

Gulf Fishery Management Council

June 2026 Liaison Report



The Gulf Council (Council) met in Tampa, Florida, on June 1-3, 2026. The Council presented Officer Specialists Kyle Yurewitch and Mathew Rubenstein of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission with the 2025 Law Enforcement Team of the Year Award. The following is a summary of the issues addressed during the meeting:

Commercial Red Grouper

The Gulf Council took final action on [Reef Fish Amendment 63](#) to develop a 3-year program to set aside a portion of the red grouper commercial quota for distribution to participants of the Grouper/Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The quota pool will be established using a percentage of the annual catch limit increase that is expected to be distributed when [Reef Fish Amendment 62](#) is implemented.

The Council recommends establishing a quota pool beginning in 2027 if the commercial annual catch target (quota) is above 4,280,000 pounds. That quota pool would be populated with 50% of the quota increase above 4,280,000 million pounds gutted weight. Annual allocation would be non-transferable and would be distributed to commercial reef fish permit holders that have landed at least 500 pounds of red grouper during a rolling two-year reference period. Half of the quota pool will be distributed to active red grouper fishermen without red grouper shares and half will be distributed to active fishermen with red grouper shares. Shares will be distributed proportionally based on red grouper landings. Reef Fish Amendment 63 will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration and implementation as soon as practicable.

After hearing public testimony expressing concern about the health of the red grouper stock and scheduled increases to the red grouper annual catch limits in [Reef Fish Amendment 62](#), the Council also decided to request that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provide commercial catch per unit effort data for red grouper for the years 2010 – 2025, which corresponds with the years during which the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ program has been in effect.

Greater Amberjack Regional Management

The Council heard a presentation on development of a draft document that considers regional management of recreational greater amberjack. The Council discussed key decision points including whether to divide management by state or region; how to allocate among the regions; which data units to use; which management measures should be considered; and how to structure

accountability measures. The Council plans to continue work on this document during its October 2026 meeting.

For-Hire Data Collection

The Council reviewed a public hearing draft of the Generic Amendment to develop a Gulf For-Hire Data Collection Program. The Council's current preferred alternatives would require owner/operators of federal for-hire vessels to submit a trip declaration for each for-hire fishing trip, and complete electronic reports for each trip before offloading. Additionally, a portion of vessel owner/operators would be selected each year to submit economic data on charter fishing activity. A 'did not fish' report will have to be submitted if no fishing occurs for a week. The Council will gather public comment through virtual public meetings over the summer before taking final action during its August 2026 meeting.

Recreational Reporting of Deep-Water Grouper

After hearing a presentation on the mandatory recreational reporting program for tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic, the Council decided to delay development of a reporting system for the recreational deep-water grouper fishery until angler feedback is gathered and after further research is conducted on the feasibility of a reporting program.

Commercial Individual Fishing Quota Program Permit Requirements

The Council continued work on Reef Fish Amendment 59A, which addresses participation requirements in the IFQ programs. The Council selected preferred alternatives that would require shareholder accounts to be associated with a valid or renewable federal commercial reef fish permit to obtain annual allocation and obtain and maintain IFQ shares. NMFS will reclaim shares from non-compliant accounts one year after the amendment is implemented. The Council will continue work on this amendment at a future meeting.

Private Red Snapper Accountability Measures

The Council reviewed options for modifying the post-season accountability measures for private recreational red snapper to allow more flexibility without compromising the effectiveness of state management. Presently, if a Gulf state's 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 Council will continue work on this document at a future meeting.

Mutton and Yellowtail Snapper

The Council worked on Reef Fish Amendment 55 and Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, which is being considered jointly with the South Atlantic Council. New stock assessments were completed for southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper which indicated that the stocks are healthy as of 2023, with northward range expansion evident in the Gulf. The Councils are considering modifying stock catch limits, jurisdictional apportionment of the stocks, regional

annual catch limits, and South Atlantic sector allocations for both species within the South Atlantic Council’s jurisdiction. The South Atlantic Council will consider the draft document before the Gulf Council continues work on proposed modifications at a future Council meeting.

Shrimp

The Council began work on a draft amendment to establish and modify status determination criteria for penaeid shrimp. The Council will continue work on this document during a future meeting.

The Council also reviewed the draft work plan and membership of the Working Group to Address Protected Resources Interactions with Gulf federal shrimp trawls. The Council broadened Working Group membership to promote consensus-based solutions to mitigate bycatch of protected species.

Advisory Panel Appointments

Advisory Panels are comprised of people who are knowledgeable about a particular fishery and advise the Council on issues related to their expertise. The Council populated its Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Red Drum Advisory Panels. Members appointed will serve a three-year term. The list of people who have been selected to serve can be found [here](#).

Essential Fish Habitat

The Council reviewed a public hearing draft for a generic amendment to update essential fish habitat descriptions and identifications across the Shrimp, Reef Fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Spiny Lobster, and Red Drum Fishery Management Plans. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will review and approve the draft updates, and public hearings will be conducted before final action is taken.

Turtle Release Gear

The Council decided to request that NMFS review and assess the current sea turtle release gear requirements for vessels with for-hire or commercial reef fish permits. The review should include evaluation of current regulations and provide recommendations for a simplified gear kit that will continue to minimize impacts to these protected species while also minimizing the regulatory burden of the requirements on the fleet.

Next Meeting Information

The Council will meet on the week of August 24, 2026, in Biloxi, MS at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino. Meeting dates and an agenda will be published soon. You can find more information about the meeting [here](#).