

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

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

Date: April 20, 2017

Subject: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Report

Purpose:

Staff will report on actions from the GMFMC's April 3-6, 2017, meeting in Birmingham, AL.

Summary:

The Council is scheduled to take final action that would make mutton snapper regulations in Gulf federal waters consistent with FWC regulations, increase the commercial minimum size limit for gag grouper from 22 to 24 inches, and could make adjustments to federal commercial shrimp management.

The Council is also expected to review results of a greater amberjack stock assessment update, which indicates that the stock continues to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. NOAA Fisheries closed the recreational fishery in Gulf federal waters on March 24 for the remainder of 2017 due to harvest projections indicating that the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) has been caught. Commercial harvest of greater amberjack remains open, but this season will also close when the commercial ACL is projected to be met.

Other items scheduled to be discussed by the Council include:

- Potential protections for areas with deep water corals, including areas off southwest Florida. Additional gear or harvest restrictions could affect fishing activity within these areas
- Stock assessment results for several data-limited stocks
- Changes to vermilion snapper annual catch limits
- **NOTE:** Council discussions related to red snapper and gray triggerfish will be reviewed as part of the Gulf red snapper and gray triggerfish agenda item

Staff Recommendation:

Staff requests direction on whether to close recreational harvest of greater amberjack in Gulf state waters for 2017 to be consistent with the federal closure. Staff may request direction on other Council-related items following the Council meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

