



 **Gulf Council Issues**
Review and Discussion
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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management

This is a review and discussion of Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) issues that were discussed at the October 19-23, 2009, Council meeting in Corpus Christi, Texas.

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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council



Issues on October 2009 Agenda

- Reef fish
 - Gag/Red Grouper
 - Sector allocation
 - LAPP Advisory Panel
- Spiny lobster
- Highly Migratory Species



The following topics were discussed at the October Council meeting:

Reef Fish Management – discussion of preliminary gag and red grouper management; discussion of sector allocation; and established the Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) Advisory Panel.

Spiny lobster - review of a public scoping document for the joint management plan by the Gulf and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.

Highly Migratory Species – discussion of the Consolidated Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan, and overfishing of blacknose sharks.

One other item, which was not on the Council agenda, discussed in this paper is the recent closure of the Greater Amberjack commercial and recreational fisheries.

Gag and Red Grouper



- Gag grouper overfished and undergoing overfishing
- Council has two years to address overfishing condition
- Public scoping document
 - Time/area closures
 - Bag limits
 - Size limits
 - Fish traps
 - Total Allowable Catch
- Public scoping meetings Dec-Jan



Gag and Red Grouper – A SEDAR assessment workshop was held March 30-April 2, 2009. A previous stock assessment indicated that gag grouper was undergoing overfishing. This most recent update indicates that gag grouper was still undergoing overfishing and is now also overfished. The Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates that the Council develop a plan to end overfishing within two years of notification by NOAA Fisheries that an overfishing condition exists. The Council developed a scoping document to gather public input regarding gag grouper, including time/area closures, bag limits, size limits, the use of fish traps (which are currently prohibited), and total allowable catch. In Florida, the scoping hearings will occur in Panama City, St. Petersburg, Ft. Myers, and the Florida Keys. No dates have been set as of this writing, but meetings are expected to occur sometime in December or January.

The Commission staff representative is a member of the Reef Fish Committee and will continue to work with the Council on this issue.

Sector Allocation



- Sector allocation between for-hire and private recreational sectors
- Trading catch shares between sectors
- Management approaches for recreational fisheries



Sector Allocation – The Council established membership in the Limited Access Privilege Program (LAPP) Advisory Panel, and discussed sector allocation between the for-hire and private recreational sectors, and management approaches for recreational fisheries. The advisory panel was given the following charge:

To assist the Council in designing and evaluating management measures that would consider all issues related to the adoption of a reef fish limited access program for the commercial and recreational sectors. In designing the program, consideration would be placed on the trading of catch shares between sectors.

Spiny Lobster and Stone Crab



Spiny lobster – The Council reviewed scoping hearing summaries for the joint management plan with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. This document contained, among other things, an alternative to turn certain operational aspects of the fishery management plan (FMP) over to the State of Florida. These would include, but are not limited to bag limits, size limits, seasons, permits, gear, etc. Public scoping hearings were held in Key West (September 21) and Marathon (September 22).

Stone Crab – NOAA Fisheries and the Council also expressed interest in repealing the Stone Crab FMP and delegating all management of the fishery to the State of Florida. This would mean that Florida stone crab regulations would extend into adjacent federal waters in the absence of a federal plan.

The Commission representative is the Chairman of the Council's Spiny Lobster Committee and will continue to work with the Council on this issue.

Highly Migratory Species



Blacknose shark
(*Carcharhinus acronotus*)
Underwater
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Highly Migratory Species – The Council discussed Amendment 3 to the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. This amendment addresses the overfishing and overfished condition of blacknose sharks, and attributes bycatch in shrimp trawls as a contributing factor. The Council voted to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries stating that due to the drastic reduction in Gulf shrimping effort, the bycatch reduction goal for blacknose sharks has been met.

Greater Amberjack



Greater Amberjack – Greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico is overfished and has been undergoing overfishing since 2003. The Council established a rebuilding plan for the fishery and that plan included annual catch limits (ACL) and accountability measures (AM) as required by federal law. The AMs for this fishery require an in-season closure if the quotas are met or exceeded. For the 2009 fishing season (January 1 through December 31), the recreational sector quota was 1.368 million pounds and the commercial sector quota was 503,000 pounds. The recreational quota was met at the end of August and the fishery was closed on October 24, 2009. There is an anticipated overage associated with the 2009 fishing year, and that total overage has not yet been calculated due to the lag time in receiving recreational catch data. However, the recreational overage will likely result in a reduced quota and season in 2010. The commercial sector met its quota and was closed on November 7, 2009.