

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 20, 2019
Subject: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) Report

Purpose:

To report on actions from the GMFMC's January 28-31 meeting in Orange Beach, AL and finalize the 2019 Gulf recreational red snapper season.

Summary:

The Council is scheduled to meet the last week of January, and briefing documents will be updated as soon as possible following the Council meeting. Due to the partial government shutdown, the Council will not be able to take final action on Reef Fish Amendment 50 – State Management of Recreational Red Snapper. Anticipated Council discussions include:

- Gray Snapper: Potential management changes to annual catch limits (ACLs) and status determination criteria.
- Red Grouper: Potential ACL reduction based on recent analysis and stakeholder concerns that indicate the fishery may be overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council requested NOAA Fisheries take emergency action to reduce the ACL for 2019, but this action is pending and would only be short-term.
- Carryover of Unused Quota: Discussions to allow the carryover of unused quota to be harvested the following year.
- State Management of Red Snapper: Continued discussions and review of feedback from recent public workshops on potentially transferring management of the recreational red snapper fishery in Gulf federal waters from the Council/NOAA Fisheries to each of the Gulf states.

Lastly, staff will provide an update on the 2018 Florida Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permit and recreational red snapper season in Gulf state and federal waters. The 2018 Florida red snapper quota was exceeded by 13%, and the overage of 232,211 lbs. will have to be deducted from the 2019 quota. At its last meeting, the Commission set the draft season for 2019 from June 11 through July 12 (32 continuous days) to provide optimal harvest opportunities for Florida anglers and help reduce the risk of an overage. If there is quota available after the summer season, FWC could reopen in the fall for a limited harvest on weekends. Staff will request final approval from the Commission on the 2019 Gulf recreational red snapper season.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approving the proposed season structure for the 2019 Gulf recreational red snapper season. Staff may request direction on other items following the Council meeting.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

