

**Reef Fish Advisory Panel Summary
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Webinar/Conference Call
April 1, 2016**

Reef Fish AP members present:

Martin Fisher, Chair	Jane Black	Buddy Guindon	Tom Turke
Troy Frady, V. Chair	Jim Clements	Scott Hickman	Ed Walker
Ralph Allen	Jason DeLaCruz	David Krebs	Jim Zurbrick
Pam Anderson	F.J. Eicke	Michael Nugent	
Patrick Bennett	James Eliason	Mike Thierry	

Gulf Council Staff:

Steven Atran
Assane Diagne
Doug Gregory
Phyllis Miranda
Bernadine Roy
Carrie Simmons

Council Member:

Roy Williams

NMFS Staff:

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Richard Malinowski
Dr. Jessica Stephen
Rich Malinowski
Christina Package

Public:

Jeff Barger
Eric Brazer
J.P. Brooker
Robert Gill
Chad Hanson

The Reef Fish AP (AP) was convened by conference call on April 1, 2016 at 10:30 am EDT. The agenda was adopted as written and minutes from the September 16-17, 2015 meeting were deferred until the next in-person meeting. The chair conducted attendance by voice identification.

Staff provided an overview presentation of background information including the results of the red grouper stock assessment and recommendations made by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at their January 2016 meeting. Council staff also provided a presentation overview of the framework action and walked through a spreadsheet that explained the multi-use formulas used to distribute gag and red grouper allocation.

Members of the AP asked questions about the differences in the commercial and recreational buffers, historical landings of both sectors, and the possibility of overharvesting the stock based on some of the alternatives in the document. Both commercial and recreational fishermen on the AP expressed concerns about some of the alternatives provided in the document as being too high based on their experience on the water. One member, who had attended the Southeast Data Review Workshop (SEDAR) on red grouper, felt that the catch levels represented in Alternative 4 were reasonable for the current status of the stock. Based on the information from the scientists he felt catch levels could be increased even higher than those provided in Alternative 4.

Several AP members who were recreational fishermen expressed a strong desire to have a year-round fishing season for red grouper and stated the importance of having the opportunity to harvest a red grouper for fishermen in the for-hire industry. One member also mentioned the distress it placed on recreational sector when the season closed in early October 2015.

Commercial fishermen expressed concerns about a large amount of quota being released later in 2016, potentially flooding the market for red grouper. After further discussion the AP passed the motion below to add a new alternative that would increase the stock annual catch limit by 20% (from 7,930,000 pounds gutted weight to 9,520,000 pounds gutted weight). This increase was expected to allow the recreational sector to have a year-round fishing season, based on current bag limits and fishing effort, while allowing a more conservative increase in commercial quota.

Motion: To recommend that the Council add a new Alternative 5, a 20% increase of the ACL to 9,520,000 pounds gutted weight. The commercial ACL would be 7,240,000 lbs gw, and the recreational ACL would be 2,280,000 lbs gw.

	ACL	ACT
Commercial	7,240,000 lbs gw	6,880,000 lbs gw
Recreational	2,280,000 lbs gw	2,100,000 lbs gw

Motion carried 13 to 4.

The new alternative would read:

Alternative 5: Use the constant catch OFL and ABC recommended by the SSC but set the ACL and ACT below the constant catch OFL and ABC. Base the ACL and ACT on a 20% increase in the stock ACL (from 7.93 mp gw to 9.52 mp gw). Use the current allocations to establish the sector ACLs. Set the ACTs for each sector where the commercial ACT (quota) is set at 95% of the commercial ACL and the recreational ACT is 92% of the recreational ACL.

Year	Mean OFL	Mean ABC	Commercial ACL	Commercial ACT/Quota	Recreational ACL	Recreational ACT
2016+	14,160,0000	13,920,000	7,240,000	6,880,000	2,280,000	2,100,000

A motion to make Alternative 4 the preferred alternative failed by a vote of 7 to 10. A subsequent motion to make Alternative 1 the preferred alternative failed for lack of a second. The AP then passed the following motion.

Motion: To recommend to the Council that in Action 1, the new Alternative 5 be the preferred alternative.

Motion carried 13 to 4.

After the AP concluded its discussions and recommendations on the red grouper framework action, the chair requested AP members provide a list of future items they would like to review at the next meeting. Those included:

- Gray triggerfish bag limits – 1 fish bag limit for recreational sector
- Consideration of removing the captain and crew bag limit for gray triggerfish
- Consider modifying the red grouper sector allocations

- Consider developing tools to allow a real time transfer of foregone yield; for example temporarily transferring commercial ACT that was not landed to the other sector, avoiding mid-year closures for the recreational sector.
- Subsequent email from AP member – goliath grouper and allowing limited harvest through a potential tag system.

Members of the AP also provided a list of months from April until December that they would not be available for a meeting. The majority of members that participated were unavailable from May through August. One member of the public suggested that the red tide events in 2016 could be having a negative effect on red grouper and those impacts should be closely monitored.

The conference call concluded at 12:10 p.m.

List of failed motions

Motion: To recommend to the Council that in Action 1, Alternative 4 be the preferred alternative.

Motion failed 7 to 10.

Motion: To recommend to the Council that in Action 1, Alternative 1, No Action be the preferred alternative.

Motion failed for lack of a second.