

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: September 8, 2016
Subject: Red Drum – Final Public Hearing

Purpose:

Staff will present a proposed final rule to lower the recreational bag limit for red drum in the Northwest management zone from two fish to one fish per person per day.

Summary:

Red drum is among Florida's most popular recreational fisheries and is targeted for both food and sport. The stock assessment that included data through 2013 indicated that red drum was exceeding the Commission's management goal in all regions of the state. However, stakeholders from the Panhandle have expressed concerns about a decline in red drum in their area during the past 2-3 years. Specifically, Panhandle stakeholders have suggested that last year's red tide in northwest Florida and recent drought conditions may have impacted the red drum population. Since the stock assessment only included data through 2013, any effects from these events are not represented in the assessment.

In response to these concerns, staff completed a stakeholder engagement process during March – May of this year and presented the feedback received through this process in part at the April Commission meeting and in full at the June Commission meeting. Engagement efforts included using social media to encourage discussion among a variety of stakeholders and attending fishing club meetings, boat shows, and other venues frequented by anglers in northern Florida. A statewide online survey was also included in the engagement effort in order to capture stakeholder observations and preferences from all regions of the state.

In April, the Commission took immediate, short-term action to reduce the bag limit of red drum in the Northwest management zone from 2 fish per person per day to 1 fish per person through an Executive Order. This reduction was implemented from May 1 – November 1, 2016, or until the Commission adopts a rule change regarding the bag limit, whichever is earlier. At the June Commission meeting, the Commission approved a draft rule that would implement this bag limit reduction as a long-term management measure. The Commission will consider this management measure through the proposed final rule at the September Commission meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend approving the proposed final rule to lower the bag limit for red drum in the Northwest management zone to one fish per person per day.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Melissa Recks, Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries Management