



# **GAO Report – Documenting Processes for Allocation Reviews**

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

**June 2020**

# Background

- Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 instructed GAO to review mixed-use fishery allocations in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico
- Report examined three main areas:
  - 1) The Council's history of establishing and revising of mixed-use fishery allocations
  - 2) Evaluate the key sources of information that are available for reviewing allocations
  - 3) Evaluate the extent to which the Council has developed processes to guide allocation reviews



# GAO Review Process

- GAO met with:
  - NMFS employees
  - Council members and staff
  - Members of the public
- Gathered information on:
  - Available data and documentation
  - History
  - Perceptions



# What is not in the report

- The GAO Report does not specifically tell NMFS or the Council:
  - The frequency of reviewing allocations, nor
  - How to allocate by sector



# Recommended Data to Use for Allocation Decisions

- Available information to help conduct allocation reviews:
  - Trends in catch and landings
  - Stock assessment results
  - Economic analyses
  - Social indicators
  - Ecosystem models
- Limitations noted for each type of information



# Report Conclusions

- Allocation decisions can be complex and difficult. The outcomes may have important economic and social implications.
- The Council has taken an important step in developing policies outlining criteria for initiating allocation reviews.
- The Council has not fully developed a process for how it will conduct and document such reviews.



# Report Recommendations #1

The NMFS Assistant Administrator for Fisheries should work with the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico councils, and other councils as appropriate, to develop documented processes for conducting allocation reviews.



# Report Recommendations #2

The NMFS Assistant Administrator for Fisheries should work with the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico councils, and other councils as appropriate, to specify how the councils will document their allocation reviews, including the basis for their allocation decisions, whether fishery management plan objectives are being met, and what factors were considered in the reviews.





# Future Allocation Discussions from March 2020 Meeting

- Landings history
- Market needs
- Fairness
- Equity
- Cultural importance of a species
- Accountability of a fishing sector
- Importance of fishery to a sector
- Which fisheries might best be served by managing using a single allocation?
- Expected discard rate – if expected rate is high, should a sector be allocated more fish?



# Future Council Allocation Discussions

- Does the GAO report change the Council's thinking about how to proceed?
- What does the Council want staff to bring back to them the next time the Council discusses allocations?

