

**Reef Fish Committee  
Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab B**

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**Agenda Item IV:** Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Program Landings, and State Program Landings for Red Snapper

**Action:** Presentations and discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** SERO staff will review the status of reef fish and IFQ program landings relative to catch limits, which is provided for the Committee’s information only. Council representatives from the five Gulf States will also review their 2024 private angling fishing seasons for red snapper and offer projections for the rest of the 2024 fishing season as appropriate. These data are part of an ongoing report to the Council that requires no action by the Committee. The states will also characterize available data for observed mean lengths and weights. Committee members should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item V:** Draft Amendment 58B: Modifications to Deep-water Grouper Management Measures

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present updated management alternatives for modifying the deep-water grouper (DWG) complex, in light of recent stock assessment advice. Management alternatives for DWG include specifying status determination criteria, catch limits, sector allocations, and accountability measures. DWG catch limits were updated by the SSC following its review of the SEDAR 85 stock assessment for yellowedge grouper which, along with snowy grouper, warsaw grouper, and speckled hind, is a component of the DWG complex. The SSC recommended managing these four DWG species together because of the use of similar data units and to reduce dead discards. The Committee should discuss the range of actions and alternatives presented, suggest revisions to (or removal of) any presented management alternatives, and determine next steps for the document.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Presentation: Modifications to Lane Snapper Minimum Size and Recreational Bag Limits

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present draft options for modifying lane snapper minimum size and recreational daily bag limits. Lane snapper is not managed with sector specific annual catch limits, but the recreational sector expressed interest in maintaining a year-round fishing season as the fishery has been closing late in the year when other species are also closed to harvest. Thus, the Council directed staff to develop management options that aim

to extend the fishing season. Further, fishermen have reported increasing lengths of lane snapper being landed. In response to positive feedback about the stock, and to be more responsive to the stock's management needs, the Council requested an updated interim analysis for lane snapper at its June 2024 meeting. The Committee should evaluate the management options and the accompanying analyses presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to staff as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Draft Amendment 58A: Modifications to Shallow-water Grouper Management Measures

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present updated management alternatives for modifying the Other Shallow-water Grouper (SWG) complex in light of recent stock assessment advice. Scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and black and yellowfin grouper, are currently managed under a single annual catch limit (ACL), with a commercial ACL and annual catch target (ACT) specified to allow for the functioning of the SWG component of the commercial Grouper-Tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) program. Because OFLs and ABCs were specified explicitly by the SSC for the aforementioned pairs of groupers, these species can no longer be managed under a single complex with one annual catch limit because of the possibility of overfishing occurring on either pair. Council staff will present revised actions for specifying the Other SWG complex structure, IFQ share distribution, status determination criteria, catch limits, sector allocations, accountability measures and closed seasons for the recreational sector, and flexibility measures between Other SWG and Deep-water Grouper. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to staff as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Reef Fish Amendment 60: Individual Fishing Quota Distributional Issues

**Action:** Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Staff will give a presentation on Reef Fish Amendment 60, an amendment addressing the distribution of shares and annual allocations in the red snapper and grouper/tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs. IFQ shares and annual allocation to be distributed include, shares held by NMFS (from Reef Fish Amendment 36A), shares and annual allocation recovered from inactive IFQ shareholders accounts, shares and allocation reclaimed from shareholder accounts who do not comply with commercial reef fish permit and fishing activity requirements that will be set in Reef Fish Amendment 59 and, annual allocation from future IFQ quota increases. Reef Fish Amendment 60 considers alternative approaches to distributing IFQ shares and annual allocation collected and addresses the different sets of shareholder accounts that could benefit from the distribution methods considered. The Committee should discuss the information presented, suggest revisions as needed, and recommend next steps.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Draft Options: Federal For-hire Fishing Season for Red Snapper

**Action:** Document, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** In April 2024, the Council directed staff to re-evaluate the for-hire buffer for red snapper, and the for-hire fishing season. In August 2024, after reviewing the first options draft, the Council decided not to modify the for-hire buffer between the component's ACL and ACT at this time, and to proceed only with evaluating modifying the for-hire fishing season. Council staff will present draft options for this action, including a season duration analysis. The Committee should review the information presented, make any modifications to the options presented, and provide any additional direction to staff as appropriate. Staff will plan to bring this document back to the Council for final action in January 2025.

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**Agenda Item X:** Summary of the October 2024 SSC Meeting

**Action:** No action

**Council Input and Next Steps:** The October 2024 SSC meeting was canceled due to Hurricane Milton and will be rescheduled when possible.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Discussion: Updated NMFS Bottom Longline Index for Gulf Red Snapper

**Action:** Discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** SEFSC staff will discuss an update to the NMFS Bottom Longline index for Gulf red snapper. This fishery-independent index of abundance has historically been used to evaluate trends in the relative abundance of the spawning stock biomass of red snapper and has also been used previously to inform interim catch advice. This information is provided in response to a Council request to view updated fishery-independent indices for red snapper. Many of the fishery-independent indices will be updated for the SEDAR 98 Data Workshop in Mobile, AL, in early December; however, this index is the only one which could be updated in time for this Council meeting. The Committee should review the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Request for an Update on the Greater Amberjack Count

**Action:** Discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Mr. Chris Schieble (Louisiana) will discuss a request for an update to the Council regarding the Greater Amberjack Count, which is a regional study designed to generate spatially explicit estimates of absolute abundance of greater amberjack in

the Gulf. The Committee should discuss this request and determine how to recommend the Council proceed.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Other Business

**Action:** Additional items that can be brought up for discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Additional items may be brought up for discussion by Committee members during the adoption of the agenda, time permitting. If the Committee wishes to pursue action, then action can be scheduled at a future Council meeting.

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