

## **Anonymous Voicemail Public Comment Summary**

**January 21, 2026 – March 31, 2026**

[\(Link to full text comments\)](#)

### **16 Comments Received**

#### **IFQ Program Reform**

- Concerns about access to quota:
  - Lack of fair competition and access.
  - Quota owned by few large operations.
  - Fishermen being forced out of business and boats idle at the dock.
  - The system is unsustainable for small operators.
  - A lack of access to quota despite perceived abundance of fish.
- Concerns about the economic viability of the program:
  - Fishermen losing most profits to lease costs.
  - Inflates fish prices for consumers because of the increase in quota lease price.
  - Inability to hire crew due to low profitability.
  - Profits are disproportionately captured by non-fishing quota holders.
  - Difficulty entering the fishery because of the high cost of permits and licenses.
- Suggestion to reallocate quota to active fishermen and provide more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities especially to those without initial allocation.
- Abolish the IFQ system entirely (“IFQ got to go” is a repeated sentiment).

#### **Observer Program**

- Opposition to the observer program:
  - Seen as costly, dangerous, and ineffective.
  - Fishermen alter behavior when observers are onboard and the data are viewed as unreliable.
  - Safety concerns, including mention of observer fatalities.
  - Suggestion to replace observers with camera/electronic monitoring systems.

#### **General Council Feedback**

- The Council prioritizes shareholders over working fishermen.
- Decisions (e.g., quota cuts) are made to increase share value, not conserve fish.
- Lack of genuine consideration of public input.
- The Council processes is viewed as performative (“just a show”).
- Frustration for political influence, lobbying, and corruption.
- Lack of accountability to fishermen and the public.

## **Commercial/Recreational Equity**

- Recreational fishermen express frustration with unequal access compared to commercial sector:
  - Desire for more balanced allocation of fishing opportunities and a call for “shared sacrifice” across sectors rather than disproportionate restrictions.

## **Regional Management**

- Criticism of “one-size-fits-all” Gulf-wide management:
  - Argument that different regions have very different ecosystems and fish abundance and region-specific management strategies should be developed for species like gag grouper.

## **Gag Season**

- Adjust gag grouper season timing to align with weather conditions and when fish are actually accessible (e.g., winter months for small boats)
- Concerns that current seasons favor larger offshore vessels and exclude smaller, nearshore operators.

## **Deep-Water Grouper**

- Concern shared for potential overharvest of deepwater grouper species because of advanced fishing technology and efficiency.
- Suggested vessel and per-person catch limits and/or seasonal closures.

## **Shark Depredation**

- Negatively impacting catches and discard mortality.
- Limiting shark feeding was suggested.

## **For-Hire**

- Frustration with barriers to entering charter fishing industry including the cost and availability of permits.
- General frustration with regulatory complexity and perceived ineffectiveness.