



fishers requested that the Council reconsider the use of fish traps as allowable gear in the reef fish fishery to provide some relief to offset the longline restrictions included in Reef Fish Amendment 31. Another consideration is that the use of fish traps may help lower the bycatch of gag while targeting red grouper. For the recreational sector, consideration will be given to keeping the first fish caught.

6. Data Collection and Monitoring

Fish tag program or other methods to improve monitoring of recreational catches.

7. Time/Area Closures

The overfished status of gag, and the need to protect spawning aggregations of gag from fishing pressure, as well as reduce bycatch of gag while targeting red grouper make time and/or area closures a possible management measure.

8. Public-Proposed Initiatives to Improve Data Collection

- Recreational Sector Separation - Divide the recreational allocation into separate for-hire and private recreational allocations. Each sector would have its own annual catch limit and possibly an annual catch target.
- Vessel Monitoring System - Require for-hire vessels to allow NOAA Fisheries to monitor a vessel for better enforcement.
- Telephone or Web-Based Reporting System for both for-hire and private recreational vessels. Catch can be reported either by telephone or over the Internet to provide more timely and accurate reporting of recreational catch.
- Electronic Logbooks - to improve accuracy of data collected, and for use as an in-season monitoring program.
- Grouper Endorsements (i.e. stamp) for the for-hire sector to identify the number of grouper fishermen for data collection purposes.

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A Summary of Proposed Reef Fish Amendment 32 - Gag and Red Grouper



The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires that Councils develop rebuilding plans for overfished stocks that will rebuild the stock as quickly as possible, but not to exceed ten years, except in cases where the stock cannot be rebuilt in ten years.

A Summary of Proposed Reef Fish Amendment 32 to Address Gulf of Mexico Gag and Red Grouper

What prompted the Council to initiate the development of Reef Fish Amendment 32 for gag and red grouper?

The 2009 stock assessment update shows that both gag and red grouper were significantly impacted by an “episodic” event in 2005, most likely associated with red tide. Gag is both overfished and undergoing overfishing, and while red grouper is neither, the stock has declined and the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee has recommended that the acceptable biological catch be reduced.

What does this mean?

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires the Council to develop a rebuilding plan for overfished stocks. The plan must rebuild the stock as quickly as possible, but should not exceed 10 years. The Act also requires annual catch limits be set at levels that do not exceed the acceptable biological catch.

Proposed Reef Fish Amendment 32 is currently under development, and it will include a plan to end the overfishing of gag and rebuild the stock to a stock level capable of producing maximum sustainable yield, while at the same time minimizing discards and discard mortality to the extent practicable.

Amendment 32 will also review adjustments to red grouper annual catch limits and possibly annual catch targets, and explore whether management changes are necessary.

What management actions will the Council consider?

The Council is developing a suite of management actions and alternatives to achieve its rebuilding goal and meet the requirements of the Magnuson Act. Some of the possible actions include:

1. Revise previously established annual catch limits & annual catch targets for both species
2. Accountability measures
3. Adjustments to multi-use IFQ shares
4. Recreational management measures
5. Bycatch issues
6. Data collection and monitoring programs
7. Possible time/area closures
8. Industry-proposed initiatives to improve data collection and accountability.

1. Annual Catch Limits and Annual Catch Targets

Current annual catch limits for gag are higher than the recommended catch limits resulting from the recent stock assessment update. Therefore, the Council must revise its current annual catch limit strategy to ensure the recommended annual catch limits are not exceeded.

For red grouper, the annual catch target was previously set equal to optimum yield. While red grouper is neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing, the decline in the stock changes the optimum yield.

2. Accountability Measures

National Standard 1 Guidelines require that for stocks and stock complexes in rebuilding plans, accountability measures should include overage adjustments that reduce the annual catch limits in the next fishing year, unless scientific information shows an adjustment is not necessary to mitigate the effects of the overages. Current accountability measures for gag and red grouper do not contain the overage adjustment for overfished stocks. While the commercial IFQ shares serve as an accountability measure and are expected to prevent the annual catch limit from being exceeded, the amendment implementing the individual fishing quota program did not implement a payback provision to address overfished stocks.

3. Adjustments to IFQ Shares

Under the reduced gag and red grouper annual catch limits expected as part of this amendment, it is possible that the use of multi-use shares could result in commercial harvest of gag or red grouper exceeding its sector allocation. To prevent this, adjustments may be made to the multi-use share provision in the grouper and tilefish individual fishing quota system.

4. Recreational Management Measures

Changes in recreational bag limits, size limits, and closed seasons for gag and red grouper will be needed to achieve necessary changes in allowable catch.

5. Bycatch Issues

Bycatch of gag while fishing for other species, such as red grouper, has a high likelihood of exceeding the quota. The Council will look at possible management measures that will decrease gag bycatch. Reconsidering the use of commercial fish traps is one potential option. Commercial

Attend a meeting to learn more!

Scoping Meetings for Reef Fish Amendment 32 Gag and Red Grouper

All meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. & conclude no later than 9:00 p.m.

January 11, 2010

**Monroe County
Harvey Govt Center
1200 Truman Avenue
Key West, FL 33040

Holiday Inn
5002 Seawall Boulevard
Galveston, TX 77551

January 12, 2010

Best Western
7921 Lamar Poole Road
Biloxi, MS 39532

*Hilton

950 Lake Carillon Drive
St. Petersburg, FL 33716

January 13, 2010

**Ramada Inn
4760 S. Cleveland Avenue
Ft. Myers, FL 33907

Fairfield Inn & Suites
3111 Loop Road
Orange Beach, AL 36561

January 14, 2010

*The Boardwalk
9600 S. Thomas Dr.
Panama City, FL 32408

January 19, 2010

Crowne Plaza
2829 Williams Road
Kenner, LA 70062

A Note on Scoping:

Scoping is the process of identifying issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issue at hand. It provides the first and best opportunity for the public to make suggestions or to raise issues and concerns before the council begins developing an amendment.

* Note a scoping meeting format change for these meetings. Two rooms will be used - one room where participants can get answers to questions about the proposed amendment, and the other room for participants to provide input.

** Note a scoping meeting format change for these meetings. An informal roundtable discussion regarding the proposed amendment will be held during the first hour of the meeting, from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Public input will be taken beginning no later than 7:00 p.m. and ending no later than 9:00 p.m.

*Written comments may be submitted to the address below, or via email to: Amendment32@gulfcouncil.org
Comments should be received by January 26, 2010.*

Contact Us:

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