

**Reef Fish AP Meeting  
Scope of Work**

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

**Action:** Presentations and discussion

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Southeast Regional Office staff will review the status of reef fish and individual fishing quota (IFQ) program landings relative to catch limits, which was provided to the Council in November 2024. Reef Fish AP members should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

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

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will review updated management alternatives for modifying the deep-water grouper (DWG) complex, including 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 Council is working towards a public hearing draft for this document, and recent modifications include removing some alternatives and the addition of a recreational fishing season duration analysis. Reef Fish AP members should discuss the range of actions and alternatives, suggest revisions to (or removal of) any management alternatives, and recommend preferred alternatives to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Draft Framework Action: Modifications to Other Shallow-water Grouper Catch Limits

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will review a draft framework action to modify the catch limits and recreational fishing season for the Other Shallow-water Grouper complex (SWG). This document is being considered to reduce fishing mortality on SWG species ahead of the development and implementation of Draft Amendment 58A, which considers Modifications to Other Shallow-water Grouper Management Measures. Reef Fish AP members should discuss the range of actions and alternatives, suggest revisions to (or removal of) any management alternatives, and recommend preferred alternatives to the Council as appropriate.

**Agenda Item VIII:** Review: SEDAR 79 Southeastern US Mutton Snapper Stock Assessment and SSC Recommendations for OFL and ABC

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present SEDAR 79, which is a stock assessment of southeastern U.S. mutton snapper. This stock assessment uses the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS) in place of the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) data for recreational private vessel landings. SRFS was considered appropriate for inclusion in this assessment since the vast majority (>95%) of mutton snapper are landed off Florida, and while estimating a lower level of landings, SRFS demonstrates improved precision compared to MRIP-FES for mutton snapper. Council staff will also review catch level recommendations by the Gulf and South Atlantic Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSCs), which reviewed the assessment at their joint February 2025 meeting. Reef Fish AP members should review the presentation and information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Review: SEDAR 96 Southeastern US Yellowtail Snapper Stock Assessment and SSC Recommendations for OFL and ABC

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present SEDAR 96, which is a stock assessment of southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. This stock assessment uses SRFS in place of MRIP-FES data for recreational private vessel landings. SRFS was considered appropriate for inclusion in this assessment since the vast majority (>95%) of yellowtail snapper are landed off Florida, and while estimating a lower level of landings, SRFS demonstrates improved precision compared to MRIP-FES for yellowtail snapper. Council staff will also review catch level recommendations by the Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs, which reviewed the assessment at their joint February 2025 meeting. Reef Fish AP members should review the presentation and information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item X:** Review: SEDAR 88 Gulf Red Grouper Stock Assessment and SSC Recommendations

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present SEDAR 88, which is a stock assessment of Gulf red grouper. This stock assessment uses SRFS in place of MRIP-FES data for recreational private vessel landings. SRFS was considered appropriate for inclusion in this assessment since the vast majority (>95%) of red grouper are landed off Florida, and while estimating a lower level of landings, SRFS demonstrates improved precision compared to MRIP-

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FES for red grouper. Council staff will also review catch level recommendations by the Gulf SSC, which reviewed the assessment at its February 2025 meeting. Reef Fish AP members should review the presentation and information presented and make any recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XI:** Discussion: Headboat Data Collection

**Action:** Discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** At its January 2025 meeting, the Council was informed that the dockside data validation for headboat landings was not expected to continue in all Gulf states except Florida. This long running survey was viewed by the Council and fishermen as an important data source for informing stock assessments and management. Further, the survey in Florida is only expected to be funded through November 2025. Reef Fish AP members should discuss the present and anticipated conditions of the program and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Discussion: SSC Recommendations on Return ‘em Right Research

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

**Council Input and Next Steps:** In February 2025, the SSC reviewed research conducted under the Return ‘Em Right program, with these research projects focusing on the effects of using descender devices in Gulf reef fish fisheries. The SSC made a general recommendation about how the results of these projects might be used to better inform discarding and associated mortality for federally managed species in the Gulf. These recommendations will then be passed on to the Council for review and consideration in how they might be used to make fisheries management modifications. The Council maintains a general goal of reducing discard mortality to the extent practical for its managed species. Further, the DESCEND Act, which requires that fishermen possess and be ready to use a descending device when fishing for reef fish species, is set to expire in 2025, without follow-on legislation to reauthorize it. Reef Fish AP members should consider the SSC’s discussion of the associated research projects and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Public Comment

**Action:** Information

**Committee input and next steps:** Members of the public will be able to address the Reef Fish AP directly with respect to the topics discussed during this meeting, and other matters, as time allows.

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**Agenda Item XIV:** 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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