Gulf Council Issues
Review and Discussion
February 8, 2017
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management
For-Hire Electronic Reporting – Final Action

- All Gulf federally-permitted for-hire vessels will be required to electronically report trip information
  - Reports due at end of each trip **before unloading fish**
  - Reports to be made using devices that record location (i.e., smartphones, tablets, or VMS), **with GPS-portion of the device permanently affixed to the vessel**
- Implementation pending approval by U.S. Secretary of Commerce and program funding
Gag Grouper – Stock Assessment and Management Update

- Assessment update indicates gag grouper not overfished or undergoing overfishing but results highly uncertain
- Council considering increasing commercial minimum size limit from 22 to 24 inches
  - Would match recreational 24-inch size limit
- State waters recreational season
  - Stakeholder requests for longer season in Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, and Taylor counties (currently open Apr. 1 – Jun. 30)
  - Other Gulf waters open June 1 – Dec. 31

Commission direction requested on state season
Bottom Longline Exempted Fishing Permit Application

- Proposal would allow 8 commercial longline vessels to fish in an area off west Florida that is seasonally closed to bottom longlining.
- Seasonal closure implemented in 2010 to reduce take of sea turtles by the bottom longline fishery.
  - Area open to other fishing gears.
- Proposal goal: determine if electronic monitoring (i.e., video cameras) can be used to monitor, assess, and reduce sea turtle interactions.
- Council to vote in April on whether to recommend approval of EFP application.

*Commission direction requested*
Other Council Updates

- **Potential deep-water coral protection areas** – scoping meetings in spring 2017
  - Could limit fishing in some offshore areas off Florida
- **Commercial shrimp permits** – public hearings in spring 2017
- **Spiny lobster** – joint amendment underway with South Atlantic Council to increase annual catch limit
- **King mackerel allocation sharing** – final action deferred
Direction Requested

- Gag grouper recreational season – Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, Taylor counties
- Bottom longline EFP request
- Input on other Council items is welcome
- Next Gulf Council meeting is Apr. 3-7 in Birmingham, AL