



F/SER29:MFL

MEMORANDUM FOR: The File

FROM: John C. McGovern, Ph.D.
Assistant Regional Administrator
Sustainable Fisheries Division

SUBJECT: 2023 Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) Greater Amberjack Recreational Season
Analysis

Gulf greater amberjack are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP). In August 2008, the final rule for Amendment 30A to the FMP specified an accountability measure for greater amberjack that closes the recreational sector if the annual catch target (ACT) is met or predicted to be met. In April 2018, a Framework Action to the FMP modified the recreational greater amberjack fishing year to begin on August 1 and run through July 31 of the following year. The April 2018 Framework Action also modified the recreational season to have a fixed closed season from January 1 through April 30, June 1 through July 31, and November 1 through December 31. Amendment 54 to the FMP is in the rule-making stage and would set the 2023 greater amberjack recreational sector ACT to 335,320 pounds whole weight (lbs ww) and the annual catch limit (ACL) to 404,000 lbs ww. Amendment 54 to the FMP is expected to be approved by the Secretary of Commerce by May 31, 2023, implemented in June 2023.

Past Gulf greater amberjack recreational landings were obtained from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center on May 4, 2023. This dataset includes landings estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES), Southeast Region Headboat Survey (Headboat), Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Louisiana), and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (Texas). Amendment 54 will set a relatively low ACT of 335,320 lbs ww and, as stated earlier, the recreational fishing year starts August 1st. The majority of the recreational landings are arranged into two-month bins, and the recreational sector has been closed in July since 2018. Therefore, landings from the July/August wave were assumed to occur in August. Recent historic landings in August when the recreational sector was open resulted in high landings (>300,000 lbs) in this month. Therefore, a prediction of landings is only needed for August and September since the ACT is expected to be met within these two months. Three different recreational landings scenarios were explored: 1) 2021 landings, 2) average of 2020 and 2021 landings, and, 3) average of 2019, 2020, and 2021 landings. Recreational Landings from 2022 were not used because of the closure of the recreational sector in August 2022. August and September landings were assumed to have a uniform distribution with equal landings per day. Table 1 summarizes the recreational landings data that were used. The landings per day were cumulatively summed to determine when the ACT (335,320 lbs ww) is expected to be met. Table 2 provides the closure dates when the ACT is expected to be met.



Table 1. August and September Gulf greater amberjack recreational landings for 2019, 2020, 2021, two-year average (2020 and 2021), and three-year average (2019, 2020, and 2021). Includes recreational landings from Headboat, Louisiana, MRIP, and Texas.

Year	August	September
2019	446,858	105,711
2020	786,814	231,277
2021	324,144	161,376
2-Year Average	555,479	196,327
3-Year Average	519,272	184,180

Table 2. Predicted closure dates when the ACT is expected to be met for the Gulf greater amberjack recreational sector with three different predicted landings scenarios. The ACT is 335,320 lbs ww.

Predicted Landings Scenario	Closure Date
2021 Landings	September 9, 2023
2-Year Average (2020 and 2021)	August 19, 2023
3 Year Average (2019, 2020, and 2021)	August 21, 2023

cc: F/SER29 - Stephen