hire red snapper annual catch target (ACT) buffer from 20% to 9%. This buffer is in place to help account for management uncertainty and reduce the chance of exceeding the annual catch limit (ACL). By reducing the buffer, it is expected to maximize harvest days, while constraining harvest within the quota. Additionally, the Council took final action to update management targets and quotas for gray (mangrove) snapper based on a recent stock assessment. Under this action, the annual quota will remain similar to the 2019 quota, and other regulatory measures such as the bag and size limit will not change. Both of these actions are pending approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

The Council also discussed the following items:

- Recreational Greater Amberjack: The Council is considering changes to regulations that would increase the likelihood of having both a May and fall recreational season. Options include adjusting the fishing year, fractional bag limits, modifying season structure, and zone management.
- Two-Day For-Hire Possession Limit: Currently, under limited circumstances, customers on for-hire vessels on a trip longer than 24 hours can possess two daily bag limits of reef fish and mackerel. Based on industry requests, the Council is developing an amendment to clarify when on these trips customers can possess two-day bag limits.
- Commercial IFQ Program: The Council is considering potential changes to the commercial red snapper and grouper/tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) programs. These changes could affect who can own IFQ shares, address how to distribute unused quota, and create a quota bank.
- Red Snapper Sector Reallocation: The Council decided to postpone further discussion on red snapper sector reallocation until its January 2020 meeting so that it can consider the results from a recent study on allocations and recalibrated recreational harvest estimates.

The Council will continue to discuss these topics at future Council meetings.

If updated information is available, staff will also provide an update on the 2019 Gulf recreational red snapper season.

Staff Recommendation:

No direction requested at this time. Input on GMFMC items is always welcome.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management