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While the controversies over red snapper management in the Gulf of Mexico were well publicized, two other fisheries are undergoing further management with little notice.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, at its January 28 – 31 meeting, is expected to approve new actions to further regulate the harvest of greater amberjack and gray triggerfish. Both species are undergoing overfishing. Amberjack are considered overfished and triggerfish are on the edge of being overfished. As with red snapper, when overfishing is occurring, or a stock is overfished, the Magnuson Act requires that overfishing be ended and that the stock be rebuilt to a level whereby it is no longer overfished.

The proposed regulations are found in Amendment 30A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. There are many alternative actions in the plan. The actions preferred by the Council for anglers pursuing amberjack include retaining a one fish per angler bag limit, increase the minimum size limit to 31 inches fork length, and a zero bag limit for charter boat captains and crews. For commercial fishermen, the Council prefers establishing a quota of 503,000 pounds (38% reduction) increasing to 938,000 pounds by 2012.

The Council's preferred action for gray triggerfish is to increase the recreational and commercial size limit to 14 inches fork length. Commercial fishermen would have an 80,000 pound quota in 2008 rising to 135,000 pounds in 2013.

The proposed actions are not effective now and will not go into affect until they are voted on by the Council, approved by NOAA Fisheries, and published in the Federal Register. The current regulations for amberjack are one fish per angler with a 28 inch fork length limit. Gray triggerfish have a 12 inch fork length limit and each triggerfish kept counts against the 20 reef fish aggregate limit.

If you have questions or comments about these actions, contact the Gulf Council at 888-833-1844 before January 28, 2008.