

Gulf Council Motions Report
August 25 – 28, 2025
San Antonio, Texas

ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET

Review of Final 2025 Funded Budget and Activities

Motion: To approve the final 2025 budget as written.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Updates to SOPPs

Motion: To accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Updates to the Administrative Handbook

Motion: To accept the proposed changes to the Administrative Handbook.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

CLOSED SESSION

Discussion of Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) Membership

The Full Council was convened to discuss Scientific and Statistical Committee membership. It was decided to appoint Dr. Thomas Frazer to serve on the Standing SSC.

GULF SEDAR

Update on Southeast Fisheries Science Center Resources

Motion: To request SEFSC provide a prioritized list of state led items and also provide a prioritized list of items the SEFSC are no longer able to complete due to recent staffing shortfalls.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Review and Discussion of Gulf SEDAR Schedule

Motion: To request that SEDAR Steering Committee considers FWC/USF conduct stock assessments for gag and red grouper, replacing yellowtail and mutton snapper on the proposed SEDAR assessment schedule.

- Gag grouper will start in 2026 following completion of hogfish B assessment.
- Red grouper would start in 2028.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: The Council request the SEFSC conduct an interim analysis for Greater Amberjack considering G-Fisher and other relevant indices.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

REEF FISH

FINAL ACTION – Draft Abbreviated Framework Action: Modifications to the Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing Season

Motion: To approve the Abbreviated Framework Action: Modifications to the Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing Season and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes to the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

Names	Vote		
Mr. Osborne	Absent	Row Labels	Count of Vote
Dr. Banks	yes	Absent	1
Dr. Overton	yes	yes	16
Mr. Schieble	yes	Grand Total	17
Mr. Strelcheck	yes		
Capt. Walker	yes		
Mr. Sanchez	yes		
Dr. Allen	yes		
Capt. Frady	yes		
Mr. Geeslin	yes		
Ms. Ballard	yes		
Mr. Marquez	yes		
Dr. Sweetman	yes		
Mr. Broussard	yes		
Mr. Anson	yes		
Mr. Burris	yes		
Mr. Dugas	yes		

Motion carried 16 to 0 with 1 absent.

FINAL ACTION – Draft Reef Fish Amendment 58B: Modifications to Deep-water Grouper Management Measures

Motion: To approve Draft Reef Fish Amendment 58B: Modifications to Deep-water Grouper Management Measures and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes to the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.

Names	Vote		
Capt. Walker	yes		
Mr. Schieble	yes	Absent	1
Mr. Geeslin	yes	yes	16
Mr. Sanchez	yes	Grand Total	17
Mr. Burris	yes		
Dr. Banks	yes		
Mr. Anson	yes		
Dr. Overton	yes		
Mr. Strelcheck	yes		
Capt. Frady	yes		
Dr. Sweetman	yes		
Dr. Allen	yes		
Mr. Osborne	Absent		
Mr. Marquez	yes		
Ms. Ballard	yes		
Mr. Broussard	yes		
Mr. Dugas	yes		

Motion carried 16 to 0 with 1 absent.

Motion: To request a presentation that explores the use of a mandatory reporting system for the recreational sector of the deep-water grouper fishery.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Draft Options – Reef Fish Amendment 58A: Shallow-water Grouper Complex Management Considerations

Motion: In Action 1, to re add the Alternatives from the Considered but Rejected section of the document. Additionally, to develop options for setting share caps for the new complexes.

Action 1.2: Distribution of IFQ Program Shares to Newly Established Share Categories under the Other SWG Complex

Alternative 1: No Action. Proportionally distribute sub-complex A and sub-complex B share categories based on existing Other SWG share percentages.

Alternative 2. Proportionally distribute sub-complex A and sub-complex B share categories based on landings histories of species within each sub-complex. Scamp and yellowmouth grouper landings would determine landings history for sub-complex A. Black grouper and yellowfin grouper landings would determine landings history for sub-complex B.

- o **Option 2a:** Use landings history from 2011 – 2023
- o **Option 2b:** Use landings history from 2011 – 2019, and 2021 – 2023
- o **Option 2c:** Use landings history from 2016 – 2019, and 2021 – 2023

Alternative 3. Proportionally distribute sub-complex A and sub-complex B share categories, with 50% based on existing Other SWG share percentages and 50% based on landings histories of species within each sub-complex. Scamp and yellowmouth grouper landings would determine

landings history for sub-complex A. Black grouper and yellowfin grouper landings would determine landings history for sub-complex B.

- o **Option 3a:** Use landings history from 2011 – 2023
- o **Option 3b:** Use landings history from 2011 – 2019, and 2021 – 2023
- o **Option 3c:** Use landings history from 2016 – 2019, and 2021 – 2023

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 2, to make **Alternative 1** the preferred.

Alternative 1: No Action – Do not create flexibility measures for scamp, Warsaw grouper, or speckled hind. These species could not be landed under an alternative allocation category. The scamp complex quota would be equal to the complex ACL established in Action 6.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: To move **Action 2** to Considered but Rejected.

Action 2: IFQ Flexibility Measures

Alternative 1: No Action – Do not create flexibility measures for scamp, Warsaw grouper, or speckled hind. These species could not be landed under an alternative allocation category. The scamp complex quota would be equal to the complex ACL established in Action 6.

Alternative 2: Create a flexibility measure for Warsaw grouper and speckled hind that accounts for the new share categories in Alternative 2 of Action 1. Create a flexibility measure that allows Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, designated as DWG share category species, to be landed under Scamp Complex allocation once all DWG allocation in an account has been harvested. The scamp complex quota would be 4% below the scamp complex ACL established in Action 6.

Motion carried 15 to 1 and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 3, to make **Alternative 2** the preferred.

Alternative 2: Establish the MSY proxy, MFMT, MSST, and OY as defined for the Other SWG Complex and for black grouper in Amendment 48 to the Reef Fish FMP (GMFMC 2021) and set the SDC for the black grouper complex based on the SSC recommendation of $F_{30\%SPR}$.

Biological Reference	Definitions
MSY	yield at $F_{30\%SPR}$
MFMT	F_{MSY}
MSST	75% of B_{MSY}
OY	90% of MSY

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 4, to modify **Alternative 3** as follows:

Alternative 3: A post-season recreational AM would be implemented for the black

grouper complex if the recreational ACL and the Black Grouper complex ACL are exceeded. In the year following an overage, NMFS would close the recreational black grouper complex to harvest when the recreational ACL is met or is projected to be met, unless NMFS determines based upon the best scientific information available (BSIA) that closure of the recreational fishing season is unnecessary.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: To move **Alternative 2** in Action 4 to Considered but Rejected.

Alternative 2: An in-season recreational fishing closure would be implemented for the black grouper complex when NMFS projects the recreational ACL (established in Action 3) is met.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 4, to add a new **Alternative** as follows:

Alternative: For the recreational sector, if the average recreational black grouper complex landings exceed the average recreational ACL, and the average black grouper complex landings exceed the average black grouper complex ACL over a three-year moving period, the Regional Administrator would reduce the duration of the recreational season by the amount projected such that the recreational ACL is not exceeded during the following fishing year unless NMFS determines based upon the best scientific information available (BSIA) that no adjustment to the recreational fishing season is necessary.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 5, to make **Alternative 2** the preferred.

Alternative 2: Establish the MSY proxy, MFMT, MSST, and OY for the scamp complex based on the SSC recommendations of the yield when fishing at a 40% spawning potential ratio ($F_{40\%SPR}$):

Criteria Type	Alternative 3
MSY	yield at $F_{40\%SPR}$
MFMT	F_{MSY}
MSST	75% of B_{MSY}
OY	90% of MSY

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 6, in **Alternative 2** to make **Option 2b** the preferred:

Alternative 2: Establish catch limits for the scamp complex. The ABC is equal to the stock ACL, which equals the combined sector ACLs. Establish sector allocations for the scamp complex as follows:

Option 2b: The commercial and recreational allocations are based on the proportion of average landings for 2012-2023 excluding the 2020 COVID year. The commercial sector is allocated 38.6% of the scamp and yellowmouth grouper combined ACL, and the

recreational sector is allocated 61.4%.

Year	OFL	ABC	Stock ACL	Comm ACL	Rec ACL
2027-2031+	233,000	183,000	183,000	70,638	112,362

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 7, to make **Alternative 2** the preferred:

Alternative 2: Establish a recreational ACT for the scamp complex by applying the Council’s ACL/ACT Control Rule and assuming that scamp and yellowmouth grouper are considered a single stock. Use landings data from 2019 – 2023, excluding the 2020 COVID year. The ACT would be set at 14% below the recreational ACL.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 8.2, to modify **Alternative 2** as follows:

Alternative 2: If recreational scamp complex landings exceed the complex recreational ACL in a fishing year **and the stock complex is overfished**, NMFS would reduce the recreational ACL and ACT for the following fishing year by the amount of the ACL overage in the prior fishing year, unless the best scientific information available determines that a greater, lesser, or no overage adjustment is necessary.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Draft Options – Reef Fish Amendment 62: Modifications to Gulf Red Grouper Management Measures

Motion: In Action 1, to modify **Alternative 3** as follows:

Alternative 3: Revise the MSY proxy and catch limits for red grouper based on the results of SEDAR 88, and recommendations of the Gulf Council’s SSC using a three-year constant-catch scenario. The OFL and ABC for red grouper would be set based on an MSY proxy of the yield when fishing at $F_{40\%SPR}$, and the yield when fishing at 75% of the F_{MSY} proxy, respectively. The OFL and ABC are derived, in part, using SRFS data for private recreational vessels. The total ACL is set at 80% of the ABC in 2026, 90% of the ABC in 2027, and 100% of the ABC in 2028 and subsequent years. The OFL, ABC, and total ACL in mp gw are as follows: **(table updated)**

OFL	10.64 mp gw
ABC	8.28 mp gw
Total ACL (in 2026)	6.62 mp gw
Total ACL (in 2027)	7.45 mp gw

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 1, to add an **Alternative 4** where the total ACL is set at 90% of the ABC.

Motion failed 0 to 16 with 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 1, to make **Alternative 3** the preferred.

Alternative 3: Revise the MSY proxy and catch limits for red grouper based on the results of SEDAR 88, and recommendations of the Gulf Council’s SSC using a three-year constant-catch scenario. The OFL and ABC for red grouper would be set based on an MSY proxy of the yield when fishing at $F_{40\%SPR}$, and the yield when fishing at 75% of the F_{MSY} proxy, respectively. The OFL and ABC are derived, in part, using SRFS data for private recreational vessels. The total ACL is set at 80% of the ABC in 2026, 90% of the ABC in 2027, and 100% of the ABC in 2028 and subsequent years. The OFL, ABC, and total ACL in mp gw are as follows: **(table updated)**

OFL	10.64 mp gw
ABC	8.28 mp gw
Total ACL (in 2026)	6.62 mp gw
Total ACL (in 2027)	7.45 mp gw

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 3, to make **Alternative 2** the preferred.

Alternative 2: Eliminate the February 1 through March 31 recreational closed season for SWG in federal waters seaward of the 20-fathom boundary.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: To direct staff to develop a new Reef Fish amendment that establishes a pilot program for setting aside a portion of the red grouper commercial quota. The amendment should consider, but not be limited to, alternative set aside amounts, criteria for qualifying for set aside allocation, restrictions on transferability, and methods for distributing set aside allocation. The Council’s goal is to take final action in April 2026, with a target pilot program start date of early 2027.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: In Action 2, to select **Alternative 2** as the preferred.

Alternative 2: Revise the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational and commercial sectors as the average landings using SRFS data during the years 1986 through 2005. The allocations for red grouper are 68.2% commercial and 31.8% recreational. The commercial buffer between the ACL and ACT is 5%; the recreational buffer is 9%.

Motion carried with 1 abstention and 1 absent.

Draft Options – Reef Fish Amendment 55 / Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 – Modifications to Mutton Snapper and Yellowtail Snapper Management Measures

Motion: In Action 1, to move **Alternative 4** to Considered but Rejected.

Alternative 4: Modify the jurisdictional apportionment and catch limits using the following reference period. Each region’s ACL will equal its apportionment of the stock ABC.

Mutton Snapper:

- Option 4a: For mutton snapper, use the average landings from 2004 – 2023
- Option 4b: For mutton snapper, use the average landings from 2014 – 2023
- Option 4c: For mutton snapper, use the average landings from 2019 – 2023

Yellowtail Snapper:

- Option 4d: For yellowtail snapper, use the average landings from 2004 – 2023
- Option 4e: For yellowtail snapper, use the average landings from 2014 – 2023
- Option 4f: For yellowtail snapper, use the average landings from 2019 – 2023

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Other Business - DESCEND Act

Motion: To direct staff to draft an abbreviated framework action to continue the measures in the DESCEND Act in the Gulf, with the goal of taking final action in November 2025.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Other Business - Greater Amberjack

Motion: The Council draft and transmit a letter to the NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator expressing the Council’s concern that the agency has not yet finalized the rulemaking for greater amberjack management measures in federal waters of the Gulf of America, despite requirements under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to implement accountability measures when catch limits are exceeded. The letter should inquire about: (1) the reason for the delay in finalizing the rule, (2) the expected timeline for publication and implementation, and (3) how NOAA Fisheries intends to ensure compliance with the accountability measure requirements that mandate adjustments to prevent overfishing, account for overages and ensure continued progress on rebuilding.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: To request the state Directors to report their Greater Amberjack Private Recreational landings in their state survey reporting units when they report their Private Recreational Red Snapper landings during the November and April Council meetings, with NMFS staff providing Greater Amberjack Private Recreational landings in MRIP-FES units, along with federal charter for-hire and headboat landings.

- November 2025 Council meeting would comprise September and October 2024 landings data.
- April 2026 Council meeting would comprise September and October 2025 landings data.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

SHRIMP

Draft Shrimp Amendment 19: Shrimp Permit Moratorium

Motion: To modify the language of **Option 3** as follows:

Option 3: Create a federal limited access permit for commercial shrimp vessels in the Gulf. To be eligible for a commercial shrimp vessel permit under the limited access system, vessels must have a valid or renewable federal Gulf commercial shrimp vessel permit on October 26, 2026. Federal Gulf commercial shrimp vessel permits would need to be renewed every year, and all previous renewal, transfer, and reporting requirements would still be in effect. Reviews of the limited access permit will occur ten years after implementation of this amendment or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Council.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Motion: To make **Option 3** the preferred option.

Option 3: Create a federal limited access permit for commercial shrimp vessels in the Gulf. To be eligible for a commercial shrimp vessel permit under the limited access system, vessels must have a valid or renewable federal Gulf commercial shrimp vessel permit on October 26, 2026. Federal Gulf commercial shrimp vessel permits would need to be renewed every year, and all previous renewal, transfer, and reporting requirements would still be in effect. Reviews of the limited access permit will occur ten years after implementation of this amendment or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Council.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Protected Resources Bycatch in Shrimp Trawls: A Summary Review of Data for Reinitiation of Section 7 Consultation

Motion: Populate and convene a new working group comprised of shrimp harvesting sector representatives, NMFS staff, Council staff, SSC members, researchers, and others to identify workable solutions that aim to reduce interactions with smalltooth sawfish and giant manta ray in the Gulf federal shrimp trawl fishery. This new working group should be formed by the Council chair, Shrimp committee chair, Regional Administrator, and Executive Director with no more than 15 members.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Organization and Prioritization of Recommendations on Executive Orders 14276 and 14192

Motion: To direct staff to write a letter pursuant to E.O. 14276 highlighting the Council's recommendations below:

- Explore requirements for active participation and permits for Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) holders.
- Consider replacing the provisions of the DESCEND Act.
- Consider removing low priority species from fishery management plans.

Motion carried with 1 absent and 1 abstention.

U.S. Coast Guard Safety Requirements to Carry Observers

Motion: To write a letter to the USCG requesting they certify Starlink as an acceptable satellite communication device as soon as possible.

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

FULL COUNCIL

Other Business – Council Action Schedule

Motion: To remove #17 from the Action Schedule.

#17: Spatial area closures for Gag and other Groupers

Motion carried with no opposition and 1 absent.

Election of Council Chair

Motion: To nominate JD Dugas to serve as Council Chair through the August 2026 Council meeting.

JD Dugas approved as Council Chair by acclamation.

Election of Council Vice Chair

Motion: To nominate Kesley Banks to serve as Council Vice Chair through the August 2026 Council meeting.

Kesley Banks approved as Council Vice Chair by acclamation.