

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: July 11, 2017
Subject: Gulf Gray Triggerfish – Adoption of Federal Standards

Purpose:

Staff will present a federal consistency action to amend state rules to be consistent with pending changes for Gulf gray triggerfish in adjacent federal waters. Staff will also discuss options for a limited fall 2017 harvest season for gray triggerfish in Gulf state waters.

Summary:

The Gulf Council recently took final action to amend the Gulf gray triggerfish rebuilding plan at its April meeting. Gray triggerfish has been overfished since 2006. The Council considered ways to balance rebuilding the stock while allowing for adequate fishing opportunities. The final action includes: 1) decreasing the recreational bag limit from 2 to 1 fish, 2) increasing the recreational size limit from 14 to 15 inches, 3) adding a January – February closure in addition to the annual spawning closed season of June – July, 4) increasing the commercial trip limit from 12 to 16 fish. Federal rule changes are expected to take effect in 2018.

The Commission closed recreational harvest of Gulf gray triggerfish for 2017 in response to the announcement that the 2016 quota was estimated to be exceeded by more than 200% and federal waters would be closed in 2017. However, the Commission also expressed interest in a limited fall recreational season for state waters. Staff will provide information for Commission consideration for a possible limited fall 2017 season in state waters.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends modifying Gulf gray triggerfish regulations to be consistent with pending federal rules:

- Decrease recreational bag limit from 2 to 1 fish
- Increase recreational size limit from 14 to 15 inches
- Modify annual recreational closures by adding January – February closure in addition to current June – July spawning closure
- No changes are needed to the commercial trip limit because commercial harvesters follow Gulf federal trip limits in state waters

For gray triggerfish, staff recommends considering the final 2016 recreational harvest data in deciding whether to allow a limited fall 2017 season.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management