

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

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

**Date:** July 11, 2017

**Subject:** Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Report

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## **Purpose:**

Staff will report on actions from the GMFMC's June 5-8, 2017, meeting in Naples, FL.

## **Summary:**

The Council took final action on several items including:

- Adjusting annual catch limits (ACLs) for vermilion snapper
- Modifying the number of unrigged hooks that can be carried on bottom longline vessels
- Defining criteria for determining if reef fish stocks are considered to be overfished.

On red snapper, the Council discussed the recent court decision on sector allocation, a the recent meeting of the Council's Ad Hoc Red Snapper Private Angler Advisory Panel, and potential changes to the buffers on the for-hire and private angler quotas. The Council also discussed an Exempted Fishing Permit application submitted by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries that would create a pilot IFQ-type program for harvest of red snapper in federal waters by a limited number of Louisiana private anglers. Consideration of this proposal was postponed until August. Finally, the Council discussed potential changes to the commercial reef fish IFQ programs and potential establishment of IFQ-type programs for charter boats and headboats fishing for red snapper, gag grouper, red grouper, gray triggerfish, and greater amberjack.

The Council also discussed rebuilding greater amberjack, which is overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council is expected to take final action in August and will consider reducing ACLs and expanding the fixed recreational closed season (which is currently June 1 – July 31). Stakeholder opinions on when to close the fishery are mixed.

## **Staff Recommendation:**

Staff requests direction on expanding recreational closed season options for federal waters harvest of greater amberjack. Options include:

- March 1 – May 31 (consistent with commercial closure)
- March 1 – June 30 (spawning season)
- Jan. 1 – June 30 (extends fishing later into the year)
- Jan. 1 – July 31 (minimizes chance of a quota closure)

## **Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management