



# PUBLIC HEARING GUIDE

9/24/12



## Amendment 37 - Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan





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### What is a Public Hearing?

A public hearing gives you an opportunity to comment on a fishery management plan or amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is developing. Public hearings are conducted after the Council has selected a preferred alternative for each proposed action, and comments should focus on possible benefits and drawbacks of the alternatives contained in each action. Suggestions, issues, and concerns expressed during the public hearings will be presented to the Council for review and consideration before final action is taken.

### How does a public hearing affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the public hearing process are witnessed by at least one Council member and are reported to the full Council prior to final action. Your input is considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures to address the issue(s) at hand.

### How else can I get involved?

There are many ways you can help the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identify fishery management needs and develop reasonable management alternatives, each dependent on how actively involved you want to become. The first step to becoming involved is to educate yourself about the management process by visiting our website at [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org), signing up to receive our communications, and contacting council members and staff to discuss management. You can attend meetings, serve on panels and committees that advise the Council on fishery issues, and even apply to become a Council member.

## Introduction to Amendment 37

### Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan

#### ***Purpose for Action***

To end overfishing of gray triggerfish and rebuild the stock by 2017.

#### ***Need for Action***

To ensure regulations prevent future overfishing and achieve optimum yield from the fishery.

A 2006 assessment of gray triggerfish in the Gulf of Mexico determined that the stock was overfished (stock is too low) and experiencing overfishing (rate of harvest is too high). In 2008, the Council initiated a stock rebuilding plan that aimed to return the gray triggerfish stock to healthy levels within 6 years, by 2013.

Last year, an updated gray triggerfish stock assessment concluded that the population is not rebuilding on schedule and continues to be overfished and experience overfishing.

In addition, the assessment identified that young fish are missing from the gray triggerfish population in recent years. As a result, the Council's scientific advisors have lower the gray triggerfish Acceptable Biological Catch level. Because harvest levels

cannot be higher than the recommended Acceptable Biological Catch, the Council requested an interim rule from National Marine Fisheries Service to end overfishing until long-term management measures in this amendment could be put in place. The interim rule lowered the commercial and recreational Annual Catch Limits and Annual Catch Targets for 2012 and into early 2013. This rule also allowed National Marine Fisheries Service to close the recreational gray triggerfish season once the Annual Catch Target is reached (that authority already existed in the commercial fishery).

#### ***Acceptable Biological Catch***

The amount of fish that can be removed from a stock that accounts for scientific uncertainty and natural changes in stock size.

#### ***Annual Catch Limits***

The amount of fish that can be harvested from the stock each year.

#### ***Annual Catch Targets***

A harvest level set lower than the Annual Catch Limit to create a management buffer so that overharvest does not occur.

This amendment is designed to end overfishing of gray triggerfish and to rebuild the stock within 10 years, by 2017, as required by national fisheries law (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Council must modify the existing gray triggerfish rebuilding plan, set new Annual Catch Limits and Annual Catch Targets, and consider changing commercial and recreational management measures to hold harvest at recommended levels so the gray triggerfish stock can rebuild.

## Summary of Actions

### **Action 1. Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan**

National fisheries law (The Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires fishery management Councils to rebuild overfished fish stocks in 10 years or less. In 2008, the Council initiated a rebuilding plan (Amendment 30A ) for the overfished gray triggerfish stock that expected to rebuild the stock in 6 years, by 2013. The latest stock assessment update (2011) indicated that the stock is not rebuilding within the expected time period. This action considers changing the rate that fish are removed from the population (fishing mortality rate) so that stock rebuilding can occur within the required 10 year maximum timeframe.

**Alternative 1:** No action - maintain the rebuilding plan established in Amendment 30A.

**Alternative 2:** Prohibit harvest until the stock is rebuilt in 4.1 years, by 2015.

**Preferred Alternative 3:** Set the fishing mortality rate to rebuild the stock in 5 years, by 2016.

**Alternative 4:** Set the fishing mortality rate to rebuild the stock in 6.3 years, by early 2018.

## Action 2. Annual Catch Limits and Annual Catch Targets for Gray Triggerfish

As a rule, the Annual Catch Limit for a fish stock cannot be set higher than the Acceptable Biological Catch. Following the most recent stock assessment, the Council's scientific advisors recommended that the gray triggerfish Acceptable Biological Catch level be reduced to 305,300 lbs whole weight (ww) for 2012 and 2013. In this action, the Council considers reducing the commercial and recreational Annual Catch Limits to reflect the newly established Acceptable Biological Catch.

Additionally, this action considers the size of the buffer that should be used when determining the Annual Catch Target. The Annual Catch Target is the actual harvest level used by the Council when making fisheries management decisions. It is set lower than the Annual Catch Limit to account for any management uncertainty that may occur, and helps prevent Annual Catch Limits from being exceeded, which is particularly important for overfished stocks.

**Alternative 1:** No action - do not change the sector Annual Catch Limits and Annual Catch Targets developed in Amendment 30A.

	Annual Catch Limit	Annual Catch Target
Commercial	138,000 lbs ww	106,000 lbs ww
Recreational	457,000 lbs ww	405,000 lbs ww

**Alternative 2:** Prohibit harvest until a new stock assessment has been completed.

	Annual Catch Limit	Annual Catch Target
Commercial	0 lbs	0 lbs
Recreational	0 lbs	0 lbs



**Gray Triggerfish**

**Alternative 3:** Reduce Annual Catch Limits so that they correspond with the Acceptable Biological Catch (305,300 lbs ww) and use the buffers established in Amendment 30A to set sector Annual Catch Targets.

	<b>Annual Catch Limit</b>	<b>% reduction of ACL to determine ACT</b>	<b>Annual Catch Target</b>
Commercial	64,100 lbs ww	23%	49,400 lbs ww
Recreational	241,200 lbs ww	22%	188,100 lbs ww

**Preferred Alternative 4:** Reduce Annual Catch Limits so that they correspond with the Acceptable Biological Catch (305,300 lbs. ww) and use the Council’s ACL/ACT control rule to determine the buffers used to set Annual Catch Targets.

	<b>Annual Catch Limit</b>	<b>% reduction of ACL to determine ACT</b>	<b>Annual Catch Target</b>
Commercial	64,100 lbs ww	5%	60,900 lbs ww
Recreational	241,200 lbs ww	10%	217,100 lbs ww

**Action 3. Commercial Management Measures**

Each year, the commercial gray triggerfish season opens January 1 and closes when the harvest reaches, or is projected to reach, the Annual Catch Target. The following sub-actions consider changing two commercial management measures to meet commercial fishing needs while reducing harvest of gray triggerfish.

**Action 3.1. Commercial Fixed Closed Season for Gray Triggerfish**

This year, the commercial harvest of gray triggerfish closed July 1 when the Annual Catch Target was reached. In this action, the Council considers establishing a fixed closed season for gray triggerfish. Creating a fixed closed season early in the year will allow the season to extend further into the year before a quota closure is necessary.

**Alternative 1:** No action - do not establish a fixed closed season.

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Establish a fixed closed season for gray triggerfish during peak spawning (June 1 – July 31).

**Alternative 3:** Establish a fixed closed season for gray triggerfish during peak harvest (August 1 - December 31).

**Alternative 4:** Establish a fixed closed season for gray triggerfish (April 1 - August 31).

### **Action 3.2. Commercial Trip Limit for Gray Triggerfish**

Currently, there is no commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish. Establishing a trip limit will reduce the rate of triggerfish harvest and may increase the number of fishing days available before the Annual Catch Target is met and the season is closed.

**Alternative 1:** No action - do not establish a commercial trip limit.

**Alternative 2:** Establish a commercial trip limit of 25 lbs whole weight.

**Preferred Alternative 3:** Establish a commercial trip limit of 50 lbs. whole weight.

**Alternative 4:** Establish a commercial trip limit of 75 lbs whole weight.  
Note: See amendment for trip limits converted to gutted weight.

### **Action 4. Recreational Management Measures**

The recreational sector has remained below the Annual Catch Limit every year, with the exception of 2008 when the original rebuilding plan was initiated. The following sub-actions consider changing recreational management measures to meet recreational fishing needs while reducing harvest of gray triggerfish.

#### **Action 4.1. Recreational Fixed Closed Season for Gray Triggerfish**

Currently, there is no recreational closed season for gray triggerfish. This year the Council requested an interim rule to reduce overfishing of the stock and allow the season to be closed once the revised Annual Catch Target is reached. The recreational season closed June 11. In this action, the Council considers establishing a fixed closed season to extend the fishing season.

**Alternative 1:** No action – do not establish a fixed closed season.

**Alternative 2:** Establish a fixed closed season during peak harvest from May 1st – June 30th.

**Preferred Alternative 3:** Establish a fixed closed season during peak spawning from June 1st – July 31st.

**Alternative 4:** Establish a fixed closed season for the entire month of June.

#### **Action 4.2. Recreational Bag Limit for Gray Triggerfish**

Currently, gray triggerfish does not have a species specific bag limit but is part of the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit that includes: vermillion snapper, lane snapper, almaco jack, tilefish (golden), goldface tilefish, and blueline tilefish. Reducing the bag limit for gray triggerfish will reduce the rate of triggerfish harvest.

**Alternative 1:** No action - maintain gray triggerfish as part of the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

**Alternative 2:** Establish a 4-gray triggerfish per angler bag limit within the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

**Preferred Alternative 3:** Establish a 2-gray triggerfish per angler bag limit within the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

**Alternative 4:** Establish a 1-gray triggerfish per angler bag limit within the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

#### **Action 5. Recreational Accountability Measures**

Currently, if the recreational Annual Catch Limit is exceeded, the following fishing season will be reduced in length to ensure that landings do not exceed the Annual Catch Target. This is a post season accountability measure. The Council is considering changing the recreational accountability measure to an in-season accountability measure. This would help prevent overages from occurring by closing the fishing season when landings reach, or are projected to reach, the harvest level. The Council is also considering an overage adjustment if the Annual Catch Limit is exceeded.

Note: Alternative 4 may be selected in addition to the other alternatives in this action.

**Alternative 1:** No action - keep the current post season accountability measure.

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Replace the current accountability measure with in-season closure authority that will be based on the recreational Annual Catch Target.

**Alternative 3:** Replace the current accountability measure with in-season closure authority that will be based on the recreational Annual Catch Limit.

**Preferred Alternative 4:** Add an overage adjustment to the accountability measure so that if the Annual Catch Limit is exceeded, then the following year's Annual Catch Limit or Annual Catch Target is reduced by the amount of the overage.

**Option a.** Any time the Annual Catch Limit is exceeded.

**Preferred Option b.** Only if the Annual Catch limit is exceeded and the stock is overfished.



The Council is collecting input on this amendment both online and through a series of meetings across the Gulf coast. Each of the following meetings will begin at 6 p.m. local time and conclude no later than 9:00 p.m.

**October 15, 2012**

Country Inn & Suites  
4415 Commons Dr. E.  
Destin, FL 32541  
(850) 650-9191

Courtyard Marriott  
3250 Tamiami Trail N.  
Naples, FL 34103  
(239) 434-8700

**October 16, 2012**

Sirata Hotel  
5300 Gulf Blvd.  
St. Petersburg, FL 33706  
(727) 363-5100

Holiday Inn Express  
160 W. Commerce Blvd.  
Gulf Shores, AL 36542  
(251) 948-6191

**October 17, 2012**

Courtyard Marriott  
11471 Cinema Drive  
D'Iberville, MS 39540  
(228) 392-1200

Hilton Galveston  
5400 Seawall Blvd.  
Galveston, TX 77551  
(409) 744-5000

**October 18, 2012**

Harte Institute  
6300 Ocean Dr., Rm. 127  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412  
(361) 825-2000

Crowne Plaza Airport  
2829 W. Williams Blvd.  
Kenner, LA 70062  
(504) 467-5611

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. A virtual presentation is also available. To view the online presentation or to comment on the proposed changes, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/8qzj87p>, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page at [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).





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