Big Bend Angler

The Quarterly Journal of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club

Volume 47, Number 4 Fall 2014

Gags!

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Volume 47, Number 4 Fall 2014

Big Bend Angler

The Quarterly Journal of the Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club Founded 1968

Your GOFC Team

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GOFC Meetings

When:

4th Tuesday of each month.
Fellowship begins at 7:00 PM,
program begins at 7:30 PM

Where:

U.F. College of Veterinary Medicine's New Lecture Hall

Contents

Articles:

Red Grouper and Other Closures 2
From NOAA Fisheries News Releases
A Dead Man's Chest 5
Captain Russ Roy on the significance of deadrise
How Problematic Is Spearfishing? 6
Captain Charlie Courtney investigates
Eating Guidelines for Big Bend Fish 7
From the Florida Department of Health
Fatehr Daughter Fishing Adventure 8
From FWC's Gone Coastal column
Stone Crab Season Opens 9
FWC Press Release
Gator Hunting with the Kids 14
Captain Brian Keil chases the big lizards
Gulf Council Update for October 14
What are they up to now?

Club News:

Events Calendar..... 2
President's Message 3
Current 2014 Ellett Award Standings 12

Fishing Reports & Forecasts:

Member Reports 4
Captain Brian Kiel has been busy!
Inshore Report 6
Captain Russ Roy

Events Calendar

Monthly Meetings

Monthly club meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month (note that this is ***not*** the last Tuesday in those months having 5 Tuesdays). Fellowship begins at 7:00 p.m., with the meeting program beginning at 7:30. No monthly meetings are held in June, November or December, being replaced, respectively, by the the **Fish Fry**, the **Cookout & Auction,** and your own Christmas holiday activities.

Your GOFC Board of Directors meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Northwest Grill. Interested GOFC members are invited to attend.

Coming Events

The **October 28th monthly meeting** will feature Jerry McBride, who is a magazine editor, author, photographer, TV personality and fishing instructor. He will talk to us about inshore and kayak fishing. Jerry is a great speaker with a passion for fishing and consistently catches more gator trout than most anyone else you'll meet.

The annual **Auction and Cookout** will be held on Friday, November 21st In lieu of the November monthly meeting. This event is hosted once again at the home of Ed and Marcia Ellett. Richard McDavid and family will be continuing the tradition of providing great eats in the form of his renowned Frogmore Stew. We will raise money for the Club by auctioning off items donated by members, so start sorting through your tackle and outdoor gear for items you no longer need or use that can be donated for the annual Ellett auction.

Cover

Shellie and Lamar Evers show off a pair of nice gags cuaght while fishing with Jay and Carolyn Peacock in September.

Red Grouper Closed in Federal Waters

NOAA Fisheries implemented an in-season adjustment to the red grouper recreational fishing season that changed the closure date from September 16, 2014, to October 4, 2014, based upon updated landings. With this adjustment, the red grouper recreational season closed at 12:01 a.m., local time, October 4, 2014 and remains closed until January 1, 2015, unless changed in subsequent rulemaking.

Other Closures

Other closures involving offshore species of note in the Gulf of Mexico include greater amberjack, which closed at 12:01 a.m. on August 25, 2014, and will remain closed until January 1, 2015.

Red snapper closed June 10 after a 9 day season and will remain closed until June 1 2015. Fishing remains open in the Gulf of Mexico year round for all other species of snapper, including gray (mangrove), vermillion and lane snappers.

Gray triggerfish closed May 1, 2014 and will remain closed until January 1, 2015.

****** Harvest or possession of redfish of any size is prohibited year round in Federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, i.e. greater than 9 miles offshore. Do not go offshore with redfish in your fish box that were legally caught inshore! ******

Currently Open Seasons

Gag grouper opened July 1, 2014 and will close January 1, 2015 (at 12:01 a.m.). Fishing remains open in the Gulf of Mexico in water depths of less than 120 feet year round for all other species of grouper (except for goliath grouper, the harvest of which is prohibited year round). Fishing is closed for red, black, yellowmouth, and yellowfin groupers and scamp from February 1 through March 31 in depths greater than 120 feet.

Fishing is allowed year round for king and Spanish mackerel as well as for cobia.

President's Message

By Captain John Byatt

Former GOFC president Jon Thomas suggested and arranged the first GOFC social event at Gator Tales several years ago. That event was a great success and was well attended: Going by the old saw of "if it ain't broke, don't fix (or change) it" the tradition was continued this year. Thanks to all the folks who came along to the event last month; we had a great turnout and it sure looked like there was a whole lot of socializing going on. It was also good to see some of the club's newest members and have them get to meet people who've been with the club for a few years.

Fall is usually my favorite time of the year to fish. Cooler air and water temperatures make for a more comfortable day on the water and the fish are generally eager to bite. Usually there's also a pretty good turnout for the fall tournament and number of good sized fish make it to the weigh-in. Last year, Ken Knopf turned up at the Sea Hag with a 50 pound plus, club record king mackerel. However, the club Fall Tournament was evidently fated not to be this year. We called off the first date because of the unfavorable forecast. As it turned out, the seas were not as bad as NOAA predicted, but it was as well we didn't hold the tournament that weekend because it coincided with the peak inshore, red tide-caused fish kill around Steinhatchee. The weather gods once again frowned on anglers the following weekend with blustery winds making fishing either uncomfortable or unwise. We finally caught a break last weekend (October 11th) which was the date scheduled for

President on Page 16

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Doug Johnson's Reeling for Kid's Fishing Tournament August,22 2004

Fishing Reports & Forecasts

All GOFC Members Are Invited to Submit Reports of Their Latest Fishing Trips

Our fishing report section include reports for the previous 3 months of fishing activity. In addition to our regular contributors, all GOFC members are urged to send us their reports for inclusion in the member reports section of the next quarter's issue of Big Bend Angler. By tracking these reports over the year, readers should gain a stronger understanding of how things change with the seasons and what to do about it, so that you too can catch your share of the big ones.

Green Cove Springs Shrimping

By Captain Brian Kiel

On October 9th I had a small window to take the kids skrimping.

Plan A: stay at the house like most afternoon/evenings and just have dinner followed by the kids doing homework…..

OR….

Plan B: go skrimping after skool……

Plan B sounded the most fun, so with the wifer heading to a conference I thought the three of us would go skrimping and have dinner on the water. During the day I smoked a Boston butt for dinner, and once the kids got home from skool I pulled it off the smoker, wrapped it in foil and newspaper then we hitched up Plan B and hit the road for Green Cove Springs (GCS). It seems shrimping out of GCS lately is slowing down so I kinda figured we'd not tear up the skrimps but I did know we'd have fun trying for an hour.

Shrimp and Boston Butt Sandwiches.

We started on the southeast side of State Road 16, moving around throwing our nets in from 28 to 18 feet, but we didn't find large numbers of shrimp. They were large sized, but not concentrated and low in numbers.

Next we headed over to the northwest side next to Shands Pier. Here the shrimp were more numerous but also smaller. There was a line of boats throwing in 12 feet of water, and that's where we started.

With the sun setting, we broke out the pork butt and buns. As we did so, it was kinda funny as the two guys in the boat behind us smelled the pork and yelled out "Are you guys packing ribs?" Too funny.

Effort: one hour of throwing with two skrimp nets; a 6 footer (3/8" mesh) and a 9 footer (5/8" mesh) and finishing with just shy of a gallon of mediums and a few larges. We culled the smalls out.

We didn't slay 'em, but we enjoyed some quality time on the water plus kicked some "butt" (pork that is).

On October 2nd I had a small window to shrimp before I had to pick up my daughter from band practice so I hit Green Cove Springs for shor,t 2 hour shrimp trip. The current was outgoing and honking. I found the largest shrimp were on the southeast side of the bridge in 26 feet but in numbers there were more shrimp northwest of the bridge next to the Shands Pier in 18 – 20 feet but they were smaller in size. It was a clear difference.

One throw was full of small shrimp and I emptied it overboard (that's with a 5/8" mesh). I threw for 2 hours and ended with 2 gallons of mediums with a few large using a 9 foot shrimp net. I also collected a few channel cats, but I was fortunate enough to snag a 17.5" flounder.

Shrimp and flounder — Yum!

I tried quite a few places and depths trying to find the shrimp more concentrated, but I never did find them in high numbers (not complaining … just saying).

On September 13th I had a fun short trip on a buddy's boat yesterday. We shrimped Saturday afternoon south of the Highway 16 bridge on the east side for 1 hour and 45 minutes, starting at 4:00 p.m. with an incoming tide (high tide was at 5:47 p.m.).

We used one 8 foot and one 6 foot shrimping net to harvest 3+ gallons of solid mediums before the tide slowed and the shrimp became harder to pinpoint. It rained a bit but the weather wasn't blazing hot for a change.

A Dead Man's Chest

By Captain Russ Roy

That must have been some chest if it had "fifteen men" on it. The phrase comes from the novel Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson. He, in turn, got the phrase from another book by Charles Kingsley which included a list of names of British Virgin Islands, with one of them called "Dead Chest Island." Sounds like a cool tourist destination, so I put it on my bucket list. (After all, I have had a heart attack, and came pretty close to a dead chest.)

Well, our purpose here is definitely not heart attacks, been there- done that, but the usage of the word "dead" in many nautical expressions. I recently bought a boat and am selling my *Jolly Codger* ProLine. The new, actually used, boat is a Contender, and the reason for all this buying and selling is I wanted a boat that rode better. The *Jolly Codger* was, and is, a pretty good boat, but it could shiver your timbers in choppy seas.

The Contender, named *Fast Action* after my wife, has a much smoother ride. (Contenders are known for this.) One of the reasons for this smoother ride is that the Contender hulls have more deadrise than most other boats. When they hear the term "deadrise" most people think of zombie/vampire movies, but we nautical types know that deadrise refers to the angle between horizontal and the slope of the hull.

Kevin Falvey, in an article in *Boating Magazine* (posted online in January, 2010) does a good job describing deadrise:

Deadrise is the angle formed between horizontal and the hull at any given point. While transom deadrise is the most often cited value, a boat's hull has deadrise along its entire length. A flat-bottom garvey has zero deadrise, and a deep-V race boat may have 50 degrees at its stem and more than 20 degrees at its transom. However, since most planing powerboats run on the after third of their hulls at cruising speeds, transom deadrise is the most common basis for comparison.

Falvey notes that other factors also contribute to quality of ride including how much beer has been consumed (just kidding!) but we want to examine this "dead" business. Where else does this show up in nautical terms? Dead in the water, dead run, deadeye, dead horse (flogging a ...), deadlight, deadwood, dead ahead, and dead reckoning are some of the terms. "Flogging a dead horse" has a variety of origins but in nautical terms it is said to refer to an advance of a month's pay given to sailors to pay off their debts incurred while onshore. Then they had to work onboard for a month before they began to earn again. As usual, Mr. Google and Ms. Wikipedia can give you a lot more detail here with all these "dead" terms. Most of the time the "dead" part of the phrase refers to something being still, unmoving.

A deadeye, for example is typically a thick, round block of wood with one or more holes in it. It can perform some of the simple functions of a block and tackle, but it has no moving parts (it is still) while a block and tackle has moving pulleys.

So what about deadrise? If the water is unmoving (dead) then the water level would be horizontal and if you imagined the bottom of the boat's keel perched on this level surface, the deadrise would be the angle made between the water surface and the hull.

Contenders are certainly planing powerboats and their hulls are described as having a 24.5 degree deadrise. Most boats described as having V or deep V hulls have deadrise angles of 18 to 20 degrees. Four or five degrees doesn't sound like much, but don't forget Falvey's statement. The deadrise just isn't at the stern but along the whole hull from bow to stern. The numbers given are just at the stern.

The next time you are at a Club Tournament, and people are pulling out their boats on trailers after fishing, walk around and look at boats from the stern and from the bow. Compare a Contender with other makes. While the sterns will be different, the bows will also differ.

Of course this deadrise stuff is not the whole story. Every boat hull is a set of compromises and the more you study the better you will be at picking the hull that is best for you. You don't have to name it for a spouse either, you can name it for yourself, like *Jolly Codger*!

NOAA to Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Recreational Red Snapper Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering actions to establish two components within the red snapper recreational sector. One would be a federal for-hire component comprised of federally-permitted headboats and charter vessels. The other would be a private-angling component comprised of anglers fishing from private vessels and state- permitted for-hire vessels. The draft environmental impact statement analyzes the impacts of this proposed action on the human environment.

The purpose of the draft environmental impact statement, developed by NOAA Fisheries in cooperation with the Council, is to analyze the effects of creating distinct private-angling and federal for-hire components of the recreational red snapper sector and allocate red snapper resources between these recreational components. Establishing separate components would provide a basis for flexible management approaches tailored to each component and reduce the likelihood for recreational quota overruns which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock. The draft environmental impact statement also evaluates how to allocate the recreational red snapper quota between the two components and how season closures provisions would be applied to the two components.

Inshore Report

by Captain Russ Roy

Most of the news for the past several weeks has been the presence, or lack of, the Red Tide bloom. Until recently in our area, it was mostly offshore, but it did show up in Salt Creek at Suwannee and inshore at Steinhatchee, both north and south of the River. It will probably be several more weeks before it goes away, due mostly to the water cooling off. Anyone who got a good look at acres of dead fish will be glad to see it go, including me. Now what we have to find out is how badly our local fishery has been damaged.

Since the outbreak of the "Red Menace" was patchy, it is likely that the damage will be also, but the only way we can find out is to go out and fish. The best report from Suwannee in recent days has been that of the large numbers of redfish along Suwannee Reef south of the East Pass. Other than that, I don't hear much– probably because lots of folks are just waiting for water to clean up.

I did go out to Spotty Bottom to check on a new radio antenna I put on the Contender. The antenna works fine, but the water was very brown and very quiet. No bait whatsoever. Near Hedemon, there were some small patches of tiny baitfish, but several porpoises showed up and the bait promptly disappeared. The brown water should clear up in a few weeks now that we are out of our daily thunderstorm cycle, but by then it may be too cool for kings and even for Spanish. I would recommend either Cedar Key or Crystal River if you want to try for those, and the sooner the better.

At our last GOFC Board meeting, there was some discussion about the impact that closures of a species, amberjack for example, by the Feds or FWC, can impact our members who wish to catch all of the ten Ellett species in one year. I've always thought that catching all the Ellett species was quite an accomplishment– one of the best awards to get, even if it doesn't result in actually winning the Ellett award itself. (Someone else got all ten probably, and they were bigger!) You have to be good at both inshore and offshore fishing and really do some planning.

There is really not much the Board can do about closures or Red Tides or hurricanes and the other surprises that come along. Bluefish, for example, can be a real challenge some years. This species is famous for having "boom and bust" population cycles. Some years blues are all over, in other years you can't find a one.

Each fishing trip, to be successful, involves tactics. That is, targeted species in specific areas with technique and equipment tailored for just those species. On the other hand, winning the Ellett or getting all ten Ellett species, involves strategy. You have to sit down in January, and plan your

Inshore on Page 7

How Problematic Is Spearfishing?

By Captain Charlie Courtney

More and more GOFC members are turning to spearfishing as an effective means of assuring that they come home with some nice fish. Indeed, spearfishing is an enjoyable and quite effective method of harvesting reef fish. However, some disturbing research has come to light that suggests spearfishing may be too effective.

A review article titled "Biological Considerations of the Effects of Spearfishing" published by NOAA's Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (http://flowergarden.noaa.gov/document_library/mgmtdocs/spearfishingresearch.pdf) provides some good information on this subject. They state the problem thusly, "Spearfishing is a highly efficient harvesting gear that selectively targets larger fish relative to other fishing gears and can significantly alter abundance and size structure of target species toward fewer and smaller fish.

There are three main effects of spearfishing. First, spearfishing can disproportionately reduce the number of large predators, particularly snapper and grouper compared to hook and line fishing. This can cause dramatic changes in the make up of the reef fish community in areas that are heavily spearfished.

Second, spearfishing yields a greater total harvest of reef than the same amount of time spent fishing with hook and line. In other words,spearfishing remove larger fish and more pounds of fish per trip than hook and line fishing. Indeed, this aspect of spearfishing has led to bans on spearfishing using scuba in many countries.

Third, catch and release is not an option when spearfishing. As a result, spearfishing results in approximately 3 times as many dead fish discarded for regulatory reasons. such as out of season, undersized, etc., as hook and line fishing (3 percent vs. 1 percent).

Two studies are particularly telling and applicable to our situation in the Gulf of Mexico. The first was a 2012 Australian study where populations of Coral Trout (a species of grouper) were compared before and after spearfishing was allowed on a section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that was, and continued to be, open to hook and line fishing. A nearby section of the reef where spearfishing was not allowed (but hook and line fishing was permitted) served as a further control. After 3 years of spearfishing, the population of Coral Trout was reduced by half, and the surviving fish were only 3/4ths the size of those compared to the control area where spearfishing was not allowed and the spearfished area before before spearfishing. After 3 years of spearfishing, the percentage of keeping sized fish (approximately 16 inches) in the population of coral trout was 2 1/2 times less than before. The authors recommended that to maintain a sustainable harvest, management methods such as catch and size limits be instituted for spearfishing instead of a total ban on spearfishing.

The second study studied the impact of SCUBA spearfishing on the size of reef fish in the southern Mariana Islands. Specifically, the size of selected reef fish species were compared in Guam, where SCUBA spearfishing is allowed to the those in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, where SCUBA spearfishing was banned in 2003. Their results showed that SCUBA spearfishing impacts reef fish populations by reducing the size of the tar-

Spearfishing on Page 10

Inshore

Continued from page 6

"year" in terms of what species you will go after each month. The most obvious example of this strategy would be to go after sheepshead from the middle of February to the middle of April rather than any other time. They are bunched up and much easier to catch during their spawning season, in other words. If you begin thinking about bigger fish for some species, this also can mean some strategic planning.

On the other hand, a lot of folks just go out and have a fun day on the water. Maybe stop and buy some smoked mullet on the way home. (Or eat it on the way home. Without beer of course, since you are driving. If you find someone who will drive and not eat smoked mullet and drink beer while you do, don't be complaining to me about "bad luck" to me. I ain't listening.) I've been a strategy-tactics guy for many years. Probably the longer you are in the GOFC, especially on the Board, the more likely you are to be a strategy-tactics guy. But....maybe those "good day on the water, eating smoked mullet, drinking beer" guys are on to something. Beer is hardly ever closed.

Give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day: Give a man a sword, and he'll starve to death fighting over a fish

— Sar Kastik

Eating Guidelines for Big Bend Fish

Florida Department of Health

The table found on page 10 of this issue gives the Florida Department of Health's eating guidelines for the GOFC's "Big 10" species when caught in Big Bend waters. The guidelines are based on the levels of mercury found in fish from our area and list the maximum number of 6 ounce portions to be consumed within a given time period. More stringent guidelines are included for pregnant and nursing women and children under 6 years of age.

Important: The number of meals are cumulative across species. If you eat one meal of a species where 1 meal per week is allowed, then you cannot eat any more fish of any species that week. If you eat a one meal per month species, then no more fish for you that month!

See Table on Page 10

Ed Ellett, CPCU, CLU, CIC

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Father-Daughter Fishing Adventure Leads to Unexpected Surprise in Saltwater Catfish Dinner

FWC Gone Coastal Series

By Greg Workman

It started off as your typical "let's go fishing" kind of week for my 13-year-old daughter, Hannah, the youngest of my four children. I've been working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for 29 years, and my family has spent time on the water and in the woods. Our experiences are golden to me, and each one is unique.

As Friday came around, the night-before checklist was completed: batteries charged, poles, tackle and PFDs loaded in the boat, fuel and oil topped off, and the trailer hooked to the truck.

I woke up extra early to double-check the weather, which looked to be perfect. We loaded up and headed to the boat ramp before the morning rush and started our journey toward our desired fishing spot, which happens to be several miles out from the ramp in the Gulf of Mexico. Manatee and other marine life sightings heightened the excitement.

As we arrived, I caught the sun rising, its rays dancing on the water. About that time I heard Hannah say, "What a beautiful day, Daddy." The smile on her face was what memories are made from, even if we didn't catch a single fish. She casted and her smile grew even bigger with anticipation of what might bite. We'd been talking all morning about having fresh seafood for dinner.

Fish on! We started catching black sea bass and spotted seatrout, but unfortunately they were all under the minimum size limit, so we released them to be caught another day. What we caught the most of was saltwater catfish.

As I threw yet another catfish back, Hannah asked me an interesting question, why did I throw the saltwater catfish back, when I keep the freshwater catfish we get. I couldn't give her a good answer, except that I've always been told they're not fit to eat and are only used for bait.

Her remark puzzled me though, and as I'm always up for trying something new and adventurous, I kept the next good eating-size catfish, about a 1-pounder, and placed it on ice. We later caught a nice legal black sea bass to join the hardhead catfish in the cooler, ending our fishing day on a good note.

There are two primary types of saltwater catfish people typically catch, by the way: the hardhead, which is brownish to gray-green with four barbels on the chin, and the less common gafftopsail, which

Hardhead Catfish

is more blue on the top and only has two barbels on the chin. Neither of the species are the same as the two primary freshwater catfish species: the channel and the flathead catfish. The state record for a hardhead catfish is 3 pounds, 5 ounces, and the record for a gafftopsail is 8 pounds, 14 ounces.

Gafftopsail Catfish

There are no seasons or minimum size limits for either species of saltwater catfish, but there is a daily bag limit of 100 pounds. Visit MyFWC.com/Fishing and click on "Saltwater" and "Unregulated Species" for more on such species.

Watch for the spines. I've had the opportunity to work in several different divisions during my career with FWC, one of which was Freshwater Fisheries. During my time there, I've been stuck and jabbed by freshwater catfish with little to no pain, but let me tell you, I made the unpleasant mistake of getting stuck by a saltwater cat on this trip and it lit me up. It was comparable to a scorpion or wasp sting. I didn't show my pain because I didn't want Hannah to worry, and I think that made it hurt worse. So I caution folks to pay attention and be careful when handling these fish, especially near the dorsal fin on the top of the fish and the two pectoral fins, where the barbs are located. The pain eventually went away, but I'm glad it was me and not my daughter, because that could've ruined a perfectly good day.

The trip home was filled with laughter and a discussion about how we were going to cook our catch.

Now comes one of my favorite parts of a fishing trip; the cooking and eating. I took the sea bass fillets and blackened them to perfection in my cast iron skillet. Then it was time for the catfish fillets, which I dusted in Zatarain's Fish Fri Southern Crispy Style Frying Mix. I took the lightly covered fillets and placed them in the 350-degree oil until crisp on both sides. Hannah prepared a few side dishes, set the table and dinner was served.

With both fish carefully divided and placed on a plate, it was time to see what the fuss was all about. The sea bass lived up to its reputation of being a special treat and a savory eating fish. Enthusiastic to try the catfish, we both took a bite and looked at each other. Wow, it was awesome! Who knew! The catfish turned out to be a great tasting catch – mild, flaky and delicious. I'll be keeping my share from now on. It actually had a better taste and texture than freshwater cats. I'm sold and can't wait to catch some more so I can share with my coworkers.

I've definitely learned not to judge a fish based on what people say about it. Just like fishing, you have to try it for yourself.

Stone Crab Season Opened October 15th

FWC News Release

Florida's recreational and commercial stone crab claw harvest season opened October 15th in state and federal waters. The season closes again on May 16th. A saltwater fishing license is required for recreational harvest of crabs (unless the angler is exempt from the recreational license requirement due to age, disability or active military status).

How to measure stone crab claws

To be harvested, stone crab claws must be at least 2¾ inches in length when measured from the elbow to the tip of the lower immovable portion of the claw (see illustration).

The crab must be returned alive to the water after any legal sized claws are removed. Both claws of a stone crab may be harvested if they are of legal size. Although it is currently lawful to harvest both of a stone crab's claws, this practice leaves the stone crab with few alternatives to defend itself from predators, and several months to a year are required for the claw to regrow.

The crab can still obtain minimal amounts of food with no claws, but having one claw (if the other one is harvested) will enable the crab to obtain greater amounts of food in a shorter amount of time. You can view a video on how to properly remove the claw at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTgXTS8gLjU&feature=youtu.be

Stone crabs may be harvested by recreational anglers using two methods, diving and trapping. Occasionally stone crab holes can be found by walking the edges of oyster bars on muddy or sandy flats that are dry at low tide, but this method usually is less rewarding than diving or trapping.

Diving usually means SCUBA diving along the edges of rock piles and rocky jetties, looking for holes in the sandy bottom next to the rocks. Crabs can be "tickled" out of their holes using a metal or plastic rod having a bend at the tip of 90 degrees or less -- an angle more acute than 90 degrees is considered a "hook" and is illegal to use for stone crabs.

Most people prefer to set baited (fish heads, etc.) traps for stone crabs, and many bait and tackle shops sell prerigged plastic or wire traps. There is a 5 trap maximum per person and the recreational bag limit is 1 gallon of claws per person, 2 gallons per vessel, whichever is less. Harvest of claws from females with eggs is prohibited, and harvesters may not use any device that can puncture, crush or injure the crab's body.

Recreational traps must have buoys with a legible "R" at least two inches high, permanently attached to the buoy, and the owner's name and address must be at-

Crabs on Page 13

Spearfishing
Continued from page 6

geted species. Catch data also showed that SCUBA spearfishing captured larger fish than snorkel spearfishing. Finally, because SCUBA spearfishermen can reach deeper reefs and take larger individuals, it reduces the ability of deep water fish to replace fish taken from shallower areas of the reef. The authors recommended a ban on SCUBA spearfishing (but not snorkel spearfishing) to provide a refuge for fish populations in the deeper waters of the reef.

Having a sufficient number of large fish within a species is important, because size matters. A large female grouper produces far more eggs than a smaller female grouper. Indeed, a single 25 pound female grouper may produce as many eggs as 50 five pound female groupers. Because spearfishermen can more easily harvest the very largest fish, their impact on the reproductive capacity of a fish population is disproportionate to the number (and total poundage) of fish they actually harvest.

So what does this all mean to us here in the Big Bend? First of all, due to the gentle slope of the sea bottom in the Big Bend area of the Gulf of Mexico, fish are accessible by SCUBA spearfishermen for many miles offshore, so the impact of spearfishing on reef fish populations is not limited to just a small area of the Big Bend. That said, there is little data to support the relative impact of SCUBA spearfishing vs. hook and line fishing on our fishery beyond the casual observation that spearfishermen consistently come back more often with more bag limits and typically larger grouper than hook and line fishermen. However, casua

l observation is not "data", and it is imperative that any management decisions that may adversely affect a portion of the recreational fishing public be supported by sound scientific data.

I suspect that once the data is gathered, a good management plan will separate out SCUBA spearfishing from hook and line fishing with different bag limits and closed seasons (and perhaps slot limits) for the more highly vulnerable species, such as groupers, whereas other species that are almost exclusively harvested by spearfishing, such as hogfish, could be managed as a single recreational fishery. However, good data is a must before any plan is put in place.

Thank you, dear God, for this good life and forgive us if we do not love it enough. Thank you for the rain. And for the chance to wake up in three hours and go fishing: I thank you for that now, because I won't feel so thankful then.

— Garrison Keillor

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Eating Guidelines for The GOFC "Big 10" from the Big Bend

Extracted from "Your Guide To Eating Fish Caught In Florida" by the Florida Department of Health

Species	Pregnant/Nursing Women and Children Under 6	All Others
Bluefish	*1 per month*	*1 per week*
Cobia	*Do Not Eat!*	*1 per month*
Grouper	*1 per month*	*1 per week*
Greater Amberjack	*1 per month*	*1 per week*
Flounder	*1 per month*	*1 per week*
King Mackerel (under 31 inches) *King Mackerel (over 31 inches)*	*Do Not Eat!* *Do Not Eat!*	*1 per month* *Do Not Eat!*
Redfish	*1 per month*	*2 per week*
Sheepshead	*1 per month*	*2 per week*
Spanish Mackerel	*1 per month*	*1 per week*
Seatrout	*1 per month*	*1 per week*

Men's Ellett Point Standings

30 September 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Reed, Dale		0.00	2.25	12.39	21.00	15.00	2.10	23.13	13.50	21.09	36.00	25.00	4.75	17.59	4.50	14.96	4.90	23.33	3.80	17.08	1	170.58
McElroy, Ross	16.25	23.21		0.00	19.91	14.22		0.00	13.80	21.56	4.75	3.30	6.50	24.07	5.25	17.45	3.81	18.14	2.00	8.99	0	130.96
Byatt, John		0.00	2.9375	16.18	35.00	25.00	1.13	12.39	7.00	10.94		0.00	6.63	24.54	4.69	15.58	1.69	8.04	2.19	9.83	0	122.49
Ellett, Ed		0.00	0.98	5.40		0.00	2.27	25.00	6.30	9.84	9.10	6.32		0.00		0.00	5.25	25.00	2.81	12.64	1	85.20
Wilson, Hal	17.5	25.00		0.00	17.85	12.75		0.00	11.20	17.50		0.00	4.00	14.81	4.76	15.81	3.59	17.10	1.67	7.51	0	110.48
Morales, Carlos		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.50	16.52	12.00	18.75		0.00	4.50	16.67		0.00	4.50	21.43	5.00	22.47	0	95.84
Horn, Phil		0.00	2.5625	14.11		0.00	2.25	24.78		0.00		0.00	5.43	20.11		0.00		0.00	5.56	25.00	1	85.00
Cooper, Virgil		0.00	4.54	25.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	5.12	17.02		0.00	4.81	21.62	1	64.64
Shands, Joe		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	6.75	25.00	7.52	25.00		0.00	3.00	13.48	1	64.48
Baillee, Waldon		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	5.19	19.22	6.27	20.84		0.00	4.55	20.45	3	63.52
Roy, Russ	16	22.86		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	13.00	9.03		0.00	3.50	11.64	2.00	9.52	1.00	4.49	0	57.54
Daniels, Eric		0.00	2.27	12.50		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	4.43	14.73	4.93	23.48		0.00	1	51.70
Graf, Lou	16.125	23.04		0.00		0.00		0.00	11.50	17.97		0.00		0.00	2.00	6.65	1.40	6.67		0.00	0	54.32
Magnific, Justin		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**16.00**	**25.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**25.00**
Kiel, Brian		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.12	12.33		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.90	8.54	3	23.87
Cutright, Jack		0.00	1.03	5.67		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.64	11.87	3	20.54
Browning, Mike		0.00	0.93	5.12		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.65	11.91	3	20.03
Robinson, Andrew		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	10.44	16.31		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	0	16.31
Robinson, Mark		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**10.06**	**15.72**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1**	**16.72**
Hinton, Chic		**0.00**	**0.77**	**4.24**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**2.27**	**10.20**	**0**	**14.44**
Daniels, Ian		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.43**	**11.40**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1**	**12.40**
Carter, Dennis		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1.50**	**6.74**	**0**	**6.74**
Allen, Charles		**0.00**	**1.0625**	**5.85**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**5.85**

Elite Angler Ellett Point Standings

30 September 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Knopf, Ken	36.2	25.00		0.00	32.20	17.14	2.38	25.00	12.10	25.00	15.00	13.02	8.39	25.00	6.21	25.00	3.30	20.73	2.42	15.37	4	195.25
Turner, Allen		0.00	1.26	7.26		0.00	1.23	12.95		0.00		0.00	3.45	10.28	2.58	10.39	3.98	25.00	3.18	20.19	4	90.06
Knopf, Debby	16.7	11.53		0.00	46.97	25.00	2.2	23.16	6.8	14.05	28.8	25.00	3.24	9.65	3.14	12.64	3.6	22.61	1.4	8.89	4	156.54
Patrick, John		0.00	4.34	25.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	5.50	16.39	4.99	20.09		0.00	3.94	25.00	1	87.48

Random Catches

Women's Ellett Point Standings

30 September 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Reed, Liz		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	4.80	25.00		0.00	3.50	25.00	0	50.00
Rothfork, Brittany	13.8	25.00		0.00	21.80	25.00		0.00	6.90	25.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.60	20.00		0.00	1	96.00
Byatt, Terry		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.25**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**25.00**
Daniels, Gwendolyn		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	3.21	16.72		0.00		0.00	1	17.72
Cutright, Melvina		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00	2.25	16.07	0	16.07
Carter, Debbie		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**1.75**	**12.50**	**0**	**12.50**

Youth Ellett Point Standings

30 September 2014

GOFC member	Amberjack	pts	Bluefish	pts	Cobia	pts	Flounder	pts	Grouper	pts	King Mackerel	pts	Redfish	pts	Sheeps-head	pts	Spanish Mackerel	pts	Trout	pts	Bonus points	Total points
Wagner, Reid	23	26.14		0.00	14.92	0.00		0.00	11.00	51.98		0.00		0.00		0.00	1.54	10.69		0.00	0	88.82
Baillie, Mikayla		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.29**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**1.34**	**25.00**	**1**	**51.00**
Wagner, Riley	**22**	**25.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**5.29**	**25.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**50.00**
Thomas, Charlie		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**3.60**	**25.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**25.00**
Wagner, Ryan	**21**	**23.86**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**		**0.00**	**0**	**23.86**

Crabs

Continued from page 9

tached to each trap and clearly legible. The buoy markings are not required for traps attached to a dock.

Traps can only be pulled by hand and only during daylight hours. Finally, traps may not be placed in navigational channels of the Intracoastal waterways, or in navigational channels maintained and marked by any county, municipal, state or federal governmental agency.

Traps can only be constructed of wood, plastic or wire and may be no larger than 24 inches on each side or a maximum of 8 cubic feet. The throat size of the trap may not exceed 5 1/2 inches in the longer dimension and 3 1/2 inches in the shorter except that a round throat may not exceed 5 inches in diameter.

Each plastic or widre trap must have a degradable wooden panel equal to the size of the entry hole on the top of the trap. This panel is designed to rot away and allow crabs and other creatures to escape should the trap ever be lost. Different requirement for a degradable escape hatch apply to wire traps.

Once you have some claws, do not ice them. Instead put them in water — in your baitwell or a bucket. Once you get home, promptly boil them, after which they can be eaten or frozen for long term storage.

After boiling, some claws will sink and some will float. The "floaters" are claws from crabs that have recently molted. Although they taste just fine, there is less meat inside a "floater" than a "sinker" claw.

Why do sharks like kayakers? Because they're crispy on the outside and soft and chewy on the inside

— Hoo Nose

John Ellett

A little about the "John Ellett" award namesake. John was Ed Ellett's father, current GOFC member and a past President. John was a regular guy that, like the members of this club, loved to fish! He enjoyed the intrigue of figuring out what they would bite, when and how. He enjoyed piddling with his tackle and boat. He enjoyed exploring new areas. Most importantly, he enjoyed sharing the experience with his family, friends and new acquaintances. Does this sound familiar? Is this you? To encourage above he started giving a modest grand club prize and it continues to this day. John passed away on his birthday, December 23, 2009, at age 92. Probably, 88 of his years were filled with fishing experiences! He would be honored to know the Club continues the Award in his name.

Gator Hunting with the Kids

By Captain Brian Keil

I was drawn for the first phase of gator season for the Upper St. Johns River Basin, which is around Melbourne, and my kids were stoked as they were going for their first gator!

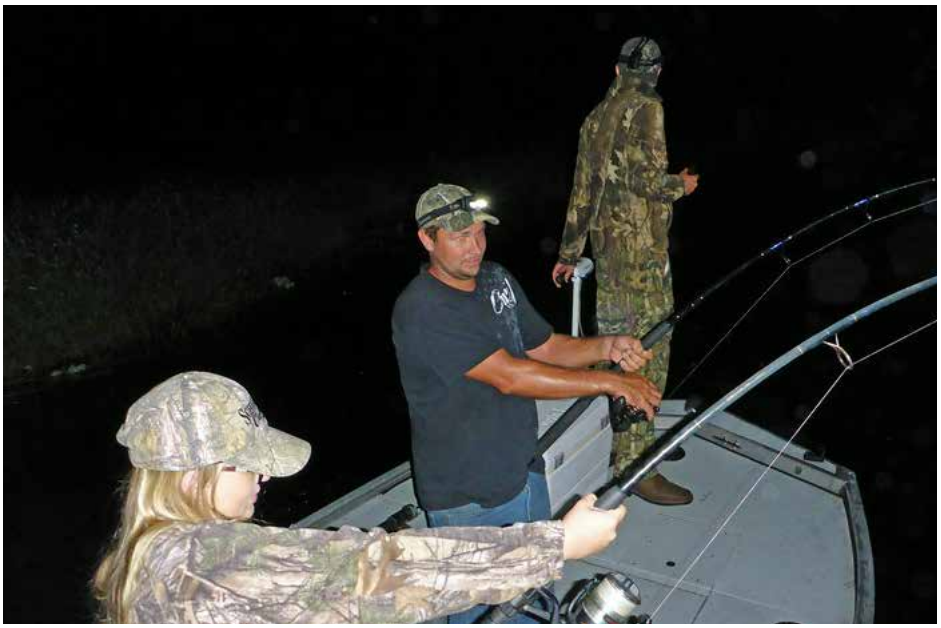
"Girls First"…my 13 year old daughter Kaitlyn would be first on the harpoon followed by my 15 year old son Casey for the second gator. We've hand caught small gators together while frog gigging, but this would be their first real gator hunt. My largest gator so far went 10 foot 4 inches, and one of the goals was to get an even larger gator.

On board would be one of our cousins, Jason, who is from Palm Bay and knows the local waters well. Jason's parents don't hunt or fish, and as young boys I'd take Jason and his two brothers, James & Bobby, hunting and fishing. Together we got some of many firsts: first hogs, a deer, scallops, sheepshead, grouper and ducks. It's really satisfying to see how much hunting and fishing plays a role in their lives now (big time) and to know I had a part of that. All three live for hunting and fishing.

Unlike my gator hunting where I've baited gators using "well-fermented" (rancid) sheep lungs, we would be using rod & reels and snatch hooks adorned with a small cyalume chemlight so you can see where you're casting. Gear would be strong spinning reels with stout rods, 60 pound braid, two feet of 80 pound leader on which the cyalume is attached and a weighted treble hook.

Friday Evening, First Night

Running out to our area was about a 25 minute run through a couple of lakes and long twisting narrow canals. Once there, we used the trolling motor to motor around the canals. Our first gator was a 9 footer, so we discussed it and decided to let it go in hopes of a 10+ footer.



It takes two people with stout spinning rods to handle a snagged gator!

As the night wore on there didn't seem to be many gators out, and it was kinda a tough-off night. Jason had other friends out gator hunting too, and later they stated the same thing.

Around 5:00 a.m. we called it a night and headed in. We brought 7 gators to the boat, with the largest going 9 foot, but we believed the next evening would be better.

After a few hours of sleep we headed over to see two gators that Jason's friends took before they took them to the processor.

Saturday Evening, Second Night

The second gator we worked up happened quickly. Around 11:00 p.m. Jason hooked up on the rod and knew it was a large gator, so we got the second snatch hook into him. From there we pulled him up with Kaitlyn waiting with the harpoon.

After coaching her on where to stick him as he fought at the boat, snapping, twisting and turning, her first shot missed completely, and her confidence kinda sank a bit, but her second shot got him in the underside of the jaw then he took off again.

Gators on Page 15

Gulf Council Update for October 2014

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Mobile, Alabama, October 20 - 23, 2014, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including recreational red snapper sector separation and red snapper regional management. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council.

Reef Fish Amendment 40 considers dividing the recreational red snapper sector into two distinct components - a private angling component and a for-hire component. After reviewing the document and listening to hours of public testimony, the Council approved sector separation after adding a three-year sunset provision. The amendment will go to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

The Council resumed discussions on Reef Fish Amendment 39 - Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper. This amendment considers dividing the federal recreational red snapper quota among states and giving them authority to set some of their allowing for own management measures for red snapper to vary by state.

The Council added an alternative to Action 1 that would establish a regional management program in which each region would submit proposals to NMFS describing the measures they would adopt for the

Council on Page 16

Gators

Continued from page 14

Then one of the trebles pulled. Not knowing how well her shot hit, I took the second harpoon and stuck him in the neck. From there we pulled him up to the boat, and I loaded the 44 Magnum bangstick.

After I gave Kaitlyn directions on where to bangstick the gator, her first strike didn't have enough force, and the bangstick did not go off. Wanting to seal the deal quickly, I helped guide her on the bangstick, and the shot did the trick with an explosion of water.

Not 10 minutes later an airboat comes up with lights flashing, and a Brevard Sheriff comes a calling. Officer Keith from the Sheriff's department checked our licenses and permit plus boater registration. He was very professional and courteous and was even nice enough to take a few photos of the four of us.

Upon closer inspection of the gator we could see that he was bitten by a larger, gator in front of his hind legs. Our 10 foot 7 inch gator had an inside bite area of 8 inches wide, but the bites on this gator's side were 11 inches across! The bite cut across both top dorsal sides all the way across and even cut into the stomach too. That bite and fight by a much **LARGER** gator must have been ferocious!

With that we hunted a bit on the way back in for the second gator but did not find a large enough gator to work.

This gator was twice the size of its captors.

Sunday Evening, Third Night

Prior to going back out Sunday night, my wife drove down from Ponta Vedra to take Kaitlyn home so she could attend the first day of school (on Monday). Unfortunately, but to Casey's delight, Casey would miss the first day of school as we tried to get his first gator.

Launching before dark, we had to seek shelter under a bridge as a storm rolled through with lots of lightening and rain. The radar was lit up, but after a bit it cleared to a beautiful sunset.

The second gator of the night was a good one, and again things happened fast. We both hooked up at distance with the snatch hooks from the get go, and we quickly brought the gator to the boat. We had a good idea this was a good gator, and Casey was all ready with the harpoon.

Casey's first hit with the harpoon didn't stick, and that didn't make the gator happy. The second attempt did stick, and the gator took off with the harpoon tip in its back. After loading the bangstick and pulling the safety out, we submerged the head a bit, and Casey got ready with the bangstick. His first attempt was at too sharp of an angle, and the round went off skimming the center of the forehead and raking across the muzzle, penetrating the lip. With this the gator was dazed and complacent. The second shot was where it was supposed to go, and Casey's first gator was pulled aboard.

Monday 8:00 a.m.

After a few hours of sleep, we loaded up his iced down gator and took it to Central Florida Trophy Hunts for processing. I got Casey back to school by noon, so he didn't miss the entire first day of school! Gotta love adventures like this with your children!

President

Continued from page 3

the inshore grouper learnament. More on this in a separate article in the magazine, but we couldn't have ordered up a better day weather-wise.

The red tide has put a damper on fishing trips for many people going all the way back to August. The most vexing part has been the lack of reliable, up-to-date information on where this natural scourge is and where it's headed. Although the updates from FWC have been somewhat helpful, the water sampling counts (which best detect levels of the organism) are sparse and the satellite imaging was plagued by dense cloud cover. One of my most enjoyable days fishing out of Steinhatchee was followed just six days later by one of the most miserable due to the algal bloom moving inshore and apparently killing everything in its wake that didn't up and swim away. Earlier on it looked as though offshore fishing from Cedar Key to Steinhatchee was taking a beating, but plenty of people managed to find quality grouper in waters that were either never affected by the red tide, or that were repopulated after the toxins from the red tide had drifted away. As disheartening as it's been to spend a day's fishing looking for a bite and to see so many dead fish, I'm optimistic that the worst is behind us. The bloom seems to be lessening in intensity and is moving away from the coast of Levi and Dixie counties. Even better, people are reporting catching fish again in areas that were hit hard earlier.

The club's board meets on the first Tuesday of every month and boardies, besides swapping stories and lots of BS also arranges all the details for club meetings and events. Being on the board is a great way to get involved with the club and Need new board members and input on club events

If you possibly can, attend this month's meeting (October 28th) because we're fortunate to have one of Florida's best inshore fishermen presenting. Jerry McBride is a magazine editor, author, photographer, TV personality and fishing instructor. He presented to the club several years ago when he worked for DOA lures and if you attended that meeting, you already know he's a great speaker with a passion for fishing. Jerry specializes in kayak fishing and consistently catches more gator trout than most anyone else you'll meet.

Finally, the main event next month (Friday, November 21st) is the GOFC auction, hosted once again by Ed and Marcia Ellett. Richard McDavid and family will be continuing the tradition of providing great eats in the form of his renowned Frogmore Stew. Of course, the main purpose of this event (other than a fun evening socializing with other club members and enjoying good food) is to raise money for the club by auctioning off items donated by members. So, start sorting through your tackle and outdoor gear for items you no longer need or use that can be donated for the annual Ellett auction.

Hope to see you at one of these events or out on the water.

Council

Continued from page 14

management of their respective portion of the red snapper quota.

The Council also added options for a 2-year or 3-year sunset provision in both Alternatives 2 and 4 of Action 1. The Council selected Alternative 2, Option d; delegation with a sunset after 3 calendar years, as its preferred alternative. Under Action 3, which considered allocation among regions, the Council selected Alternative 2, Option d, and Alternative 3, Options a and b as its preferred alternatives. This would result in regional apportionments based on 50% of landings from 1986-2012, and 50% from 2007-2012 landings, and exclude landings from 2006 and 2010.

Finally, for Action 6, Accountability Measures, the Council removed Options a and b (delay implementation of quota overages until 1 year or 2 years after plan implementation) in alternatives 2, 3 and 4 and put them in the "considered but rejected" section of the document.

This summer, the Council's scientific advisors reviewed a stock assessment and determined that greater amberjack did not meet the ten-year rebuilding plan that ended in 2012, and the stock continues to be overfished and experiencing overfishing. During its October meeting, the Council reviewed an options paper that considers adjusting the Annual Catch Limit and commercial and recreational management measures to ensure that the stock is rebuilt and the mandates of the Magnuson-Stevens Act are met.

The Council took final action on a Framework Action that will adjust the red grouper bag limit to 2-fish per person, per day, to reduce the likelihood of in-season quota closures. The framework also eliminates the automatic bag limit reduction accountability measure that currently occurs after the Annual Catch Limit is exceeded. The Council considered changes to the recreational red grouper closed season, but decided to leave it at February 1 through March 31 beyond 20 fathoms. The Framework Action will be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation.

A stock assessment completed this summer discovered that the gag stock is not overfished or experiencing overfishing. However, scientists are concerned that a large red tide event occurring this summer may negatively impact the stock. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommended an increase in the gag ABC from 2,820,000 pounds to 3,070,000 pounds in 2015, which is a smaller increase than originally planned. The Council has asked that the SSC reevaluate the projected impact of the red tide using the latest red tide information, and provide an updated acceptable biological catch for 2015-2016.

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