

participation in assessment development, transparency in the assessment process, and a rigorous and independent scientific review of completed stock assessments.

SEDAR is managed by the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils in coordination with NOAA Fisheries and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions. Oversight is provided by a Steering Committee composed of NOAA Fisheries representatives: Southeast Fisheries Science Center Director and the Southeast Regional Administrator; Regional Council representatives: Executive Directors and Chairs of the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils; a representative from the Highly Migratory Species Division of NOAA Fisheries, and Interstate Commission representatives: Executive Directors of the Atlantic States and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions.

SEDAR is normally organized around two workshops and a series of webinars. First is the Data Workshop, during which fisheries, monitoring, and life history data are reviewed and compiled. The second stage is the Assessment Process, which is conducted via a workshop and/or a series of webinars, during which assessment models are developed and population parameters are estimated using the information provided from the Data Workshop. The final step is the Review Workshop, during which independent experts review the input data, assessment methods, and assessment products. The completed assessment, including the reports of all 3 stages and all supporting documentation, is then forwarded to the Council SSC for certification as ‘appropriate for management’ and development of specific management recommendations.

SEDAR workshops are public meetings organized by SEDAR staff and the lead Cooperator. Workshop participants are drawn from state and federal agencies, non-government organizations, Council members, Council advisors, and the fishing industry with a goal of including a broad range of disciplines and perspectives. All participants are expected to contribute to the process by preparing working papers, contributing, providing assessment analyses, and completing the workshop report.

2 MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

2.1 Fishery Management Plan and Amendments

Original 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 undersized fish; and, (3) data reporting requirements.

List of Amendments, Dates, and Actions

Description of Action	FMP/Amendment	Year Implemented
Set a 12-inch total length minimum size limit on gray, mutton, and yellowtail snappers; gray snapper included in the 10 reef fish recreational aggregate bag limit	Amendment 1	1990
Commercial reef fish permit moratorium established for three years	Amendment 4	1992
Fish trap endorsement and three year moratorium established	Amendment 5	1994
Extended commercial reef fish permit moratorium until January 1996.	Amendment 9	1994
Commercial reef fish permit moratorium extended until December 30, 2000. Reef fish permit requirement established for headboats and charter vessels.	Amendment 11	1996
Gray snapper included in the 20 reef fish recreational aggregate bag limit	Amendment 12	1997
10-year phase-out of fish traps in EEZ established (February 7, 1997 – February 7, 2007).	Amendment 14	1997
Commercial reef fish permit moratorium extended until December 31, 2005.	Amendment 17	2000
(1) Prohibits vessels from retaining reef fish caught under recreational bag/possession limits when commercial quantities of Gulf reef fish are aboard, (2) adjusts the maximum crew size on charter vessels that also have a commercial reef fish permit and a USCG certificate of inspection (COI) to allow the minimum crew size specified by the COI when the vessel is fishing commercially for more than 12 hours, (3) prohibits the use of reef fish for bait except for sand perch or dwarf sand perch, and (4) requires electronic VMS aboard vessels with federal reef fish permits, including vessels with both commercial and charter vessel permits (implemented May 6, 2007).	Amendment 18A	2006
Also known as Generic Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment 2. Established two marine reserves off the Dry Tortugas where fishing for any species and anchoring by fishing vessels is prohibited.	Amendment 19	2002
3-year moratorium on reef fish charter/headboat permits established	Amendment 20	2003

Continued the Steamboat Lumps and Madison-Swanson reserves for an additional six years, until June 2010. In combination with the initial four-year period (June 2000-June 2004), this allowed a total of ten years in which to evaluate the effects of these reserves.	Amendment 21	2003
Permanent moratorium established for commercial reef fish permits.	Amendment 24	2005
Permanent moratorium established for charter and headboat reef fish permits, with periodic reviews at least every 10 years.	Amendment 25	2006
Addressed the use of non-stainless steel circle hooks when using natural baits to fish for Gulf reef fish effective June 1, 2008, and required the use of venting tools and dehooking devices when participating in the commercial or recreational reef fish fisheries effective June 1, 2008.	Amendment 27	2008
Established additional restrictions on the use of bottom longline gear in the eastern Gulf of Mexico in order to reduce bycatch of endangered sea turtles, particularly loggerhead sea turtles. (1) Prohibits the use of bottom longline gear shoreward of a line approximating the 35-fathom contour from June through August; (2) reduces the number of longline vessels operating in the fishery through an endorsement provided only to vessel permits with a demonstrated history of landings, on average, of at least 40,000 pounds of reef fish annually with fish traps or longline gear during 1999-2007; and (3) restricts the total number of hooks that may be possessed onboard each reef fish bottom longline vessel to 1,000, only 750 of which may be rigged for fishing. The boundary line was initially moved from 20 to 50 fathoms by emergency rule effective May 18, 2009. That rule was replaced on October 16, 2009 by a rule under the Endangered Species Act moving the boundary to 35 fathoms and implementing the maximum hook provisions.	Amendment 31	2010