

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: July 22, 2020
Subject: Staff Report – South Atlantic and Gulf Council Updates

Purpose:

Report on actions from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) June 8-11 meeting and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (GMFMC) June 15-18 meeting.

Why:

Update Commissioners on council items relevant to Florida's recreational and commercial fisheries.

Top Points:

- 1) Calibrations that allow Gulf state recreational red snapper data collection programs to be compared to MRIP in a "common currency" could result in future changes to state quotas and seasons.
- 2) Both councils discussed potential sector allocation changes for recently assessed stocks and reviewed a recent Congressional Government Accountability Office report on allocation issues.
- 3) Each council discussed potential ways to help fishing industries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Presidential Executive Order promoting American seafood, and the Modern Fish Act.

Affected Parties:

Those who fish for federally-managed species, seafood dealers and retailers, fishing tackle manufacturers and retailers, and others with interests in fish stocks in federal waters.

Summary:

Gulf red snapper recreational data calibrations between MRIP and state data programs are necessary to ensure quotas are not exceeded and overfishing does not occur. In response to these calibrations, GMFMC may consider adjusting state quotas or setting a quota buffer, which may require states to set shorter seasons in the future. GMFMC took final action to prohibit all fishing in Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps, and discussed potential changes to vermilion snapper and red grouper management based on recent stock assessments. Highlights from the SAFMC meeting include discussion of the 2020 Atlantic red snapper season; initial discussions on revising sector allocations for dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, greater amberjack, and red porgy; and potential restrictions on pelagic longline dolphin harvest.

Each council discussed whether federal emergency action could help offset fishing industry economic losses incurred as a result of COVID-19. They also discussed a Presidential Executive Order promoting American seafood competitiveness and economic growth that directs councils to recommend ways to reduce burdens on fishermen and increase seafood production. They discussed Modern Fish Act topics including a Joint Council Workgroup established to consider alternative management measures for recreational fisheries, and results from a Congressional Government Accountability Office report on mixed-use fishery allocations.

Staff Recommendation:

No direction requested at this time. Input on Council items is welcomed.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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