

The grouper and tilefish fishery faces serious management issues. And IFQs are our best bet to save it.

If changes aren't made—and fast—the outlook for our industry is grim. But what kind of changes?

There's a reason Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) are catching on around the globe: They work.

Here in the Gulf of Mexico, the new IFQ program for snapper is already proving itself by producing fewer dead discards, a consistent supply for buyers, higher dockside prices, and safer and more flexible fishing conditions.

Many Gulf grouper fishermen are interested in an IFQ program of our own because IFQs are the best way to ensure that small-scale, multispecies fishermen remain in the fishery.

We believe such a program would:

- Provide us greater flexibility to fish when the weather and market conditions are favorable instead of being forced into often-perilous fishing “derbies” which temporarily glut the market and depress dock-side prices.
- Boost income for grouper and tilefish fishermen and increase crew wages.

- Provide a year-round supply of fresh groupers and tilefish for consumers and seafood retailers and wholesalers.
- Improve managers' ability to control the harvest and improve the long-term outlook for the fishery.

IFQs are the best solution for large and small producers, whereas the alternatives, such as limited entry and endorsements, would most likely exclude small producers.

There's no time to waste. The Gulf Council needs to hear from us, the fishermen, that we want a change in the way our grouper/tilefish fishery is managed — before things get worse.

The Council is holding hearings in July and will decide in August (1) whether to submit an IFQ program to fishermen in a referendum, and (2) how such an IFQ program would be designed and operated.

We should tell the Gulf Council we want the chance to vote on a grouper/tilefish IFQ program and that we want it as soon as possible.

The dates and locations of the hearings are on the back of this flyer. Please make an effort to attend one of them.

Also, we urge you to submit written comments about the IFQ by August 7th to: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org.

The faster we can get our fishery on the right track, the sooner we can improve our livelihoods.

SEE BACK FOR HEARING DATES AND LOCATIONS.

The problem

The grouper fishery is stuck in a vicious cycle because it lacks a rational incentive-based management system. There is too much harvest capacity in the fleet for the amount of fish we are allowed to catch.

Fishermen race to catch as many fish as possible as quickly as possible before our quota is met—regardless of weather conditions.

Vicious cycle

Lower revenues to the fishermen increase the pressure for them to catch even more fish.

Large amounts of fish hit the docks at the same time, depressing boat prices.

Fishermen's Advocacy Organization represents small-scale fishermen in Florida who harvest reef-fish species, including grouper.

Gulf Fishermen's Association represents 200+ members throughout the Gulf, including commercial fishermen, restaurants and the public.

Please do your best to attend one of these Gulf Council public hearings!

July 21: Key West, FL ● Radisson Hotel ● 3820 N. Roosevelt Blvd. ● 5:30 p.m.

Galveston, TX ● Best Western Motel ● 5914 Seawall Blvd. ● 5:30 p.m.

July 22: Banana Bay, FL ● 4590 Overseas Hwy. ● Marathon FL ● 5:30 p.m.

New Orleans ● Hilton New Orleans ● 901 Airline Dr. ● Kenner LA ● 5:30 p.m.

July 23: Miami, FL ● Doubletree Hotel ● 2649 S. Bayshore Dr. ● 5:30 p.m.

Biloxi, MS ● Wingate Inn ● 12009 Indian River Road ● 5:30 p.m.

July 24: Ft. Myers, FL ● Clarion Hotel ● 12635 S. Cleveland Ave. ● 5:30 p.m.

Orange Beach, AL ● City of Orange Beach ● 27235 Canal Road ● 5:30 p.m.

July 30: Tampa, FL ● Quorum ● 700 N. Westshore ● 5:30 p.m.

July 31: Panama City, FL ● NMFS Lab ● 350 Dellwood Beach Dr. ● 5:30 p.m.



Please make a special effort to attend the **Tampa** and/or **Panama City** hearings, which we expect to be the largest. If you can't make either of these, however, please try to attend one of the other hearings.