

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** December 7, 2017  
**Subject:** Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper – 2018 Recreational Season

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## **Purpose:**

Staff will provide a review and discussion of recent federal Gulf red snapper discussions and potential options for the 2018 recreational red snapper harvest season for state waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

## **Summary:**

Staff will present an update on recent action that could affect the Gulf recreational red snapper fishery. Topics will include the following.

- An invitation from NOAA Fisheries to each of the Gulf states to develop a fishery management pilot program for Gulf reef fish and apply for a federal Exempted Fishing Permit that would authorize each state to lead management of Gulf red snapper/reef fish in Gulf federal waters off their state in 2018. DIRECTION REQUESTED
- Federal legislation related to red snapper, including the Regionally Empowered Decision-making for Snapper, Noting the Angling Public and the Preservation of an Exceptional Resource Act” or the “RED SNAPPER Act” (H.R. 3588 and S. 1686).
- Development of Council amendments that could delegate management of red snapper caught in federal waters to each of the Gulf states. DIRECTION REQUESTED
- Council discussions on potential establishment of IFQ-type programs for charter boats and headboats fishing for red snapper and other reef fish.
- Preliminary harvest estimates from the 2017 recreational season, as well as a lawsuit that challenges the extension of the federal recreational season in 2017.
- An in-progress federal stock assessment of Gulf red snapper, as well as pending Council items that could affect future management of red snapper.

## **Staff Recommendation:**

Staff requests direction on Gulf recreational red snapper management items including:

- The 2018 recreational season for state waters and whether to pursue a management pilot program to lead management of harvest in federal waters off Florida via an Exempted Fishing Permit;
- Delegation preferences for state management of red snapper in federal waters via the Council process.

## **Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management