Tab B, No. 9(c)

Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative:
Process Overview and Identified Management Options

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About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

- Purpose: for the recreational sector to identify and consider a suite of alternative management options that could provide for reasonable access and the sustainable harvest of Gulf reef fish fisheries generally, and the Red Snapper fishery specifically.

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

- Met every other month during 2016
- Facilitated by FCRC Consensus Center at Florida State University
- Planning Committee:
  - American Sportfishing Association
  - Coastal Conservation Association
  - Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
  - Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

Initiative Phases (I – IV) and Key Tasks	
I.	Planning Committee engages in consensus building with unaffiliated private anglers, angler groups, recreational fishing industry members, and limited for-hire operators.
I.	Consults with NOAA regarding Gulf reef fish fisheries regulatory framework.
I.	Consults with Gulf States on Gulf reef fish fisheries management options throughout initiative.
II.	
III.	
IV.	

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

Initiative Phases (I – IV) and Key Tasks	
I.	
I.	
I.	
II.	Planning Committee meets with and receives feedback from environmental NGOs, commercial fishing industry representatives.
III.	
IV.	

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

Initiative Phases (I – IV) and Key Tasks	
I.	
I.	
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III.	Planning Committee meets with and receives feedback from for-hire industry.
IV.	

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

Initiative Phases (I – IV) and Key Tasks	
I.	
I.	
I.	
II.	
III.	
IV.	Planning Committee presents recreational fisheries management options resulting from the Initiative meetings

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

Total of 52 Participants

Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative Participation By Affiliation							
	Private Anglers	For-Hire	Env. NGO	Rec. Ind.	Commercial	State Reg.	Fed. Reg.
Totals	17	9	5	7	2	10	2

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

- Although the Initiative primarily focused on the evaluation of management options, a full range of relevant issues and options were discussed during the process
- Including: recreational harvest data collection, biological data collection, stock assessment, regional management, season length/access to the fishery, allocation, and sector separation.

About the Gulf Angler Focus Group Initiative

- Two sets of questions were submitted to NOAA. Responses found in the Appendices
- Responses to these questions are tremendously relevant to considering the Options.

Options Overview

- **<u>Not recommendations</u>**, but rather **<u>options</u>** that may warrant further analysis and review
- Some may not be acceptable or practical
- Lack of data/analyses create uncertainty about potential impacts and the limited evaluation.

Options Overview

- Status Quo
- Maximizing Fishing Days Within Current Framework
- Harvest Tags
- Depth/Distance-Based Management
- Reef Fish Season
- Harvest Rate/Recruitment-Based Management
- Hybrid of Various Options

A. Status Quo

- Private recreational fishing effort is managed by inconsistent state and federal seasons and regulations. (66-365 state days vs. 9 federal)
- status quo management may provide the best overall access for private anglers if other management options are found to be unlikely to provide improved access. benchmark for evaluating other options.

A. Status Quo

- Pros:
  - Longer state seasons = more opportunity
  - Rec sector stays below ACL (2016 exception)
  - 20% buffer should help rebuilding
  - Well-known and familiar
- Cons:
  - Disadvantages some states/regions
  - 20% buffer sacrifices fishing access
  - Enforcement challenges
  - Encourages derby fishing in federal waters
  - Effort occurs during spawning season
  - Likely untenable long-term

B. Maximizing Fishing Days Within Current Framework

- Private recreational fishing effort would continue to be managed through seasons, size limits and bag limits throughout the Gulf. To provide more days in federal waters, possible management changes include:
  - reducing the bag limit
  - implementing size/slot limits
  - barotrauma reduction
  - congruent state and federal seasons and regulations.

B. Maximizing Fishing Days Within Current Framework

- Pros:
  - Familiar framework
  - Many changes can increase quota
  - Consistent state and federal regs would level the playing field
  - Consistent regs would facilitate understanding, compliance and enforcement
  - A longer federal season could reduce effort compression
- Cons:
  - Increasing days in federal waters comes with tradeoffs
  - Reduced bag limit would be unacceptable for many
  - Might not be possible to get to an acceptable season length
  - Reaching consensus among managers and stakeholders could be a challenge

B. Maximizing Fishing Days Within Current Framework

- Decision-Making Informational Needs:
  - Full analysis of the potential of barotrauma reduction.
  - What combinations of traditional management tools provide maximum season(s) lengths without allocation adjustments. A minimum of 40 days would possibly be an improvement over Status Quo.
  - Determine what combinations of traditional management tools provide a season(s) length of 40 days with allocation adjustments.
  - Determine what combinations of traditional management tools provide a season(s) length of 60 days with allocation adjustments.

C. Harvest Tags

- Private recreational fishing harvest would be constrained in part or in whole based on a finite number of tags that would be distributed among anglers.

C. Harvest Tags

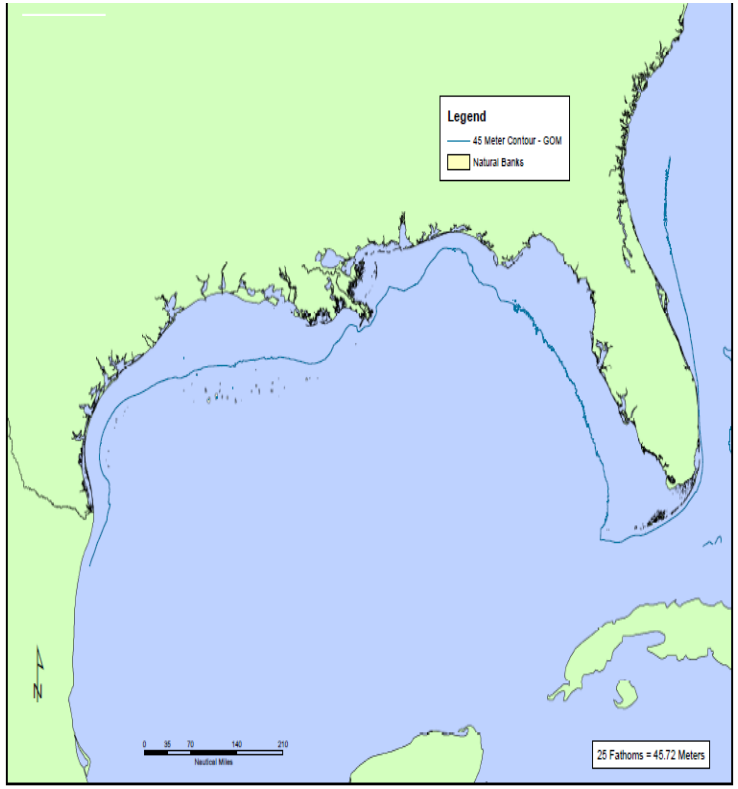
- Pros:
  - Flexibility to fish
  - Concretely limits catch and effort
  - Potentially more accurate harvest estimate
  - Could provide access to small portions of the stock where impossible under existing management approach
  - Enforcement may be easier
  - Improved safety
- Cons:
  - Individuals would have a less than 100% chance of acquiring a single tag = significant decrease in ability to harvest
  - Only option may be national lottery
  - No applicable examples to learn from
  - How to address state-by-state allocation?
  - Cost of administering may be cost-prohibitive
  - Could encourage high grading
  - Need to restrict use to non-federally permitted vessels (added complexity)

C. Harvest Tags

- Decision-Making Informational Needs:
  - A determination of distribution constraints based on MSA Section 303 and National Standard 4
  - Analyses of the maximum number of tags that would be made available, the number of fisherman who would seek those tags and the odds of receiving tags.
  - An analysis of the economic and social impacts to fishermen, communities, and the recreational fishing industry.

D. Depth/Distance-Based Management

- A management strategy that provides a depth or distance-from-shore fishing zone.
- recreational red snapper fishing closed beyond that zone
- Could increase production and replenish annual fishing within the fishing zone.



D. Depth/Distance-Based Management

- Pros:
  - May produce greater fishing access/longer seasons
  - Portion of stock is protected
  - Less impacts of barotrauma
  - Consistent regs would facilitate understanding, compliance and enforcement
  - Improved at-sea safety
  - Already occurring to an extent
  - Alternative to sector separation?
- Cons:
  - Potential enforcement challenges (where is exact boundary?)
  - Requires agreement among managers
  - How to account for incidental red snapper mortality in protected area?
  - Data/analysis not currently available

D. Depth/Distance-Based Management

- Decision-Making Informational Needs:
  - A modeling analyses to determine what depth/distance could provide at a minimum, 40 days and 60 days, of fishing that takes into account added production outside the private recreational fished area.
  - Determine what variations of depths and distances provide reasonable access across the Gulf fishing communities.
  - Analyses of barotrauma mortality reduction based on reduced fishing depths.
  - Analysis of how barotrauma mortality is impacted due to fish released in deeper restricted areas.

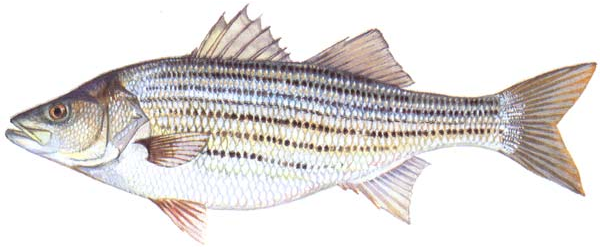
E. Reef Fish Season

- Grouping together reef fish for the purpose of management and creating a season or seasons where a bag limit is set for a group aggregate.
- Reef fish regulations would be established as a unit as opposed to regulations for individual species.

E. Reef Fish Season

- Pros:
  - Could reduce bycatch mortality currently attributable to incidental catch during closed season
  - If season is longer, could better account for bad weather days
- Cons:
  - Season set on lowest common denominator?
  - How to determine appropriate regulations based on seasonality and geographic differences?
  - May not resolve state-federal inconsistency

F. Harvest Rate/Recruitment-Based Management



- Management targets would be based on recruitment and the rates of removals caused by fishing, not a poundage-based ACL rooted in past harvest.
- Not fully evaluated for the purpose of this report due to the long-term data needs and potential limitations due to MSA.

G. Hybrid of Various Options

- A combination of two or more of the above options. E.g.:
  - Status quo management coupled with additional quota leased/purchased from another sector designated as harvest tags to be fished in the federal area any time during the year.
  - Depth/distance-based management coupled with a portion of the quota designated as harvest tags available to be used outside the depth/distance zone during some portion or all of the year.
  - A reef fish season coupled with harvest tags for low ACL species such as triggerfish.
  - A reef fish season coupled with depth/distance-based management.

Conclusions

- No easy solutions
- A hybrid of options may work
- Significant modeling and analyses are a prerequisite to finding solutions
- Simple is better