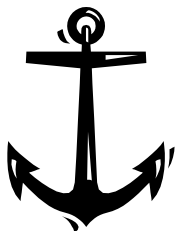


As NMFS Considers Guidelines, Working Group Releases Report on Setting ACLs/AM

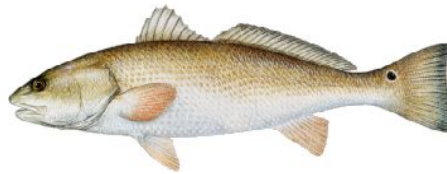
The Lenfest Ocean Program, part of the Pew Environment Group, released their guide for setting Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) and Accountability Measures (AMs) on October 11, 2007. The report was produced by a group of individuals brought together by the Marine Resource Assessment Group for two meetings in Boston during the summer of 2007. The group recommended that the setting of ACLs be based upon a risk assessment approach which would evaluate vulnerability of the resource, uncertainties in scientific information, fishery operations, environmental effects, compliance with regulations and efficacy of management tactics.

NOAA Fisheries has conducted public scoping on developing guidance on ACLs and AMs and intends to have guidelines in place in 2008. The guidelines will establish a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits in a fishery management plan. The ACLs must be set at such a level to prevent overfishing and include accountability measures that provide for corrective action in case of overages.

For stocks that are undergoing overfishing, ACLs and AMs must be in place by 2010, for all others 2011. A final rule for the guidelines was expected in November with implementation into Council and NMFS fishery Management plans expected from January 2008 through June 2009. Secretarial review would take place during from June 2009 to December that year.



President Grants Game fish Status to Redfish and Striped Bass



President Bush signed into law a rule which would grant game fish status to both striped bass and red drum nationwide in federal waters. The move will prohibit the sale of either species taken from federal waters. Seen as a victory for recreational fishing interests, many in the commercial sector are not as enthusiastic.



The President, making note of the controversy, made this comment: "The commercial fishermen and the sport fishermen don't have to be antagonistic. It's not a zero-sum game," he said. "Good policy will help our commercial fishermen and good policy will help our sport fishermen." Both species

have received game fish status in many states waters also.

The National Fisheries Institute condemned the President's Executive Order stating that the action disregards a management process that balances both the needs of commercial and recreational fishermen while promoting and maintaining healthy fish stocks.

Oyster Cornbread Dressing

- 2 Dry Cornbread Mixes
- 2 Eggs
- 2/3 Cup Milk
- 1 Sweet Potato
- 1 Stalk Celery, Chopped
- 1 Bunch Green Onion, Chopped
- 3 Tablespoons Butter
- 1 Cup Oysters
- 1 (16 ounce) Package Hot Sausage

Make cornbread according to package. Let cool and crumble. Set Aside. Boil sweet potato until tender. Mash and set aside. Cook sausage and drain. Chop celery, onion and green onions. Saute the celery and onion mixture with butter. Add to cooked sausage. Add to cooked oysters, cornbread and sweet potato. Mix together and enjoy!

From the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Seafood Technology Bureau. For more holiday oyster recipes visit www.BeOysterAware.com and click on Oyster Recipes.

Hogarth to Leave NOAA Fisheries

Dr. William Hogarth, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, will become Interim Dean for the College of Marine Science at the University of South Florida in Tampa, effective January 15, 2008. Dr. Hogarth will spend the next two to three years as interim dean for USF's College of Marine Science, filling the post to be left vacant by dean Peter Betzer who retires next month. Hogarth, after a distinguished career with the State of North Carolina as Director of the Marine Fisheries Program, joined NOAA Fisheries in 1994. He served as Deputy Assistant Administrator until 2001, when he was asked to serve as the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries for President Bush. Dr. Hogarth has held a number of administrative posts, including Regional Administrator of the Southeast Region in St. Petersburg, Florida from May 1999 to July 2000 and as the Southwest Regional Administrator in Long Beach, California, from April 1997 to April 1999.

As Assistant Administrator he was responsible for overseeing the management and conservation of marine fisheries and the protection of marine mammals, sea turtles, and coastal fisheries and their habitats within the United States Exclusive Economic Zone. During his tenure at NOAA he oversaw the renewal of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management Act. Hogarth held several other positions within NOAA earlier in his career as Chief of the Highly Migratory Species Division and as senior staff for recreational fisheries issues. We wish Dr. Hogarth the best of luck in his new endeavor

Gulf Update



The Vermilion Snapper Regulatory Amendment is currently being reviewed by the NOAA Fisheries Service. This regulatory amendment proposes to increase harvest of vermilion snapper. Management measures proposed in this rule are to reduce the commercial and recreational vermilion snapper minimum size limit from 11 inches to 10 inches TL; eliminate the 10-fish recreational bag limit for vermilion snapper within the existing 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit; and eliminate the 40-day commercial closure for vermilion snapper, which extends from April 22 through May 31 each year. The intent of these regulatory changes is to assist the vermilion snapper fishery in achieving the optimum yield. A recent assessment indicates vermilion snapper is no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing, and current harvest levels are below the optimal level.

NOAA Fisheries Service has developed rulemaking with regard to the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Vessel Monitoring System to alleviate a battery drain problem with certain VMS units. The rule modifies the regulations by providing an in-port power-down exemption and reduced reporting rates when in port. The rule also expands the allowable methods for communicating the three-hour advance notification of landing in the red snapper IFQ program. The comment period has closed and a final rule is currently under review by NOAA General Counsel Southeast.

In January and March 2007, the Council reviewed a scoping document to address overfishing of gag, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish. The scoping document also included proposed measures to revise the greater amberjack rebuilding plan and increase red grouper TAC. The Council recommended splitting the amendment into two separate amendments because of ongoing review of grouper stock assessments that would not be completed until May 2007. Amendment 30A will address overfishing of gray triggerfish and greater amberjack and Amendment 30B addresses grouper management actions. In August 2007, the Council reviewed and approved a public hearing draft for Amendment 30A and an options paper for Amendment 30B. Public hearings on Amendment 30A occurred in September 2007, and the Council was scheduled to take final action on the amendment at its October-November 2007 meeting. The Council was scheduled to approve Amendment 30B for public hearings at this same meeting.

(From SERO Activities Report October 2, 2007)



South Atlantic Update

In September 2007, the Council split Snapper Grouper Amendment 15 into three sections. Amendment 15A will include actions associated with rebuilding plans for three overfished species (snowy grouper, black sea bass, and red porgy) which will include: Specification of management reference points; rebuilding schedules; and rebuilding strategies. Amendment 15B will include actions for: Management reference points for golden tilefish; sale of recreationally caught fish; measures to minimize the impacts of incidental take on sea turtles and smalltooth sawfish; a plan to monitor and assess bycatch; and modification of permit renewal and transferability requirements. All remaining actions will be placed in Amendment 15C and will: Consider new actions including regional quotas for snowy grouper; specify the number of hooks that can be used when recreational fishing for deep water snapper grouper species; and specify a seasonal closure for snowy grouper. The Council approved Amendment 15A and 15B for public hearings at its September 2007 meeting.

In June 2007, The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) determined a benchmark assessment for gag is based on the best available science. The stock is undergoing overfishing but is not overfished. However, based on the recruitment estimates, gag may be in an overfished state during 2007. With this assessment the Council is required to submit an amendment with actions to end overfishing of gag and vermilion snapper to the Secretary by June 12, 2008. The Council recommended the development of an amendment to end overfishing of gag and vermilion snapper. At the September 2007 Council meeting, alternatives were developed for maximum sustainable yield, optimum yield, allocations, and management measures to end overfishing in Snapper Grouper Amendment 16. Management measures suggested for gag include seasonal closures, quotas, and modification to the gag and aggregate bag limit. Management measures for vermilion snapper include seasonal closures, trip limits (separate trip limits for the trip limited and unlimited permit holders), and adjustments to the quota, bag limit, and recreational size limit. The Council directed staff to have a draft ready for public hearing at the December meeting.

(From SERO Activities Report October 2, 2007)