



Gulf Red Snapper Regional Management

Review and Discussion

November 18, 2015

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Version 1

This is a review and discussion of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) proposal for regional management of the Gulf recreational red snapper fishery, which is also known as Reef Fish Amendment 39.

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Regional Management of the Recreational Red Snapper Fishery – Amendment 39



- Council proposal to divide the Gulf-wide federal recreational red snapper quota among regions
 - Regions would set recreational seasons and bag limits in adjacent federal waters but red snapper would remain federally managed

Purpose

- Provide management flexibility
- Better account for social, economic, and biological differences throughout the Gulf of Mexico
- Council final action scheduled for January



Direction requested

The Council is considering a proposal, known as regional management or Amendment 39, that would divide the Gulf-wide federal recreational red snapper quota among regions. Each region would set their own recreational seasons and bag limits for adjacent federal waters. However, red snapper would remain a federally-managed species. Red snapper management measures such as quotas and allocations would continue to be set by the Council. The purpose of the Council's regional management proposal is to provide management flexibility by better accounting for social, economic, and biological differences throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

Council final action on regional management is anticipated at the Council's January 25-29 meeting in Orange Beach, Alabama. As such, staff requests Commission direction on this proposal.

If regional management is approved by the Council and U.S. Secretary of Commerce, it would begin starting in 2017.

Regional Management – Outline



- Council decision points
 1. Regions
 2. Mechanism
 3. Sunset provision
 4. Who would be included?
 5. Regional allocations
 6. Closed areas
 7. Minimum size limit
 8. Accountability measures
- Summary of stakeholder feedback
- Important considerations for Florida



There are several key decision points in the Council's regional management proposal that shape how regional management would work and what it would mean for Florida. This presentation will provide an overview of each of these decision points, a summary of feedback from Florida stakeholders, and important considerations.

Council Decision #1: What Are the Regions?



Options:

- A. Eastern (FL, AL, MS) and western (LA, TX) Gulf
- B. Eastern (FL, AL) and western (MS, LA, TX) Gulf
- C. State-by-state regions
- D. **Council-preferred option: establish state-by-state regions, but allow adjacent states to form multi-state regions**



Under all options, sub-regions within a state could be established

One decision the Council must make is what the regions for regional management of the recreational red snapper fishery should be. The Council has discussed potentially dividing the Gulf of Mexico into eastern and western regions. The eastern region could include waters off Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi or just off Florida and Alabama (with Mississippi being included in the western region). An option that provides more flexibility is dividing the Gulf in to state-by-state regions, with each state setting regulations for state and federal waters off its shoreline. The Council's preferred option for setting regions would establish state-by-state regions, but allow adjacent states to form multi-state regions. Because the Council prefers this option, the remainder of the presentation uses the terms "state" and "region" interchangeably.

Under any of the options mentioned above, sub-regions could be established within a state or region. For example, Florida could have separate harvest seasons or different bag limits in the Panhandle and southwest Florida.

Council Decision #2: Mechanism Options for Regional Management



- A. Delegation – States would have authority to set recreational season and bag limit for fishing vessels in federal waters off their state
- B. Conservation equivalency plan (CEP) reviewed by NOAA Fisheries – States create plans that set recreational season and bag limit for vessels landing in their state
- C. **Council preferred: CEPs reviewed by technical review committee and NOAA Fisheries** – Similar to Option B, but includes extra step of review by representatives from each Gulf state



The Council is considering three different mechanisms for regional management. The first option is delegation of management to states. If the Council selects delegation, each state would have authority to set recreational season and bag limit regulations in federal waters off their state as long as certain conditions are met. Staff has been supportive of delegation at the Council because it provides the most straightforward, flexible management process for the states.

For the other two options, the states would not be delegated management authority, but would create conservation equivalency plans (CEPs) that set the recreational season and bag limit for vessels landing in their state. These CEPs would be subject to review and approval by NOAA Fisheries. Under the Council's current preferred alternative, states would create CEPs that are first reviewed by a technical review committee that consists of representatives from each state's marine fisheries management agency before being reviewed by NOAA Fisheries.

These options are examined in more detail on the following slides.

Council Decision #2: Mechanism for Regional Management – Delegation (Option A)



- Option requires one-time 75% vote of approval by the Council
- States would go through normal state rulemaking to set season and bag limit for their state and adjacent federal waters
- State regulations must be consistent with
 - Council Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan
 - Rebuilding timeline, and
 - Magnuson-Stevens Act



If the Council chooses delegation as the mechanism for regional management, it must be approved by at least a three-quarters majority vote of the Council, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Delegation is fairly straightforward. Essentially, states would go through their normal state rulemaking process to set the recreational season structure and bag limit for their state and adjacent federal waters. Each state's regulations for recreational red snapper would have to be consistent with the Council's reef fish fishery management plan (FMP), the federal red snapper rebuilding timeline, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This would include keeping harvest at or below the state's quota. As long as this occurs, states can set their seasons and bag limits with little involvement by NOAA Fisheries or the Council.

Council Decision #2: Mechanism for Regional Management – CEP Options (B and C)



- Require simple majority vote of approval by the Council
- CEPs reviewed by NOAA Fisheries on an annual basis and must provide conservation protections that are equivalent to federal Gulf-wide management
- CEPs would include:
 - Draft season and bag limit
 - Analysis showing the state can constrain harvest within its quota
 - Description of in-season monitoring (if any) and plan to close the fishery if the quota is reached
- States would need to submit draft CEP plans by July 1 of the year before the plan would go into effect
- Commission would need to work with stakeholders and develop season/bag limit before this deadline



Unlike with delegation, the CEP options only require a simple majority vote of approval by the Council. Also unlike delegation, both CEP processes provide direct oversight by NOAA Fisheries over a state's recreational season and bag limit regulations. A state's CEP must provide conservation protections that are equivalent to federal Gulf-wide management and would be subject to annual review and approval by NOAA Fisheries. The Council's preferred alternative would include an extra step in which a technical review committee would review each CEP before it goes to NOAA Fisheries for approval. Each CEP would have to include the state's proposed season and bag limit, analysis showing that the state can constrain harvest within its quota, a description of any in-season monitoring the state may use to track harvest, and the state's plan to close the fishery if the quota is reached. A complete list of items that states would have to address in their CEPs is shown on slide 22.

Each state would submit their draft CEP plans to NOAA Fisheries and the Council for preliminary review by July 1 of the year before the plan would go into effect. Depending on the preferred alternative that the Council approves, the CEP would then be reviewed by the technical review committee or NOAA Fisheries, who would notify the state if changes to the CEP are necessary. NOAA Fisheries would publish a notification in the *Federal Register* by January 1 letting the public know which state CEPs are approved. The full proposed timeline is illustrated on slide 23.

The July 1 deadline for draft CEPs means that the Commission would need to work with stakeholders and review science to develop season and bag limit proposals at least nine months to a year in advance of the season. This could be a challenge because the latest science, including landings from the current year, may not be available to inform the Commission's decision.

How Would Regional Management be Enforced?



- Angler access to red snapper in federal waters would be limited by regulations in state of landing
- As long as any Gulf state's season is open, ALL federal waters would remain open but fish could only be landed in states that are open to harvest
- Enforcement would be at the dock or in state waters



Under the Council's regional management proposal, angler access to red snapper in federal waters would be limited by regulations in the state they are landing the fish. As long as any Gulf state's season is open, all federal waters would remain open to harvest, but red snapper could only be landed in states that are open to harvest. This would allow fishermen that plan to land in one of the other Gulf states to fish in federal waters off Florida, even if Florida's season is closed, and vice versa. The same is true for differences in bag limits between states. For example, if Louisiana's bag limit is three fish and Florida's bag limit is two fish, fishermen in federal waters off Florida but landing in Louisiana could possess up to three red snapper in federal waters off Florida, even though Florida fishermen in the same area would be constrained to two fish. Because of this, FWC law enforcement would also need to keep track of not only Florida's red snapper regulations, but also regulations in the other Gulf states.

With red snapper open in the EEZ potentially year-round, enforcement of recreational red snapper regulations would largely have to occur at the dock and in state waters. This would be a change in enforcement strategy and would differ from how FWC enforces regulations for other marine fisheries. FWC currently conducts enforcement both at sea and at the dock, and has several vessels that are dedicated to enforcement in offshore waters.

However, there are two notable exceptions that would require at-sea enforcement under regional management. These are explained on the next slide and slide 15.

What Happens if a State is Inconsistent or Opt's Out of Regional Management?



- If NOAA Fisheries determines that state regulations are inconsistent, they can revoke the state's regional management
- States may also opt out
- Federal default regulations would apply
 - Federal season would be based on available quota from all states that are not participating in regional management
 - Federal waters off non-participating states would close when federal season ends



If NOAA Fisheries determines that a state's management of the recreational red snapper fishery, whether through delegation or a CEP is inconsistent with requirements including the Council's reef fish FMP, NOAA Fisheries can revoke delegation or disapprove the state's CEP. States may also opt out of regional management. If any of these situations occur, federal default regulations would apply in federal waters off the state(s) that is not participating in regional management. Federal default regulations for recreational harvest are currently a two-fish bag limit and harvest season starting June 1 and ending when the annual catch target (ACT) is projected to be met. In this case, the federal season off states that are not participating in regional management would be based on the available quota from these states. If only one state does not participate in regional management, federal waters off that state would still essentially be managed as its own region, but with regulations set by NOAA Fisheries and the Council.

When the federal default regulation season ends, federal waters off non-participating states would close to all recreational red snapper harvest, regardless of where anglers may be landing the fish. The boundary lines between states shown on the map above would be used to delineate closed areas. In this case, at-sea enforcement in closed areas of federal waters would be required.

Council Decision #3: Should Regional Management Contain a Sunset Provision?



Options to sunset regional management after:

- A. 10 years
- B. **Council preferred: 5 years**
- C. 3 years
- D. 2 years
- E. No sunset



The Council is also considering a sunset provision for regional management so that regional management ends after a set number of years. Options are sunset provisions for 10, 5, 3, and 2 calendar years or no sunset. Under the current Council-preferred alternative, regional management would expire after five calendar years unless the Council chooses to continue regional management.

Council Decision #4: Who Would Be Included in Regional Management?



Options:

- A. Apply regional management to the entire recreational sector
 - Private anglers and for-hire managed by states as one unit
 - Sector separation ends
- B. Allow states to separately manage for-hire and private anglers
 - Sector separation would continue with allocations already set by the Council
 - States could choose to manage private anglers only
- C. Apply to private anglers only
 - Sector separation continues and Council would manage federally-permitted for-hire

No agreement by the Council on who should be included in regional management



Another decision the Council must make if it moves forward with regional management is who to include in regional management. There are three options: A) apply regional management to the entire recreational sector as a whole (for-hire and private anglers managed as one unit by states and sector separation ends), B) extend sector separation but allow states to (separately) manage both federally-permitted for-hire vessels and private anglers, or C) apply regional management to private anglers only. If regional management is applied to private anglers only, sector separation would continue and the Council would continue to manage federally-permitted for-hire vessels while the states would manage private anglers as well as state-permitted for-hire vessels operating in state waters.

If options B or C are selected, the allocations for federally-permitted for-hire vessels vs. private anglers would be set by the Council based on the Council's sector separation Amendment 40. State-permitted for-hire vessels would be included in the private angler allocation.

Thus far, the Council has not been able to agree on a preferred alternative for who should be included in regional management.

Based on the Commission's opposition to sector separation, staff has supported applying regional management to the recreational sector as a whole.

Council Decision #5: How Would the Federal Quota be Divided Among States?



Options:

Allocate based on average historical landings over various time periods:

- A. 1986-2013
- B. 1996-2013
- C. 2006-2013
- D. **Council preferred:** 50% landings from 1986-2013 and 50% from 2006-2013
- E. **Council preferred:** exclude 2006 landings from calculations
- F. **Council preferred:** exclude 2010 landings from calculations
- G. Set eastern and western Gulf quotas based on biogeographical differences
- H. Divide recreational quota such that each state's allocation provides an equal number of fishing days

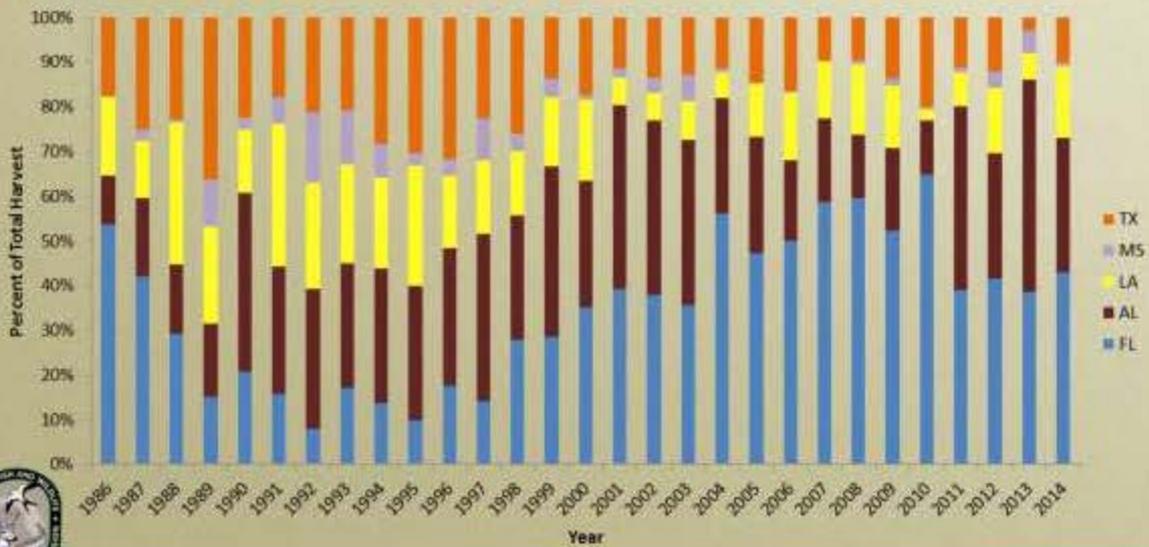


Under regional management, each state would be allocated a portion of the federal recreational red snapper quota. The Council is considering several different options for dividing the quota among states. Several options would allocate the quota to states based on average historical landings over various time periods. The first option (A) would use landings from 1986-2013. Option B would be based on landings from 1996-2013 and option C would be based on landings from 2006-2013. The Council-preferred alternative would base each state allocation on 50% landings from 1986-2013 plus 50% landings from 2006-2013. This option incorporates the longest historical time series, while also attempting to account for more recent trends in landings. The Council has also selected preferred alternatives that would exclude 2006 landings because of infrastructure damage from Hurricane Katrina and 2010 landings due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Option G above would divide the recreational quota into eastern and western Gulf quotas based on biogeographical differences between the eastern and western Gulf portions of the stock. This allocation option is only relevant if the Council creates eastern and western Gulf regions, rather than state-by-state regions.

The last option (H) would divide the recreational quota such that each state's allocation provides an equal number of fishing days for each state. This option essentially gives each state an even start to regional management. The actual number of days a state could open for red snapper harvest would vary depending on when the season is held (i.e., a season held during times of low effort may be open longer) and the bag limit.

Harvest of Red Snapper in Whole Weight of Fish by State, 1986-2014



The graph above shows how the proportion of the recreational red snapper quota harvested by each state has shifted from 1986 to 2014. Florida's portion of landings are shown in blue. From the early 1990s through about 2010, Florida's portion of the Gulf-wide harvest increased steadily to about 60% of the Gulf-wide total and the portion of landings coming from the western Gulf of Mexico decreased. This increase is likely due to a number of factors including red snapper growing larger and more abundant in waters off Florida over this period of time, red snapper expanding their range off Florida, as well as increases in fishing effort in the eastern Gulf.

How Long Would Florida's Season Be?



- Under current Council-preferred allocation alternatives:
 - If states manage private anglers only: 8-12 days
 - For-hire vessels under federal management: 44-60 days
 - If states manage private anglers and federally-permitted for-hire separately:
 - 7-10 days for private anglers
 - 42-83 days for federally-permitted for-hire
 - If states manage entire recreational sector: 12-19 days
- Council-preferred alternative benefits western Gulf states
 - Season estimates for MS, LA, and TX are between 40 and 137 days
- Allocation option that provides equal days for all states: 18-22 days assuming states manage the entire recreational sector



The estimated length of Florida's season largely depends on its allocation and who is included in regional management. The estimated season lengths provided on this slide were calculated by NOAA Fisheries and assume that the Council moves forward with the Council-preferred alternatives that would base each state allocation on 50% landings from 1986-2013 plus 50% landings from 2006-2013 (excluding 2006 and 2010). The full range of season estimates under the Council's preferred alternative is provided in a separate handout.

If the states manage private anglers only, Florida's season for private anglers in federal waters (and private anglers and state-licensed for-hire vessels in state waters) would be 8-12 days. Under this option, all federally-permitted for-hire vessels would remain under Council management and have an estimated 44-60 day season. If the states manage private anglers and federally-permitted for-hire vessels separately, Florida's private angler season is estimated to be 7-10 days for private anglers in federal waters (and private anglers and state-licensed for-hire vessels in state waters) and Florida's season for federally-permitted for-hire vessels is estimated to be 42-83 days. If the states manage the entire recreational sector, Florida's season would be 12-19 days for all recreational harvesters.

In contrast, the western Gulf states would have substantially longer seasons under the Council's preferred alternative. Season estimates for Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas range from 40-137 days. This large disparity in season lengths between Florida and the western Gulf states would put Florida anglers and businesses at an obvious disadvantage.

The option that sets allocations such that each state gets an equal number of days would result in each state having an estimated 18-22 day season if states are allowed to manage the entire recreational sector.

Council Decision #6: Could a State Close Federal Waters Adjacent to Their State?



- **Council-preferred: allow states to close adjacent federal waters**
 - State waters could remain open
 - Staff has supported this option as additional means of flexibility
- Establishing federal waters closures may require additional federal rulemaking process
 - Adds six months to CEP timeline



The Council is considering options that would allow a state to close federal waters adjacent to their state to allow some additional management flexibility. States already have authority to close state waters to red snapper harvest. The Council's preferred alternative for this action would allow a state to close adjacent federal waters to recreational red snapper harvest, even if state waters remain open. Staff has supported this option thus far at the Council.

If a state closes its adjacent federal waters, no harvest or possession of recreationally-caught red snapper would be allowed in the closed area. This means that the "at the dock" law enforcement strategy described on slide 8 would not be effective, and "at-sea" law enforcement would be required in the closed area.

If a state decides to use federal waters closures as part of its regional management strategy, the closures would likely be subject to additional review and analysis by NOAA Fisheries and/or the Council, and additional federal rulemaking may be required. For the CEP regional management options, such closures would have to be approved in the state's CEP. This additional analysis, approval, and rulemaking process is estimated to add another six months to the amount of time needed for the state's CEP to be approved.

Council Decision #7: What Would the Minimum Size Limit Be?



- Federal waters size limit would be set by Council
- States would be required to match the federal limit in state waters
- Current minimum size limit is 16 inches in federal waters and all states except TX
 - Current TX minimum size limit is 15 inches

Options:

- A. 14 inches
- B. **Council-preferred: 15 inches**
- C. 16 inches
- D. 17 inches
- E. 18 inches



The Council's proposal for regional management would allow states to set their own recreational seasons and bag limits, but proposes that the recreational minimum size limit would continue to be set by the Council. Each state would be required to match the federal minimum size limit in its state waters to maintain delegation or for its CEP to be approved. Currently, the minimum size limit in all Gulf state and federal waters except Texas state waters is 16 inches total length (TL). The current minimum size limit in Texas is 15 inches TL.

The Council is considering minimum size limit options ranging for 14 to 18 inches TL and has chosen 15 inches TL as its preferred alternative. This range of minimum size limits is considered to be effective for managing red snapper. A 15-inch minimum size limit is estimated to provide a slight increase in the poundage of red snapper that could be landed Gulf-wide (provides maximum yield-per-recruit).

Council Decision #8: What Happens if a State(s) Exceeds Their Quota?



Options:

- A. Status quo: If the total recreational ACL is exceeded, the overage is deducted from the following year's **total recreational ACL**.
- B. **Council-preferred**: If the total recreational ACL is exceeded, the overage is only deducted from the **state that exceeded their ACL**.

Sub-options for sector separation:

- 1. If a state has federal for-hire/private angler components, deduct overage only from **component that exceeded its ACL**.
- 2. If a state has federal for-hire/private angler components, deduct overage **equally from both components**.
- When Gulf-wide ACL is met, all recreational harvest must close, even if a state has not caught its allocation.



Lastly, the Council needs to decide what accountability measures (AMs) that apply if the recreational red snapper ACL is exceeded. Currently, if the total recreational ACL is exceeded in a given year and red snapper is considered overfished, the overage is deducted or “paid back” from the following year’s total recreational ACL. Then, the federal for-hire/private angler component ACL/ACTs are adjusted accordingly. Recreational seasons are calculated so that the ACT, which is 20% lower than the ACL, is projected to be met but not exceeded. This provides a buffer so that if harvest exceeds the ACT but is lower than the ACL, no overage pay back occurs in the following year. The 20% buffer will remain under regional management.

The Council’s preferred AM option (Option B above) would require that if the total recreational ACL is exceeded and red snapper is considered overfished, the amount of the overage would only be deducted from the state that exceeded their ACL. If multiple states exceed their ACL, each would have to pay back their portion of the overage. If the total recreational ACT is exceeded but the ACL is not exceeded, paybacks would not occur, but state(s) that exceeded their ACL may be expected to adjust their regulations to avoid an overage in the future.

If the Council chooses to allow states to manage federally-permitted vessels and private anglers separately, they could also select one of two sub-options of Option B. One option would deduct overages only from the component that exceeded its ACL, and the other would deduct overages equally from both components regardless of which component caused the overage.

It is also important to keep in mind that when the Gulf-wide recreational ACL is met, all recreational harvest of red snapper must close. This would continue under regional management, even if a state has not caught its allocation.

How Would States Track Quotas?



- MRIP would be used to project landings and determine if a state exceeded their quota
- All Gulf states using new data collection tools to track harvest
- States data collection tools must be vetted and “MRIP certified” before they could be used as primary means of tracking landings
 - “MRIP certification” will take a few years
 - Could result in landings calibrations that affect allocations



Currently, NOAA Fisheries calculates the recreational harvest seasons for red snapper by using past Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) landings to project how quickly the ACT will be met. NOAA Fisheries also uses MRIP landings to determine if the recreational quota (ACL) has been met. This would continue under regional management, but on a state-by-state basis.

All five Gulf states, including Florida, have developed or are testing new data collection tools for their red snapper or reef fish fisheries. The goals of these programs are to provide more accurate and timely recreational harvest data for their state. States may continue to develop and use these tools to track their landings, but they must be vetted and “MRIP certified” before they will be recognized by NOAA Fisheries as a tool for quota monitoring. During the vetting process, MRIP and the state data collection program would run side-by-side for a few years so they could be compared and analyzed for biases. If a state’s program is certified, it could be then used as the primary means for projecting seasons and monitoring landings in the state. Also, if a state’s program indicates that actual landings differ widely from MRIP harvest projections, state-by-state allocations would be adjusted to account for the differences. For example, if a state’s data collection program shows that MRIP overestimates harvest and this program is MRIP certified and accepted as the best available science, then the percentage of the Gulf-wide quota allocated to that state would be reduced accordingly.

Stakeholder Feedback –Public Hearings



- Council held public hearings in Destin and St. Petersburg during Oct. 2015
- Overall, more concerns about regional management than support
- Concerns:
 - Few benefits to Florida anglers
 - Florida's proposed allocation and estimated season length
 - Complicated
 - Would slow down state rulemaking process
 - Enforcement
 - Little support for regional management from for-hire vessels
- Advantages:
 - FWC could better balance regulations with local economic needs
 - Potential for sub-regions within Florida for red snapper management



The Council held public hearings on its regional management proposal in October. Florida meetings were held in Destin and St. Petersburg, and a webinar was also held for those who could not attend an in-person meeting. FWC staff attended these meetings and listened to the webinar. In Destin, 35 people attended and in St. Petersburg, 22 people attended. Overall, more people expressed concerns about regional management than support. Many questioned the benefits regional management would provide to Florida, especially considering the short season estimates for Florida. Many anglers and for-hire captains felt that regional management is very complicated and would be difficult for anglers to understand. Although regional management should provide more flexibility, there was concern that it would do the opposite by complicating and significantly slowing down the state rulemaking process for red snapper. There were concerns that regional management regulations and enforcement of these regulations would also be confusing for anglers and law enforcement alike. Finally, there was little support for regional management from for-hire vessels. Many requested that they continue to be managed by the Council or opposed Amendment 39 for the reasons stated above.

Those who were supportive of regional management felt that FWC could better balance regulations with local economic needs than the Council can. Many, particularly at the St. Petersburg meeting, also expressed support for creating sub-regions within Florida for red snapper if regional management moves forward. This concept was supported because legal-sized red snapper are abundant in state waters of the Panhandle but are not found in state waters off west central and southwest Florida. Stakeholders felt that creating sub-regions within Florida could allow west central and southwest Florida more access to the red snapper fishery.

Regional Management Considerations for Florida



- Process defeats the purpose of more flexibility
- CEP process reduces the nimbleness and adaptability of Commission rulemaking
- Florida would face shorter red snapper seasons
 - Projected seasons not much different than current Gulf-wide federal season
 - Current Council-preferred alternative puts Florida at a disadvantage compared to other states and could increase regulatory discards
 - If overages occur, Florida's seasons may be even shorter
- Enforcement of regional management would likely cause confusion and would be very different from enforcement of other Florida species



There are several considerations the Commission should weigh before deciding whether to support regional management. Amendment 39 proposes to do a simple thing – allow states to set their own seasons and bag limits for red snapper in both state and federal waters off their state to provide flexibility and management that is tailored to local needs. While regional management could provide the Commission a greater ability to manage red snapper based on local needs, it would come at the cost of reduced management flexibility overall. The Commission would have to manage red snapper in accordance with the Council's reef fish FMP and Magnuson-Stevens Act, and at least for a few years, would have to manage state waters using existing federal data collection tools. Essentially, red snapper management in both state and federal waters would be overseen by NOAA Fisheries and the Council. Also, the timeline and review process for setting regulations under the CEP options could reduce the ability of the Commission to be nimble and set regulations that respond to fishery or stakeholder needs.

Another consideration is that Florida's estimated season lengths under regional management are significantly shorter than Florida's recent state seasons and similar to the current federal season. Additionally, the Council's preferred alternative for state-by-state allocations would put Florida at a disadvantage compared to other Gulf states and could increase regulatory discards of red snapper. Also, if the state contributes to a Gulf-wide quota overage, Florida could face even shorter red snapper seasons to account for its portion of the overage. Reduced fishing days and large disparities with other state's fishing seasons could have negative impacts on the Florida Gulf coast anglers, businesses, and communities.

Finally, enforcement of red snapper regulations under regional management would likely be confusing for anglers and different from enforcement for other Florida species. The law enforcement approach (at sea vs. at the docks) will depend on not only Florida's regulations but other Gulf states regulations.

Direction Requested



- Staff recommendation:
 - Flexibility to work with Council toward more acceptable proposal
 - Continue to work with other states and the Council toward preferred alternatives that address:
 - Stakeholder concerns
 - Fairness to Florida anglers
 - Lack of flexibility
 - Providing the Executive Director and Chairman authority to consider and agree to modifications of individual regional management actions
 - Final action scheduled for Jan. 25-29, 2016, Council meeting in Orange Beach, AL



Staff requests flexibility to work with the Council towards a more acceptable regional management proposal. Staff recommends continuing to work with the other Gulf states and the Council towards preferred alternatives that address stakeholder concerns about Amendment 39, its fairness to Florida anglers, and its lack of flexibility. Staff also recommends providing the Executive Director and the Commission Chairman authority to consider and agree to changes to individual regional management actions on behalf of the Commission as needed. The Council is anticipated to take action on regional management at its January 25-29, 2015 meeting in Orange Beach, AL.

The following slides are considered backup material
and are not anticipated to be part of the actual
presentation



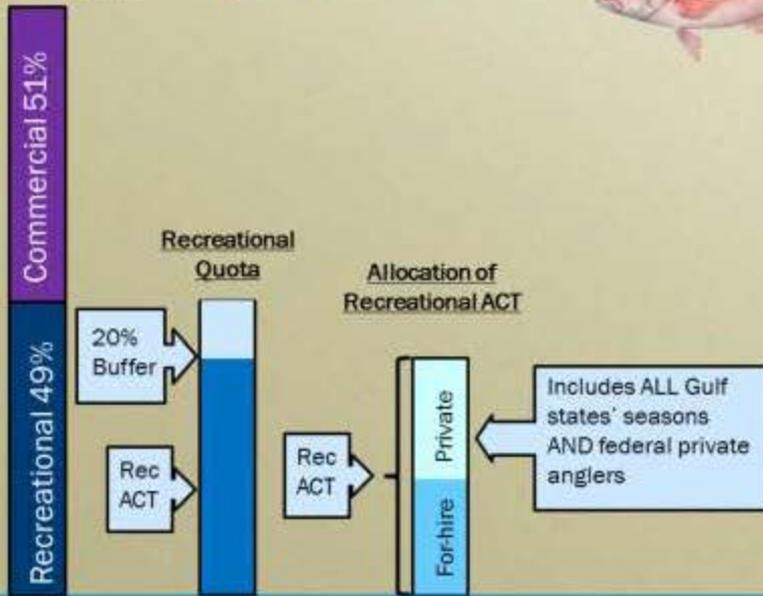
H.R. 3094 – Another Regional Management Option



- Based on red snapper regional management concept presented at April 2015 Commission meeting and developed by Gulf state directors
- Would transfer red snapper management from Gulf Council to states via this new management body (GSR SMA)
 - Composed of 5 Gulf state directors
 - States would set own management, conduct assessments
 - GSR SMA would approve management plans
 - Commercial fishery would stay with Council for 3 years then be transferred to GSR SMA
- FWC provided support for H.R. 3094 at House Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans legislative hearing held Oct. 22



Gulf Red Snapper Quota



CEP Required Information



- Point of contact
- Point of contact with authority to close the fishery
- Proposed season structure and bag limit
- Specify if CEP is intended for 1 or 2 years (NOAA would review and could require modifications after year 1 of a 2-year plan)
- Analysis demonstrating CEP's ability to keep recreational harvest within regional quota and a description of methods
- Summary of previous year's ability to stay within regional quota
- Explanation of enforcement
- Description of in-season monitoring (if applicable) and plan to close the fishery if the quota is reached
- Analysis for NEPA, MSA, and other required laws (only required if CEP contains management measures other than seasons and bag limits)



CEP Deadlines



- July 1 • Preliminary CEP due to NOAA Fisheries and Council
- Sept. 1 • CEP due to technical review committee (if this option is chosen)
- Oct. 1 • Technical review committee or NOAA Fisheries provides preliminary determination of whether the plan is a CEP
- Oct. 15 • Revised CEP due to technical review committee or NOAA Fisheries (only if necessary)
- Nov. 1 • Technical review committee provides CEPs that it approved to NOAA Fisheries for final approval
- Jan. 1 • NOAA Fisheries notifies the public which states have approved CEPs

