

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: April 20, 2017
Subject: Gulf Recreational Gag Grouper Season – Big Bend

Purpose:

Staff will present a draft rule to modify the recreational season for gag grouper harvest in state waters off Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties (Big Bend).

Summary:

At its February meeting, the Commission directed staff to develop a draft rule to modify the recreational season for gag grouper in state waters off Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties. The current harvest season in this area is April 1 – June 30. This season was established in 2012 to allow harvest when gag grouper are available in state waters off the Big Bend. At that time, the season elsewhere in the Gulf of Mexico was July 1 through Oct. 31. The season in the rest of the Gulf of Mexico (state and federal waters) was extended last year to June 1 – Dec. 31.

In March, staff held public workshops in Carrabelle, Perry, and Tallahassee to get additional feedback from stakeholders about the season. Staff have also received comments via emails and the online commenting portal. The feedback received was for various season scenarios and in general, stakeholders in this area support allowing harvest in the fall.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend modifying the current season for state waters off Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties to allow harvest from Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, in addition to the current April 1 through June 30 season.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management