

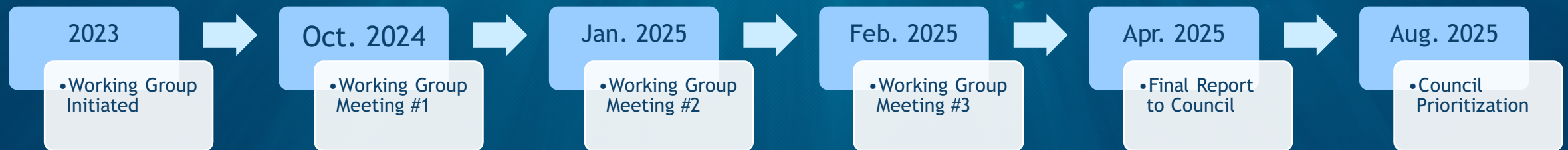
Tab B, No. 10

Recreational Initiative Council Prioritized Workplan



January 2026 Council Meeting
Tab B No. 10

Consensus Recommendations



19 Consensus Recommendations

8 Education Recommendations; 13 Management Recommendations

August 2025 Council Prioritized

6 Priority Management Recommendations; 5 Priority Education Recommendations

August 2025 Council Prioritized 6 Management Recommendations



1. 1.1: To achieve Gulf-wide consistency, specific and measurable guidelines and expectations must be set for Gulf recreational data providers regarding the quality of data that will be acceptable, beyond the ambiguous “best available data.”
2. 3.2: The Council should examine the feasibility of implementing carryover provisions for the uncaught portion of an Annual Catch Limit for reef fish species, along with assessing the ability to distribute paybacks for Annual Catch Limit overages across multiple subsequent years to increase stability..
3. 4.1: The Council should consider implementing regional/state flexibility in recreational reef fish management (while maintaining federal management authority) whenever possible.
4. 4.3: The Council should explore differentiating management measures (i.e., size limit, bag limit, and season) for greater amberjack between the eastern Gulf (Florida and Alabama) and western Gulf (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) given regional differences in fishery characteristics (maintaining a single Gulf-wide Annual Catch Limit).
5. 6.1: The Council should implement a replacement and/or enhancement to DESCEND Act (P.L. No. 116-340), which requires Gulf reef fish anglers to have a descending device rigged and ready for use, by January 2026 to reduce discard mortality in a growing fishery.
6. 6.2: Maximize seasonal overlap amongst focal species with specific emphasis on overlap with the red snapper season. At the same time, the Council should recognize the for-hire and tackle industry’s need to have a focal species available for harvest at all times.

Progress Update on 6.1



6.1: The Council should implement a replacement and/or enhancement to DESCEND Act (P.L. No. 116-340), which requires Gulf reef fish anglers to have a descending device rigged and ready for use, by January 2026 to reduce discard mortality in a growing fishery.

- **Nov 2025:** Council took Final Action on Continuation of Management Measures to Reduce Reef Fish Mortality
- Pending SERO review, finalized Codified Text and SEFSC review and certification
- Transmittal and Rulemaking Pending

Working Group Recommendation 1.1



1.1: To achieve Gulf-wide consistency, specific and measurable guidelines and expectations must be set for Gulf recreational data providers regarding the quality of data that will be acceptable, beyond the ambiguous “best available data.”

Relevant Information:

- February 2025 GulfFin meeting discussed MRIP standards for data collection, and all states had a discussion of implementing state-wide standards
- October 2025 GSMFC GulfFin meeting to discuss the AL and MS transition to LA creel and data consistency.
 - **MS- 2026 AL- 2027**

Proposed Work Plan:

- Ongoing updates following GulfFin meetings with Gulf States Commission Report
- Consider Gulf- Wide Consistency for offshore endorsement
 - **Many states already have this implemented**

Working Group Recommendation 3.2



3.2: The Council should examine the feasibility of implementing carryover provisions for the uncaught portion of an Annual Catch Limit for reef fish species, along with assessing the ability to distribute paybacks for Annual Catch Limit overages across multiple subsequent years to increase stability. Implementation of these could be explored through a pilot study and would be contingent upon stock status and/or trend.

Relevant Information:

- Red Snapper AMs including carryover provisions initiated by the Council. Proposed document to be brought back to the Council in 2026.
- Previous efforts were derailed based on the science requirement to payback overages for all stocks with carryover.

Proposed Work Plan:

- Propose reef fish species that carryover provisions would apply to, and initiate action.
- Further analysis

Working Group Recommendation 4.1



4.1: The Council should consider implementing regional/state flexibility in recreational reef fish management (while maintaining federal management authority) whenever possible.

Relevant Information:

- Red Snapper AM 50- state management

Proposed Work Plan:

- Council should identify what species it wishes to investigate state/regional management recognizing the timeline and staff workload is likely lengthy.
- Regional/ State Management would involve discussion surrounding: Scoping, Sector Separation, Allocation, Data Scoping, etc.

Working Group Recommendation 4.3



4.3: The Council should explore differentiating management measures (i.e., size limit, bag limit, and season) for greater amberjack between the eastern Gulf (Florida and Alabama) and western Gulf (Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) given regional differences in fishery characteristics (maintaining a single Gulf-wide Annual Catch Limit).

Relevant Information:

- GAJ regional management was season-length analyzed January 2020 and was tabled.
- April 2025 Council Presentation
- January Council 2026

Proposed Work Plan:

- GAJ count review and GAJ Assessment info- See Tab B No 9.

Working Group Recommendation 6.2



6.2: The Council should work with the recreational community, including the for-hire and private angler sectors, to develop seasons that maximize overlap in focal species to enable harvest of multiple species on a given trip and reduce discards. Maximizing overlap with the season for red snapper, the primary target for reef fish anglers Gulf-wide, should be a key priority. At the same time, the Council should recognize the for-hire and tackle industry's need to have a focal species available for harvest at all times.

Relevant Information:

- [Dec. 2025 O&E Meeting Summary](#)
 - Enhanced discussion and outreach for the ongoing challenges associated with maximizing access as well as season structure overlap.
 - Highlighted that better discussion of the trade-offs associated with these management decisions are needed (e.g., the gag grouper season change to September 1).

Proposed Work Plan:

- Continued Council discussion during proposed actions
- Specific Season-length overlap analysis (Council would need to identify species)

Remaining Prioritized Management Recommendations



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Council Action



- Rec. 4.3: GAJ regional/state management only recommendation with a timeline for action moving forward

Things to consider:

- Rec 1.1 unless there are specific measurable action items to analyze further, it would be challenging for staff to present new information aside from what I have included as relevant information
- Rec 3.2 Carryover provisions- would be helpful to identify species and priority on this as we look at the action schedule in realm of Council priorities
- Rec. 4.1 may be better suited to follow the GAJ regional/state management discussion
- Rec 6.2 season overlap analysis- if this is desirable moving forward by the Council, it would be prudent to identify specific species and sectors to do a season overlap analysis

Main Takeaway: If the Council is interested in moving these forward, there would need to be some more thorough discussion on the who, what, where, and when of actions before staff could compile a document looking at options.

Questions?

