

Tab B, No. 5(a)

# Reef Fish Amendment 58B: Modifications to Deep-Water Grouper Management



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
November 2024

# Background



## Deepwater Grouper Complex

- Yellowedge grouper, warsaw grouper, snowy grouper, speckled hind
- Only yellowedge assessed (SEDAR 85)
  - **Undergoing overfishing, but not overfished**
  - **Consider revising MSY proxy**
    - $F_{30\%SPR}$  vs  $F_{40\%SPR}$
    - Long lived, hermaphroditic, late maturing

## Yellowedge grouper (SEDAR 85)

Criteria	Definition	Value
$SSB_0$	Virgin SSB	13,197
$F_{MSYProxy}$	Equilibrium F to achieve 40% SPR	0.044
MFMT	$F_{MSYProxy}$	0.044
$F_{Current}$	Geometric mean of $F_{2019-2021}$	0.047
$F_{Current}/MFMT$	Current overfishing status	<b>1.08</b>
$SSB_{MSYProxy}$	Equilibrium SSB at $F_{40\%SPR}$	4,842
MSST	$0.75 * SSB_{40\%SPR}$	3,632
$SSB_{Current}$	SSB in 2021	6,017
$SSB_{Current}/SSB_{MSYProxy}$	Stock status based on $SSB_{40\%SPR}$	1.24
$SSB_{Current}/MSST$	Stock status based on MSST	<b>1.66</b>
$SSB_{Current}/SSB_0$	SSB in 2021 compared to virgin SSB	0.46

# Background



## Deepwater Grouper Complex

- Managed under a complex ACL
- No defined recreational ACL
- 96.5% of complex ACL set aside for commercial, for IFQ program
- Accountability Measures (AMs):
  - **Commercial: IFQ**
  - **Recreational: post-season**

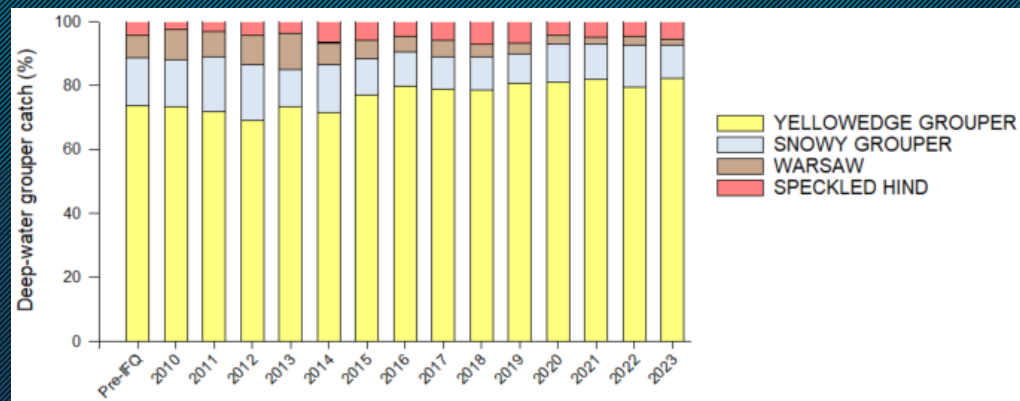


# Background



## Recent Landings:

- Commercial sector lands most of the fish (~90% of total landings)
- Rec catch likely underestimated by APAIS
  - Private access points not accessible to samplers
  - Rec FES effort estimation issues still apply



# Background



## SSC Catch Limit Recommendations:

- Set OFL and ABC for yellowedge, and the other three species, using MRIP-FES
- Combined those OFL and ABC recommendations into a complex OFL and ABC
  - Species often caught together
  - Idea was to reduce discard mortality
  - Same data units

<u>Year</u>	<u>OFL</u>	<u>ABC</u>
2025 - 2029+	731,035 lb gw	555,026 lb gw

# What needs to happen



- **Action 1:** Modification of DWG MSY Proxy, OFL, ABC, and Complex ACL
- **Action 2:** Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations
- **Action 3:** Modification of DWG Recreational AMs



## Action 1: Modification of DWG MSY Proxy, OFL, ABC, and Complex ACL



- **Alternative 1: No Action.** Maintain the current MSY proxy, OFL, ABC, and complex ACL. The MSY proxy is the yield when fishing at  $F_{30\%SPR}$ , the OFL is 1.113 mp gw, the ABC and complex ACL are 1.105 mp gw.
- **Alternative 2:** Revise the MSY proxy and catch limits for the DWG complex based on the SSC's recommendations. The OFL and ABC for yellowedge grouper would be set based on  $F_{40\%SPR}$ , and the yield at 75% of  $F_{40\%SPR}$ , respectively. The OFL and ABC for the three remaining species would be based on Tier 3b of the Council's ABC Control Rule. The DWG MSY proxy would be  $F_{40\%SPR}$ . Yellowedge grouper and the three remaining species would be managed as a single complex with a complex OFL of 731,035 lb gw, and an ABC of 555,026 lb gw. The complex ACL would be set equal to the ABC.

# Action 1: Modification of DWG MSY Proxy, OFL, ABC, and Complex ACL



## Alternative 1:

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)
2016+	1.113 mp gw	1.105 mp gw

## Alternative 2:

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)
2025 - 2029+	731,035 lb gw	555,026 lb gw

Drop in catch limits from **Alternative 1** to Alternative 2 due to overfishing status, change in MSY proxy, and lower recent recruitment

## Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



- Why?
  - Must establish recreational ACL, which will be monitored in FES
  - Can't just combine with commercial anymore due to catch limit reductions
  - Commercial needs its own ACL for IFQ program
  - Means, recreational needs its own ACL also
    - Season projections, AMs
- Also:
  - Commercial quota 4% below commercial ACL
    - Accommodates current flexibility measures



## Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



- Alternative 1: No Action. Based on the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, the DWG ACL provides 96.50% of the complex ACL for the commercial sector based on landings during 2001-2004. The recreational sector's ACL is unspecified. Catch limits are in lb gw.

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)	Comm ACL	Comm Quota	Rec ACL
2025- 2029+	731,035	555,026	535,600	514,176	undefined

## Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



- Alternative 2: Complex ACL = complex ABC. Establish a recreational ACL and sector allocation based on the average recreational landings as used in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment (2001 - 2004). Commercial ACL = 96.50%, recreational ACL = 3.50%. Catch limits are in lb gw.

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)	Comm ACL	Comm Quota	Rec ACL
2025- 2029+	731,035	555,026	535,600	514,176	19,426

## Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



- Alternative 3: Complex ACL = complex ABC. Establish a recreational ACL and sector allocation based on the average recreational landings from the most recent 5 years (2019 - 2023; see Table 1.1.2.). Commercial ACL = 89.76%, recreational ACL = 10.24%. Catch limits are in lb gw.

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)	Comm ACL	Comm Quota	Rec ACL
2025- 2029+	731,035	555,026	498,191	478,264	56,834

## Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



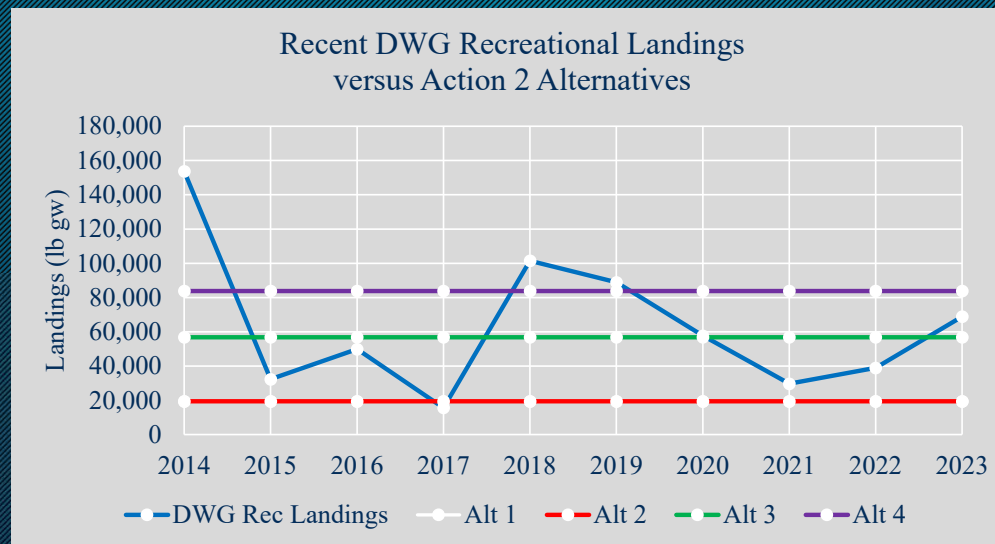
- Alternative 4: Complex ACL = complex ABC. Establish a recreational ACL and sector allocation based on the average of the highest (2014) and lowest (2000) annual recorded recreational landings from 2000 - 2023 (see Table 1.1.2.). Commercial ACL = 84.90%, recreational ACL = 15.10%. Catch limits are in lb gw.

Year	OFL	ABC (Complex ACL)	Comm ACL	Comm Quota	Rec ACL
2025- 2029+	731,035	555,026	471,217	452,368	83,809

# Action 2: Modification of DWG Sector ACLs and Sector Allocations



- Commercial landings from the last 10 years are greater than any of the proposed commercial ACLs in Action 2.
- Recreational landings vs. potential recreational ACLs: (*Alt 1 and Alt 2 overlap*)



## Action 3: Modification of DWG Recreational AMs



- **Alternative 1: No Action.** Maintain the AMs for the DWG complex. For the commercial sector, the IFQ program serves as the AM. For the recreational sector, if the total complex ACL is exceeded in a fishing year, then in the following fishing year, the Regional Administrator will close the recreational fishing season for the complex for the remainder of that fishing year when the total complex ACL is projected to be met.
- *Impossible to verify how much of the commercial ACL has been landed until after the commercial fishing year ends on December 31. Not possible to project when the complex ACL would be met during the fishing year. As written, Alternative 1 is not viable.*

## Action 3: Modification of DWG Recreational AMs



- Alternative 2: Revise the recreational AMs for the DWG complex. For the recreational sector, if the recreational ACL is exceeded in a fishing year, then in the following fishing year, the Regional Administrator would close the recreational fishing season for the DWG complex for the remainder of that fishing year when the recreational ACL is projected to be met. For the commercial sector, the Grouper-Tilefish IFQ program would continue to serve as the AM.
- Post-season AM, based off newly established recreational ACL

## Action 3: Modification of DWG Recreational AMs



- Alternative 3: Revise the recreational AMs for the DWG complex. For the recreational sector, if the recreational ACL is projected to be met in a fishing year, then the Regional Administrator would close the recreational fishing season for the DWG complex for the remainder of that fishing year. For the commercial sector, the Grouper-Tilefish IFQ program would continue to serve as the AM.
- In-season AM, based off newly established recreational ACL

## Action 3: Modification of DWG Recreational AMs



- Why no season duration projections?
  - IPT can generate these, but...
  - Recreational data for DWG may not be representative
    - APAIS sampling doesn't happen on private docks
  - Recreational data are highly variable (see Table 1.1.2 in doc)
  - Larger recreational ACL means less likelihood of ACL overage
  - Expect in-season monitoring to be uncertain
    - Season will be projected based on recent landings (e.g., using mean daily catch from previous fishing year)
    - No ACL closures to date, so no experience to draw from there

## What's next?



- Add or remove alternatives?
  - Consider measures that might help constrain rec sector to its new ACL?
- Request additional analyses?
- Prepare a public hearing draft?
  - Consider where to hold public hearings

