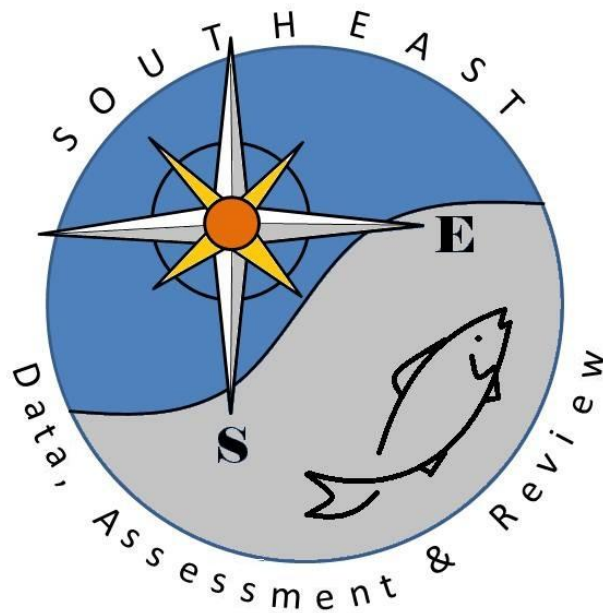


# Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack Management History

GMFMC

SEDAR33-RD05

8 March 2013



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## 2. Greater Amberjack Management Overview

### 2.1. Fishery Management Plan and Amendments

The following summary describes only those management actions that likely affect greater amberjack fisheries and harvest.

*Original GMFMC FMP:*

The Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan was implemented in November 1984. The regulations, designed to rebuild declining reef fish stocks, included: (1) prohibitions on the use of fish traps, roller trawls, and powerhead-equipped spear guns within an inshore stressed area; (2) a minimum size limit of 13 inches total length (TL) for red snapper with the exceptions that for-hire boats were exempted until 1987 and each angler could keep 5 undersize fish; and, (3) data reporting requirements.

*GMFMC FMP Amendments affecting greater amberjack:*

Description of Action	FMP/Amendment	Effective Date
Set a 28-inch fork length minimum size limit and 3 fish per person per day bag limit for recreational harvest of greater amberjack, with a 2-day possession limit allowed for qualified charter vessels and head boats on trips that extend beyond 24 hours, and a 36-inch fork length minimum size limit of greater amberjack for commercial harvest. Established a longline and buoy gear boundary and expanded the stressed area to the entire Gulf coast. Established a commercial reef fish permit.	Amendment 1	1990
Established a moratorium on the issuance of new reef fish permits for a maximum period of three years; established an allowance for permit transfers. Added Almaco jack and banded rudderfish to the fishery management unit.	Amendment 4	1992
Created an Alabama special management zone (SMZ) and a framework procedure for future specification of SMZs. Established restrictions on the use of fish traps in the Gulf of Mexico EEZ, and implemented a three-year moratorium on the use of fish traps by creating a fish trap endorsement. Required that finfish be landed head and tails intact	Amendment 5	1994
Established reef fish dealer permitting and record keeping.	Amendment 7	1994
Extended the reef fish permit moratorium	Amendment 9	1994

through December 31, 1995 and allowed collections of commercial landings data for initial allocation of individual transferable quota (ITQ) shares. Established historical captain status for purposes of ITQ allocation.		
Implemented a new commercial reef fish permit moratorium for no more than five years or until December 31, 2000, permitted dealers can only buy reef fish from permitted vessels and permitted vessels can only sell to permitted dealers, established a charter and headboat reef fish permit.	Amendment 11	1996
Reduced the greater amberjack bag limit from three fish to one fish per person, and created an aggregate bag limit of 20 reef fish for all reef fish species not having a bag limit.	Amendment 12	1997
Initiated a 10-year phase-out on the use of fish traps in the EEZ from February 7, 1997 to February 7, 2007, after which fish traps would be prohibited, and prohibited the use of fish traps west of Cape San Blas, Florida.	Amendment 14	1997
Commercial harvest of greater amberjack closed March, April and May of each year. Prohibited harvest of reef fish from traps other than permitted reef fish traps, stone crab traps, or spiny lobster traps.	Amendment 15	1998
(1) The possession of reef fish exhibiting the condition of trap rash on board any vessel with a reef fish permit that is fishing spiny lobster or stone crab traps is prima facie evidence of illegal trap use and is prohibited except for vessels possessing a valid fish trap endorsement; (2) that NOAA Fisheries establish a system design, implementation schedule, and protocol to require implementation of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) for vessels engaged in the fish trap fishery, with the cost of the vessel equipment, installation, and maintenance to be paid or arranged by the owners as appropriate; and, (3) that fish trap vessels submit trip initiation and trip termination reports. Prior to implementing this additional reporting requirement, there will be a one-month fish trap inspection/compliance/education period, at a time determined by the NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator and published in the <i>Federal</i>	Amendment 16A	1998

<p><i>Register.</i> During this window of opportunity, fish trap fishermen will be required to have an appointment with NMFS enforcement for the purpose of having their trap gear, permits, and vessels available for inspection. The disapproved measure was a proposal to prohibit fish traps south of 25.05 degrees north latitude beginning February 7, 2001. The status quo 10-year phase-out of fish traps in areas in the Gulf EEZ is therefore maintained.</p>		
<p>Set a slot limit for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack of 14 inches to 22 inches FFL, and set an aggregate recreational bag limit of 5 fish for those species in aggregate. The purpose of these actions was to reduce harvest of juvenile greater amberjack that were mis-identified as banded rudderfish or lesser amberjack.</p>	Amendment 16B	1999
<p>Extended the commercial reef fish permit moratorium for another five years, from its previous expiration date of December 31, 2000 to December 31, 2005</p>	Amendment 17	2000
<p>Prohibited vessels with commercial harvests of reef fish aboard from also retaining fish caught under recreational bag and possession limits. Vessels with both for-hire and commercial permits were limited to the minimum crew size outlined in its Certificate of Inspection when fishing commercially. Prohibited the use of reef fish other than sand perches for bait. Required commercially permitted reef fish vessels to be equipped with VMS.</p>	Amendment 18A	2006
<p>Established two marine reserve areas off the Tortugas area and prohibits fishing for any species and anchoring by fishing vessels inside the two marine reserves.</p>	Amendment 19	2002
<p>Established a 3-year moratorium on the issuance of new charter and headboat vessel permits in the recreational for hire fisheries in the Gulf EEZ. Allowed transfer of permits. Required vessel captains/owners to participate in data collection efforts.</p>	Amendment 20	2002
<p>Continues the Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps marine reserves for an additional 6 years, until July 2010. Modified the fishing restrictions within the reserves to allow surface trolling during May – October.</p>	Amendment 21	2004

Established bycatch reporting methodologies for the reef fish fishery.	Amendment 22	2005
Extended the commercial reef fish permit moratorium indefinitely. Established a permanent limited access system for the commercial fishery for Gulf reef fish. Permits issued under the limited access system are renewable and transferable.	Amendment 24	2005
Extended the recreational for-hire reef fish permit moratorium indefinitely. Established a limited access system on for-hire reef fish and CMP permits. Permits are renewable and transferable in the same manner as currently prescribed for such permits.	Amendment 25	2006
Require the use of non-stainless steel circle hooks when using natural baits to fish for Gulf reef fish, require the use of venting tools and de-hooking devices when participating in the commercial or recreational reef fish fisheries.	Amendment 27	2008
Maintain the three-year stepped rebuilding plan based on a constant $F_{OY}$ projection as specified in Secretarial Amendment 2, and establish TAC at 1.9 mp for 2008 through 2010 and 3.5 mp from 2011 through 2012. Establish accountability measures that allow the Regional Administrator to close a sector when that sector's allocation of TAC has been reached or projected to be reached. If recreational landings exceed the sector's share of TAC, the RA will file a notice reducing the length of the recreational fishing season for the time necessary to recover the overage in the following fishing year. If commercial landings exceed the commercial quota, the Regional Administrator shall issue a notice reducing the commercial quota in the following year by the amount the quota was exceeded in the previous year. Increase the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack to 30-inches FL, and eliminate the bag limit for captain and crew. Establish commercial quotas for 2008 through 2010 of 503,000 pounds and for 2011 and 2012 of 938,000 pounds.	Amendment 30A	2008
Longline endorsement requirement - Vessels must have average annual reef fish landings of 40,000 pounds gutted weight or more from 1999 through 2007 The longline boundary in the	Amendment 31	2010

<p>eastern Gulf is extended from the 20-fathom depth contour to the 35-fathom depth contour from June - August. Vessels are limited to 1000 hooks of which no more than 750 of which can be rigged for fishing or fished.</p>		
<p>Establishes a commercial trip limit of 2,000 pounds. Establishes an annual catch limit equal to the acceptable biological catch at 1,780,000 pounds. Establishes allocations and annual catch targets, which act as quotas for the commercial and recreational sectors. The commercial allocation is 27% and the recreational allocation is 73% of the allowable catch. Until a future stock assessment is completed, or the annual catch limit is exceeded, the commercial quota will be 409,000 pounds, and the recreational quota will be 1,130,000 pounds. The 2013 commercial quota will be reduced by the 2012 landing overage after those numbers have been finalized.</p>	<p>Amendment 35</p>	<p>2012</p>

**Management and quota overage information from Amendment 30A to Amendment 35 for greater amberjack**

Prior to Amendment 30A, there was not a specified allocation of the stock ACL for the recreational and commercial sectors. In Amendment 30A, the Council selected an interim allocation (73% recreational: 27% commercial) that would remain in effect until the Council, through the recommendations of an Ad Hoc Allocation Committee, could implement an amendment that fairly and equitably addressed the allocation of greater amberjack between the recreational and commercial sectors.

*GMFMC Regulatory Amendments:*

**September 2010:**

Provides a more specific definition of buoy gear by limiting the number of hooks, limiting the terminal end weight, restricting materials used for the line, restricting the length of the drop line, and where the hooks may be attached. In addition, the Council requested that each buoy must display the official number of the vessel (USCG documentation number or state registration number) to assist law enforcement in monitoring the use of the gear, which requires rulemaking.

**January 2011:**

Intended to avoid in-season quota closures during peak economic fishing months, maximize social and economic benefits, and potentially provide biological benefits by protecting the greater amberjack stock during the peak spawning period. This regulatory framework action modifies the existing greater

amberjack recreational fishing season, creating a June 1 - July 31 closed season. This closure coincides with the open recreational seasons for other managed reef fish species such as red snapper.

## 2.2. Emergency and Interim Rules

**January 1, 2009** - NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) has published a final rule implementing interim measures in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. The rule published in the Federal Register on December 2, 2008, and the measures are effective January 1, 2009. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) requested a temporary rule be effective at the beginning of 2009 to address overfishing of gag, as well as red snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish until more permanent measures can be implemented through Amendment 30B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The interim rule will, with respect to greater amberjack, require operators of federally permitted Gulf of Mexico commercial and for-hire reef fish vessels to comply with the more restrictive of federal or state reef fish regulations when fishing in state waters for red snapper, greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, and gag.

## 2.3. Secretarial Amendments

### **Secretarial Amendment 2 (2003):**

Sets MSY, OY, MFMT, and MSST levels for greater amberjack that are in compliance with the Sustainable Fisheries Act, and it establishes a ten-year rebuilding plan for greater amberjack based on three-year intervals. No specific management measures were proposed in this amendment, since the greater amberjack harvest is currently within the TAC specified for the first three-year interval.

## 2.4. Control Date Notices

Control date notices are used to inform fishermen that a license limitation system or other method of limiting access to a particular fishery or fishing method is under consideration. If a program to limit access is established, anyone not participating in the fishery or using the fishing method by the published control date may be ineligible for initial access to participate in the fishery or to use that fishing method. However, a person who does not receive an initial eligibility may be able to enter the fishery or fishing method after the limited access system is established by transfer of the eligibility from a current participant, provided the limited access system allows such transfer. Publication of a control date does not obligate the Council to use that date as an initial eligibility criteria. A different date could be used, and additional qualification criteria could be established. The announcement of a control date is primarily intended to discourage entry into the fishery or use of a particular gear based on economic speculation during the Council's deliberation on the issues. The following summarizes control dates that have been established for the Reef Fish FMP. A reference to the full *Federal Register* notice is included with each summary.



**November 1, 1989:**

Anyone entering the commercial reef fish fishery in the Gulf and South Atlantic after November 1, 1989, may not be assured of future access to the reef fish resource if a management regime is developed and implemented that limits the number of participants in the fishery [54 FR 46755].

**November 18, 1998:**

The Council is considering whether there is a need to impose additional management measures limiting entry into the recreational-for-hire (i.e., charter vessel and headboat) fisheries for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic fish in the EEZ of the Gulf and, if there is a need, what management measures should be imposed. Possible measures include the establishment of a limited entry program to control participation or effort in the recreational-for-hire fisheries for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic [63 FR 64031] (In Amendment 20 to the Reef Fish FMP, a qualifying date of March 29, 2001, was adopted).

**July 12, 2000:**

The Council is considering whether there is a need to limit participation by gear type in the commercial reef fish fisheries in the exclusive economic zone of the Gulf and, if there is a need, what management measures should be imposed to accomplish this. Possible measures include modifications to the existing limited entry program to control fishery participation, or effort, based on gear type, such as a requirement for a gear endorsement on the commercial reef fish vessel permit for the appropriate gear. Gear types which may be included are longlines, buoy gear, handlines, rod-and-reel, bandit gear, spear fishing gear, and powerheads used with spears [65 FR 42978].

**October 15, 2004:**

The Council is considering the establishment of an individual fishing quota program to control participation or effort in the commercial grouper fisheries of the Gulf. If an individual fishing quota program is established, the Council is considering October 15, 2004, as a possible control date regarding the eligibility of catch histories in the commercial grouper fishery [69 FR 67106].

**December 31, 2008:**

The Council voted to establish a control date for all Gulf commercial reef fish vessel permits. The control date will allow the Council to evaluate fishery participation and address any level of overcapacity. The establishment of this control date does not commit the Council or NOAA Fisheries Service to any particular management regime or criteria for entry into this fishery. Fishermen would not be guaranteed future participation in the fishery regardless of their entry date or intensity of participation in the fishery before or after the control date under consideration. Comments were requested by close of business April 17, 2009 [74 FR 11517].

## 2.5. Management Program Specifications

**Table 2.5.1. General Management Information**

### Gulf of Mexico

Species	Greater Amberjack
Management Unit	Gulf of Mexico
Management Unit Definition	Gulf of Mexico EEZ
Management Entity	Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Management Contacts	Steven Atran
SERO / Council	Dr. Carrie Simmons
Current stock exploitation status	Overfished, undergoing overfishing (2010)
Current spawning stock biomass status	4.587 million pounds, whole weight (2010 SEDAR Greater Amberjack Update, using data through 2009)

**Table 2.5.2. Specific Management Criteria**

Criteria	Gulf of Mexico - Current (2009)		Gulf of Mexico - Proposed	
	Definition	Value	Definition	Value
MSST	$(1-M)*B_{MSY}$	11.048 mp ww	SEDAR 33	SEDAR 33
MFMT	$F_{30\%SPR}$	0.33	SEDAR 33	SEDAR 33
MSY	$F_{30\%SPR}$	0.33	SEDAR 33	SEDAR 33
$F_{MSY}$	$F_{30\%SPR}$	0.33	SEDAR 33	SEDAR 33
OY	Equilibrium Yield @ $F_{OY}$	4.806 mp ww	SEDAR 33	SEDAR 33
$F_{OY}$	75% of $F_{MSY}$	0.25	$F_{OY} = 65\%, 75\%, 85\% F_{MSY}$	SEDAR 33
M	n/a	0.25	M	SEDAR 33

*NOTE: "Proposed" columns are for indicating any definitions that may exist in FMPs or amendments that are currently under development and should therefore be evaluated in the current assessment. "Current" is those definitions in place now. Please clarify whether landings parameters are 'landings' or 'catch' (Landings + Discard). If 'landings', please indicate how discards are addressed.*

### Stock Rebuilding Information

The greater amberjack update assessment was completed and reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) at their March 2011 meeting. At that meeting, the SSC moved that the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) update assessment for greater amberjack (SEDAR 9 Update 2010) was the best scientific information available; however, they did not accept it as adequate for management. In addition, the yield projections were considered unreliable because they showed large sensitivity to small changes in initial conditions, fishing mortality rates, and catch. The SSC next focused on whether the assessment results were

sufficient for setting acceptable biological catch (ABC) under the control rule. Both Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the ABC control rule, which was developed by the SSC, require stable yield projections. Therefore, the SSC decided to use Tier 3b from the ABC control rule, in which the ABC is based on the most recent year's landings, for setting the greater amberjack overfishing limit (OFL) and ABC (GMFMC 2012).

Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP). On November 13, 2012, NMFS issued a final rule to implement Amendment 35 to the FMP. Amendment 35 established a greater amberjack commercial annual catch limit (ACL) of 481,000 pounds (lb), an annual catch target (ACT) (equal to the commercial quota) of 409,000 lb, and a 2,000-lb commercial trip limit for greater amberjack. Accountability measures for greater amberjack allow for in-season closures of the commercial sector when the applicable ACT is reached or projected to be reached. If despite such closure, landings exceed the ACT, NMFS will reduce the ACT and ACL the following year by the amount of the overage from the prior fishing year. Reducing the stock ACL by 18% from no action is expected to end overfishing; whether overfishing has ended will remain unknown until completion of the next benchmark assessment, scheduled in 2013.

**Table 2.5.4. Stock projection information**

*(This provides the basic information necessary to bridge the gap between the terminal year of the assessment and the year in which any changes may take place or specific alternative exploitation rates should be evaluated)*

*Gulf of Mexico*

Requested Information	Value
First Year of Management	2014
Projection Criteria during interim years should be based on (e.g., exploitation or harvest)	Fixed Exploitation
Projection criteria values for interim years should be determined from (e.g., terminal year, avg of X years)	Average of previous 3 years

\*Fixed Exploitation would be  $F=F_{MSY}$  (or  $F<F_{MSY}$ ) that would rebuild overfished stock to  $B_{MSY}$  in the allowable timeframe. Modified Exploitation would be allow for adjustment in  $F\leq F_{MSY}$ , which would allow for the largest landings that would rebuild the stock to  $B_{MSY}$  in the allowable timeframe. Fixed harvest would be maximum fixed harvest with  $F\leq F_{MSY}$  that would allow the stock to rebuild to  $B_{MSY}$  in the allowable timeframe.

Projections:

Project future stock conditions and develop rebuilding schedules if warranted, including estimated generation time. Develop stock projections in accordance with the following:

A) If stock is overfished:

$$F=0, F_{Current}, F_{MSY}, F_{OY}$$

$$F=F_{Rebuild} \text{ (max that permits rebuild in allowed time)}$$

B) If stock is undergoing overfishing:

$$F= F_{Current}, F_{MSY}, F_{OY}$$

C) If stock is neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing:

$$F = F_{\text{Current}}, F_{\text{MSY}}, F_{\text{OY}}$$

D) If data limitations preclude classic projections (i.e. A, B, C above), explore alternate models to provide management advice

**Table 2.5.5. Quota Calculation Details**

If the stock is managed by quota, please provide the following information

Current Quota Value	1.78 mp ww
Next Scheduled Quota Change	2014
Annual or averaged quota ?	Annual
If averaged, number of years to average	n/a
Does the quota include bycatch/discard ?	Not specified

## 2.6. Management and Regulatory Timeline

The following tables provide a timeline of Federal management actions by fishery.

**Table 2.6.1. Annual Commercial Greater Amberjack Regulatory Summary** (Note: SWG = Shallow Water Grouper, ww = whole weight, gw = gutted weight, rw = round weight))

	<u>Fishing Year</u>	<u>Size Limit</u>	<u>Quota</u>	<u>Open date</u>	<u>Close date</u>
1990	365 days	36" FL	n/a	Jan 1	Dec 31
1991	"	"	"	"	"
1992	"	"	"	"	"
1993	"	"	"	"	"
1994	"	"	"	"	"
1995	"	"	"	"	"
1996	"	"	"	"	"
1997	"	"	"	"	"
1998	273 days	"	"	Jan 1, Jun 1	Mar 1, Dec 31
1999	"	"	"	"	"
2000	"	"	"	"	"
2001	"	"	"	"	"
2002	"	"	"	"	"
2003	"	"	2.9 mp ww	"	"
2004	"	"	"	"	"
2005	"	"	"	"	"
2006	"	"	5.2 mp ww	"	"
2007	"	"	"	"	"
2008	"	"	0.503 mp ww	"	"
2009	219 days	"	"	"	Mar 1, Nov 7
2010	209 days	"	0.373 mp ww"	"	Mar 1, Oct 28
2011*	106 days	"	0.342 mp ww	"	Mar 1, Jun 18
2012	60 days	"	0.237 mp ww	Jan 1	Mar 1

Note: 2011\* there was an adjustment to the commercial quota after it was closed June 18, 2011 based on projections. However, landings data indicated the quota had not been met so it was re-opened for 60 days Sept 1-Oct 31, 2011.

[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishery\\_bulletins/bulletin\\_archives/2011/documents/pdfs/fb11-062\\_2011\\_gaj\\_comm\\_opening\\_and\\_quota\\_increase.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishery_bulletins/bulletin_archives/2011/documents/pdfs/fb11-062_2011_gaj_comm_opening_and_quota_increase.pdf)

**Table 2.6.2. Annual Recreational Greater Amberjack Regulatory Summary** (Note: SWG = Shallow Water Grouper, ww = whole weight, gw = gutted weight)

	<u># Fishing Days</u>	<u>Size Limit</u>	<u>Bag Limit</u>	<u>Open date</u>	<u>Close date</u>
Pre-1990	365 days	28" FL	3 fish/person/day	Jan 1	Dec 31
1990	"	"	"	"	"
1991	"	"	"	"	"
1992	"	"	"	"	"
1993	"	"	"	"	"
1994	"	"	"	"	"
1995	"	"	"	"	"
1996	"	"	"	"	"
1997	"	"	1 fish/person/day	"	"
1998	"	"	"	"	"
1999	"	"	"	"	"
2000	"	"	"	"	"
2001	"	"	"	"	"
2002	"	"	"	"	"
2003	"	"	"	"	"
2004	"	"	"	"	"
2005	"	"	"	"	"
2006	"	"	"	"	"
2007	"	"	"	"	"
2008	"	30" FL	1.368 mp ww	"	"
2009	309 days	"	"	"	Oct 24
2010	365 days	"	1.243 mp ww	"	Dec 31
2011	304 days	"	1.315 mp ww	Jan 1, Aug 1	Jun 1, Dec 31
2012	"	"	1.368 mp ww	"	"