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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Ignores Advisory Body, Increases Risk of Overfishing for Greater Amberjack

The [Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance](#) today issued the following statement on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's [recommendation](#) to reallocate Greater Amberjack:



Image credit: NOAA Fish Watch

Once again, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) – the body charged with sustainably managing fish stocks in the Gulf of Mexico –

did the bidding of the private angler fishing lobby and took action that will harm fish stocks, commercial fishermen, and seafood consumers.

Greater amberjack are a species of reef fish that have been in trouble for thirty years. Nothing the Gulf Council has done to date has rebuilt the fishery. Drastic quota reductions are needed, to the tune of 80%. However, the Gulf Council also reallocated more fish to the recreational sector, which will have negative impacts to the stock.

The recreational sector discards a lot of fish, and many of them die. The private angler component of that sector doesn't have to report what they catch to NOAA Fisheries or how many fish they throw away. Shifting fish to that sector will result in more dead fish, more waste, more uncertainty, and more risk of overfishing the stock. This is the opposite of what the stock needs, and opposite of the Gulf Council's duty to promote conservation and healthy fisheries.

In addition to harming greater amberjack fish populations, the Gulf Council also harmed commercial fishermen and seafood consumers. The Gulf Council's action will take 400,000 pounds of amberjack out of restaurants and grocery stores, causing millions of dollars of negative economic impacts.

This action is just the latest example of the Gulf Council giving preferential treatment to the private recreational elite and detrimental treatment to fisheries conservation and other stakeholders.

- In 2017, commercial fishermen asked the Gulf Council not to increase the red grouper quota because the stock couldn't handle it. The Gulf Council ignored us.
 - In 2021, commercial and charter/for-hire fishermen asked the Gulf Council not to reallocate red grouper because it would violate the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and would lead to red grouper being wasted by the private angler sector. The Gulf Council ignored us.
 - In 2022, commercial and charter/for-hire fishermen asked the Gulf Council not to increase the red snapper quota because they were worried about what they were seeing on the water. The Gulf Council ignored us.
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- In 2022, the Reef Fish Advisory Panel, a group composed of commercial, charter/for-hire, and private anglers **unanimously** told the Gulf Council not to reallocate greater amberjack. The Gulf Council ignored them.

The picture is clear. The Gulf Council does not promote conservation and does not represent all stakeholders as they are charged to do by the MSA.

Until the Gulf Council has balanced representation from all fishing sectors, we expect more fish grabs from the private recreational elite at the expense of the resource, at the expense of small businessmen and women who are trying to make a living, and at the expense of the people of this country that love wild-caught domestic seafood.

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The Shareholders' Alliance is the largest organization of commercial snapper and grouper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. We work hard to ensure that our fisheries are sustainably managed so our fishing businesses can thrive and our fishing communities can exist for future generations. We are the harvesters that provide much of the American public with a reliable source of domestically caught wild Gulf seafood, and we do this through a philosophy that sustainable seafood and profitable fishing businesses depend on healthy fish populations.

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