

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Date: November 18, 2015
Subject: Regional Management of the Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Fishery

Purpose:

Staff will provide a review of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council's) Reef Fish Amendment 39, which would allow for all or part of the recreational red snapper fishery to be managed on a regional (potentially state-by-state) basis in both state and federal waters.

Summary:

The purpose of the Council's regional management proposal is to provide management flexibility by restructuring federal recreational red snapper management to allow for regional management measures that better account for biological, social, and economic differences throughout the Gulf. There are several key decision points in this proposal that shape what regional management would mean for Florida. First, the Council must choose a mechanism for regional management: delegation to states or regions, or establishment of a regional management program in which states or regions submit regulatory/management proposals to NOAA Fisheries for approval. Currently, the Council's preferred alternative would establish a regional management program in which states submit regulatory/management proposals to NOAA Fisheries for approval after the proposals are reviewed by a technical review committee. The Council has also selected a preferred alternative to sunset regional management in five years. Another key decision the Council and Commission must make is whether to apply regional management to the entire recreational sector as a whole (for-hire and private anglers managed as one unit by states), extend sector separation but allow states to (separately) manage both for-hire vessels and private anglers, or to apply regional management to private anglers only. Regional management could occur on a state-by-state basis or states could join together to form regions. The Council must also decide quota allocations for each state or region. The Council's current preferred option would allocate to states or regions based on a combination of historical and recent landings trends and would result in an allocation for Florida that is less than what Florida anglers have caught in recent years as the portion of the stock off Florida has grown. There are several allocation options, including an option that allocates to states or regions so that each region receives an equal number of fishing days. The Council must decide if states or regions should be able to close down federal waters adjacent to their state, select accountability measures that would apply if a state exceeds its quota, and could change the recreational minimum size limit to be between 14-18 inches as part of this action. The Council is scheduled to hold public hearings on regional management on October 22 in Destin and October 27 in St. Petersburg. Feedback from the public workshops will be provided in the presentation to the Commission. Final Council action is possible at the January 25-29, 2016, Council meeting in Orange Beach, AL.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff requests direction on the various decision points in the alternatives of the document and whether to support this proposal.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

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