

**Reef Fish Committee
Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab B**

Agenda Item IV: Presentation: 2025 Reef Fish and IFQ Landings Update

Action: Presentation and discussion

Council Input and Next Steps: Southeast Regional Office (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 2025 private angling fishing seasons for red snapper and offer projections for the 2026 fishing season as appropriate. The states will also characterize available data for effort, observed mean lengths, and weights for red snapper. In addition, the five Gulf states will also present their state survey-generated landings, effort, lengths, and weights for greater amberjack, as available. These data are part of an ongoing report to the Council that requires no action by the Committee. Committee members should consider the information presented and ask questions as appropriate.

Agenda Item V: **FINAL ACTION** – Abbreviated Framework Action: Modification of Gulf Lane Snapper Catch Limits

Action: Document, discussion, and action

Council Input and Next Steps: Council staff will present written public comments received on an abbreviated framework action to modify lane snapper catch limits, based on the results of the most recent interim analysis on lane snapper. This interim analysis used a composite video index to evaluate trends in the stock biomass against trends in landings and suggested the stock to be healthy. As a result, at its January 2026 meeting, the Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended increasing the Gulf lane snapper overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch. The document proposes adopting this increase in catch limits and setting the annual catch limit equal to the acceptable biological catch. Lane snapper is not managed with sector allocations. Included fishing season duration projections for both sectors assumes a 10-inch total length minimum size limit, concurrent with a previous management modification by the Council. SERO staff will review the codified text of the proposed federal regulations. The Committee should review the information presented and ask questions and select a preferred option. If the Committee finds the proposed regulations to be necessary and appropriate, it should recommend that the Council take final action on the document to transmit it to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation.

Agenda Item VI: Public Hearing Draft – Reef Fish Amendment 63: Modifications to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ Program

Action: Presentation, document, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Council staff will give a presentation on a public hearing draft for Reef Fish Amendment 63. This regulatory action addresses management measures necessary to develop a pilot program to set aside a portion of the red grouper commercial quota to be distributed to eligible participants in the grouper/tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) program. The presentation includes options considering alternative set aside amounts, criteria for qualifying for set aside allocation, restrictions on transferability, and methods for distributing set aside allocation. As this is a public hearing draft, the Committee should review the information and options presented and recommend preferred alternatives to the Council as appropriate. The Committee should also suggest revisions as warranted. The Council previously recommended that public hearings for this document be virtual, and Council staff will hold these hearings before the June 2026 Council meeting. The Ad Hoc Red Snapper / Grouper Tilefish IFQ AP will also review a draft of this document prior to the June 2026 Council meeting.

Agenda Item VII: **FINAL ACTION** – Abbreviated Framework Action: Red Grouper IFQ Set Aside Quota Holdback

Action: Document, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Council staff will present written public comments received on an abbreviated framework action to hold back a portion of the commercial red grouper IFQ quota for 2027, which is intended to facilitate the function of the management changes being considered under draft Reef Fish Amendment 63 (agenda item VI). The document proposes holding back enough of the commercial quota to allow for the options in Reef Fish Amendment 63 to be considered by the Council. SERO staff will review the codified text of the proposed federal regulations. The Committee should review the information presented and ask questions. If the Committee finds the proposed regulations to be necessary and appropriate, it should recommend that the Council take final action on the document to transmit it to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation.

Agenda Item VIII: Draft Options – Modifications to Red Snapper Private Recreational Accountability Measures

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Council staff will provide an overview of draft options for recreational red snapper in-season and post-season flexibility measures. The presentation will review the history of previous carryover provision efforts and summarize the regional quota sharing management system used by the commercial sector for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. Presently, if a Gulf state’s private recreational red snapper landings exceed its state-specific annual catch limit in a fishing year, then in the following year, that state’s annual catch limit will be reduced by the amount of the overage in the previous year. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, make recommendations, and discuss next steps, as needed.

Agenda Item IX: Presentation: Delegate Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Management to Gulf States

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Council staff will give a presentation on options for state management of the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector for red snapper. These options will consider whether a delegated state manages the private vessel and federal for-hire components together or separately (i.e., sector separation), how the recreational annual catch limit could be divided, and other requisite management measures. Staff will discuss the main decision points and options the Committee could consider while developing the management actions and alternatives. The Committee should discuss the information presented, suggest revisions and recommend next steps as needed.

Agenda Item X: Presentation: February 2026 SSC Summary

Action: Presentation, discussion, and recommendations

Council Input and Next Steps: Mr. Moncrief (Chair, SSC) will review SSC discussions about the greater amberjack interim analyses, which was informed by the G-FISHER index of relative abundance. Mr. Moncrief will also review emerging research on projecting recreational fishing season duration for gag grouper, and discard mortality for reef fish species including gray triggerfish. He will review SSC discussions on economic effects of mid-year IFQ quota changes, and a check-in about the progress of SEDAR 100, which is a stock assessment for gray triggerfish. Lastly Mr. Moncrief will review stakeholder participatory workshops conducted by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The Committee should review the information presented, ask questions, and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate.

Agenda Item XI: Discussion of 2026 Gag Grouper and Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing Seasons

Action: Discussion

Council Input and Next Steps: Dr. CJ Sweetman (Reef Fish Committee Chair) and staff from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will review recreational fishing season duration projections for gag grouper for 2026 and will discuss the 2026 – 2027 recreational fishing season for greater amberjack. The Committee should discuss the information provided and ask questions as appropriate.

Agenda Item XII: Discussion of 2026 Federal For-hire Red Snapper Fishing Season

Action: Discussion

Council Input and Next Steps: SERO Staff will review the projected fishing season duration for the federal for-hire component for red snapper for the 2026 fishing season. SERO Staff will also brief the Council on the progress of the framework action to modify the fishing season start date for the federal for-hire component for red snapper, on which the Council took final action at its August 2025 meeting. The Committee should discuss the information provided and ask questions as appropriate.

Agenda Item XIII: 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.
