



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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WHEN/HOW TO ADDRESS ALLOCATIONS WITH ASSESSMENTS BASED ON THE NEW MRIP DATA

Council Coordination Committee Meeting

Washington, DC

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The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council's) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) received a stock assessment for red grouper that included revised Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)-Fishing Effort Survey (FES) landings data in September 2019. This is the first stock assessment completed in the Gulf of Mexico with the revised MRIP-FES data that were calibrated back to 1986. The red grouper annual catch limit is currently allocated 76% to the commercial and 24% to the recreational sector. Since January 1, 2010, red grouper is also managed under an IFQ program, which was established in Reef Fish Amendment 29. The Council received the results of the stock assessment and the SSC recommendations on catch levels that were based on the current sector allocations at their October 2019 meeting. However, the current sector allocation was established in Reef Fish Amendment 30B and used commercial and recreational landings data from 1986 through 2005 as the basis of allocation. The Council discussed that the MRIP-FES recreational landings are considerably higher than the previous estimates used to establish the allocation. The result of using the MRIP-FES data in the current red grouper stock assessment would result in revised sector allocations if the same allocation method was applied. The Council discussed whether the sector allocations should be updated with the MRIP-FES landings data and re-run with new projections from the stock assessment.

The Council passed a motion requesting that the SSC review the red grouper projections based on the allocation resulting from using the MRIP-FES landings data from 1986 through 2005. Using these new data, the revised allocations would be 59.48% commercial and 40.52% recreational. The Council also directed staff to initiate work on a plan amendment to update the red grouper allocation and modify catch levels based on the new stock assessment. If the Council chooses to use the existing allocation formula and simply update the sector allocations with the new MRIP-FES data, change could be implemented through a framework or regulatory amendment. Should the Council choose to modify the underlying formula/method to specify sector allocation, a plan amendment would be required.