

**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 2025 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 for red snapper. Committee members should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item V:** Reef Fish 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. The Committee will also hear feedback from the Reef Fish Advisory Panel on the actions and alternatives presented. The Committee should discuss the actions and alternatives presented, suggest revisions if necessary, and indicate preferred alternatives if desired. Council staff will plan to bring a public hearing draft for Council approval to the June 2025 Council meeting. Public hearings are currently planned for three locations in Florida, and via webinar.

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**Agenda Item VI:** Recreational Initiative

**Action:** Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

**Council Input and Next Steps:** Drs. Willy Goldsmith and Andrew Loftus will review the final report on the Council’s Recreational Initiative. The Recreational Initiative held three working group meetings: the first in October 2024 in Tampa, Florida; the second in January 2025 in New Orleans, Louisiana; and the third in February 2025 in Tampa, Florida. Following the summary of the working group meetings, Council staff will provide a summary of the public engagement sessions held to date. Lastly, Mr. Robert Hilliard will give an overview of the Recreational Initiative working group’s progress and recommended outcomes. The Committee should review

the information and recommendations presented by the Recreational Initiative Working Group and prioritize action items for the Council to consider.

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**Agenda Item VII:** Summary: February 2025 Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs Webinar

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

**Council input and next steps:** Dr. Mike Allen (Gulf SSC Chair) will review recommendations from the Gulf and South Atlantic SSCs joint meeting in Tampa, Florida, held in February 2025. Topics will include reviews and catch limit recommendations from the SEDAR 79 stock assessment of southeastern U.S. mutton snapper, and the SEDAR 96 stock assessment of southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper. Following, Dr. Allen will summarize the Gulf SSC's review and catch limit recommendations from the SEDAR 88 stock assessment of Gulf red grouper. The Committee should evaluate the information presented and ask questions of Dr. Allen as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item VIII:** Summary of Reef Fish Advisory Panel Discussions and Recommendations

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

**Council input and next steps:** Capt. Dylan Hubbard (Reef Fish AP Chair) and Council staff will review recommendations from the Reef Fish AP meeting held on March 17, 2025. Recommendations on the following topics will be reviewed: the stock assessments for yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, and red grouper; the federal for-hire red snapper season; the 2025 recreational red grouper fishing season; gag grouper recreational management measures for 2025; and recreational data collection. The Committee should review and discuss the recommendations presented and recommend next steps to the Council as appropriate.

After review and consideration, the Committee should consider a motion directing staff to develop a document to modify yellowtail and mutton snapper catch levels in a joint document with the South Atlantic Council, because these species are jointly managed between the Councils. The Committee should consider a second motion directing staff to develop a document to modify red grouper management.

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**Agenda Item IX:** Draft Framework: Other Shallow-water Grouper Catch Limits

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present 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. The Committee will also hear

feedback from the Reef Fish AP on the actions and alternatives presented. The Committee should discuss the range of actions and alternatives presented, suggest revisions to (or removal of) any presented management alternatives, consider selecting preferred alternatives. Staff plans to prepare a final action document for the June 2025 Council meeting.

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**Agenda Item X:** Presentation and Discussion on the 20-Fathom Recreational Seasonal Closure for Shallow-water Grouper

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

**Council input and next steps:** At its April 2024 meeting, the Council directed staff to begin work on a document to explore the removal of the recreational 20-fathom closure for the harvest of red grouper and other shallow-water grouper species (scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper, and yellowfin grouper). This time-area closure is currently in place seaward of the 20-fathom boundary from February 1 through March 31 annually. Council staff reviewed the management history with the Council in June 2024, at which time the Council indicated it would like to pause further consideration until the completion and review of the Gulf red grouper stock assessment (SEDAR 88). The Reef Fish AP has recommended that the Council remove the 20-fathom seaward closure for the recreational sector in February through March. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to staff as appropriate.

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**Agenda Item XI:** **FINAL ACTION:** Modifications to Lane Snapper Minimum Size Limit

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will present a final action draft for modifying the lane snapper minimum size limit. The recreational sector expressed interest in maintaining a year-round fishing season for lane snapper, which has closed early due to the ACL being met in recent years. Thus, the Council directed staff to develop management actions that aim to extend the fishing season. Council staff will review public comments received, and SERO staff will review the proposed modifications to the codified text for the regulations. The Committee should evaluate the management options and the accompanying analyses presented, review its preferred alternative, and recommend whether the Council should take final action on the proposed regulations.

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**Agenda Item XII:** Presentation: Greater Amberjack Flowchart to Identify Decision Points for Regional Management

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

**Council input and next steps:** Council staff will give a presentation on decision points to consider when evaluating options for regional management for greater amberjack. Some of these

considerations include whether to include the federal for-hire component in any new state or regional management design; size and bag/vessel limits; fishing seasons and closed seasons; and others. The Committee should review the information presented, make recommendations, and discuss next steps.

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**Agenda Item XIII:** Review of Return ‘Em Right Science

**Action:** Presentations, discussion, and recommendations

**Council input and next steps:** Mr. Charlie Robertson (Return ‘Em Right Coordinator, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission) will offer a programmatic overview and overview of science and monitoring funded by Return ‘Em Right for the Committee. Dr. Allen will then offer recommendations from the SSC from its review of the research conducted with funding from the Return ‘Em Right program. Mr. Nick Haddad (Florida Sea Grant) will then provide an education and outreach update to brief the Committee about continuing awareness efforts for Return ‘Em Right. Lastly, Council staff will brief the Committee on the expiration of the DESCEND Act in December 31, 2025, and possible implication for the Gulf relative to Return ‘Em Right and the use of descending devices when fishing for reef fish species in federal waters. The Committee should evaluate the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate. In particular, the Committee should consider recommendations to the Council relative to the expiration of the DESCEND Act.

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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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