



Gulf Red Snapper and Gray Triggerfish

Draft Rule

February 8, 2017

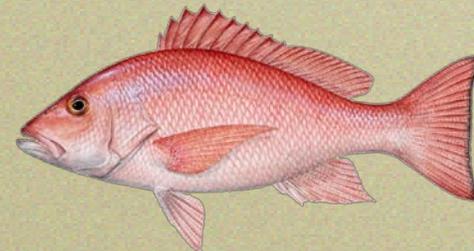
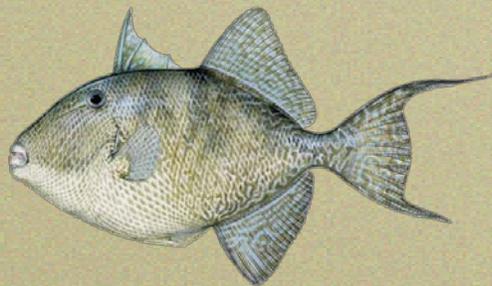
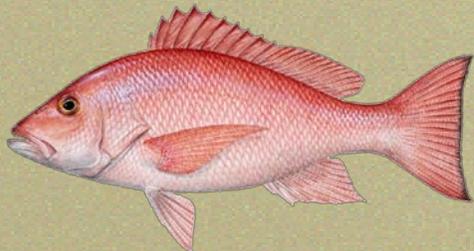
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management



Outline



- Gulf Reef Fish Survey update
- Red snapper updates from Council meeting
- Red snapper state season draft rule
- Gray triggerfish updates from Council meeting
- Gray triggerfish 2017 season considerations



Gulf Reef Fish Survey: Estimating Saltwater Recreational Harvest

Access Point Intercept Surveys (in-person interviews) result in catch per trip estimates

X

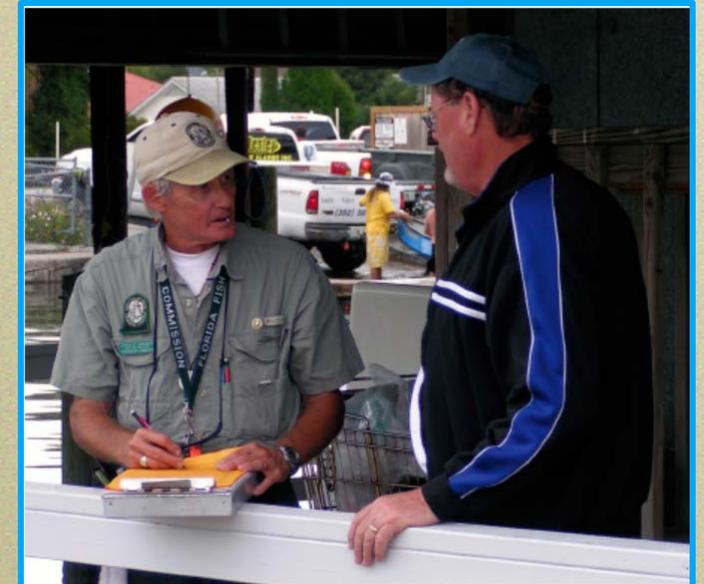
Effort Surveys (phone or mail) result in trip estimates

=

Total Harvest

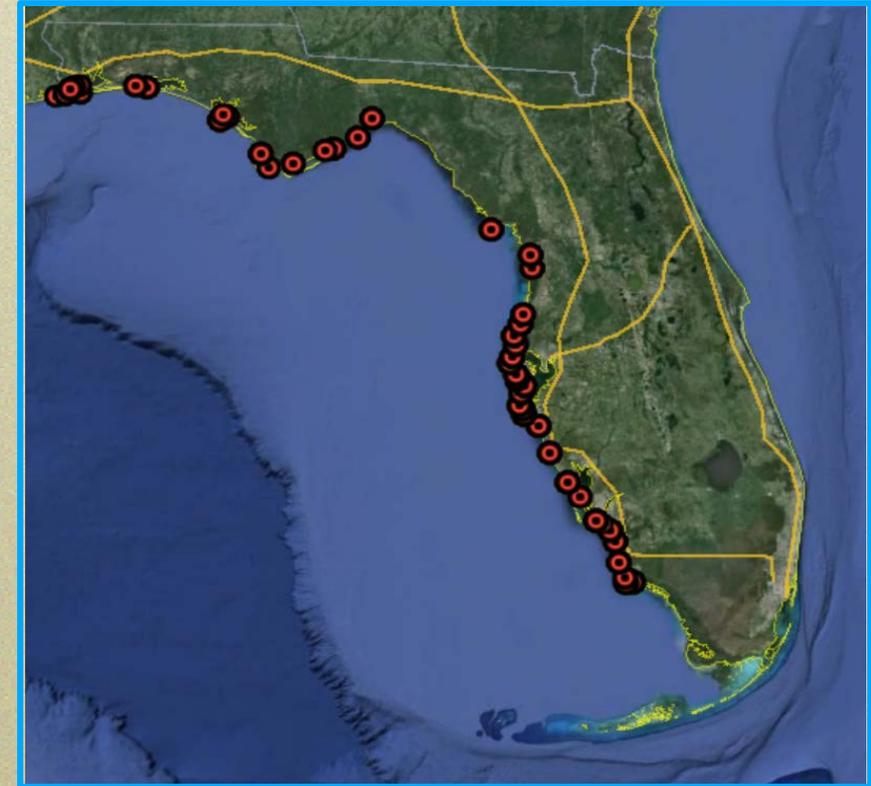
- GRFS over-samples offshore access points relative to MRIP

- GRFS uses directed mail survey
- MRIP uses phone survey of coastal households

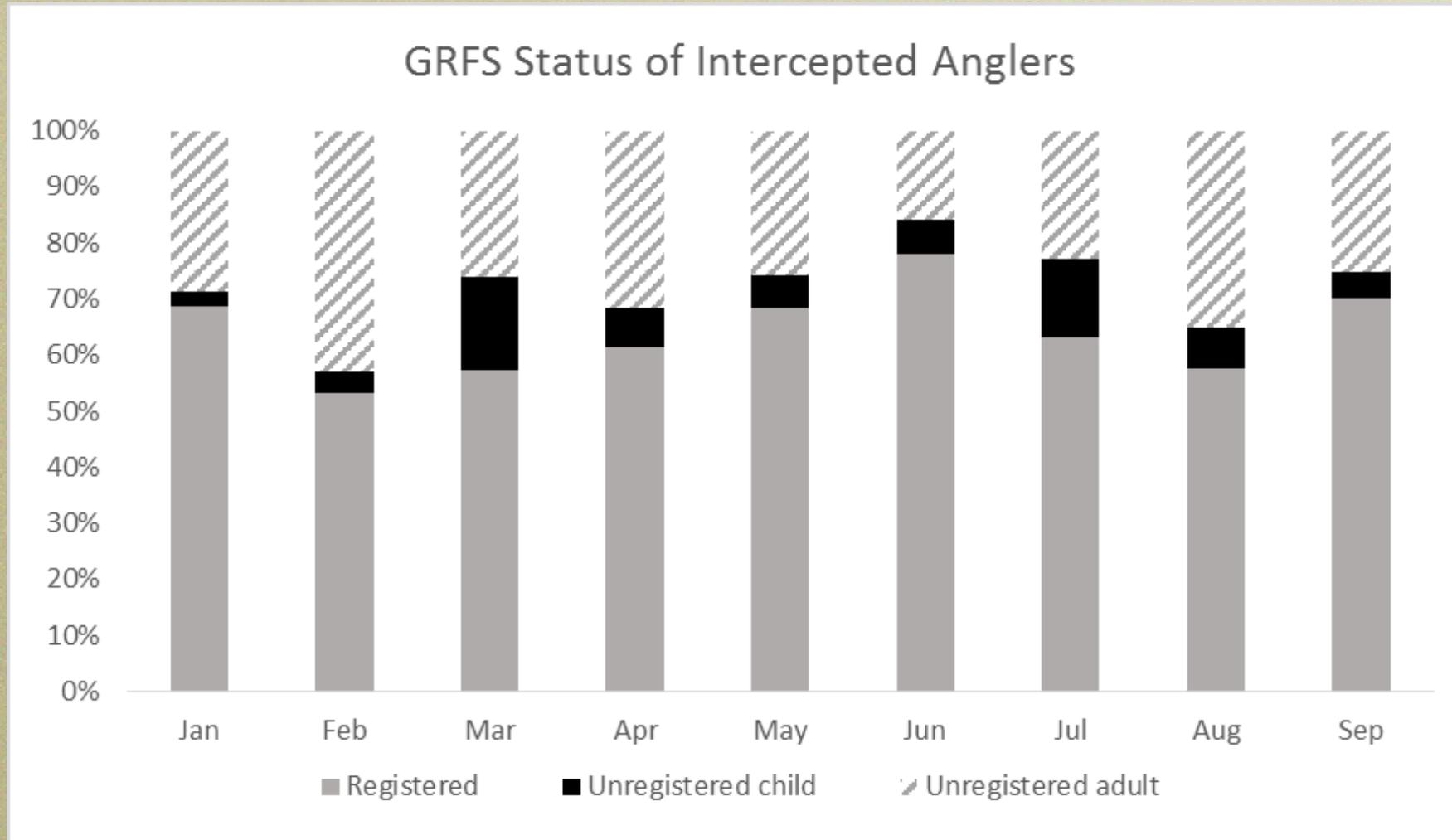


Gulf Reef Fish Survey

- 2016 Red snapper season was the second season with the GRFS in place
- Angler interviews at access points likely to be used by reef fish anglers
 - In 2016, GRFS intercepted 863 fishing parties targeting reef fish (Jan. – Oct. 2016)
 - GRFS data combined with data collected during regular MRIP survey to improve sample sizes for reef fish
- Targeted monthly mail survey
 - Nearly 500,000 anglers currently signed up for GRFS (as of Dec. 31, 2016)
 - ~ 6,600 surveys mailed each month
 - Mean response rate ~18%

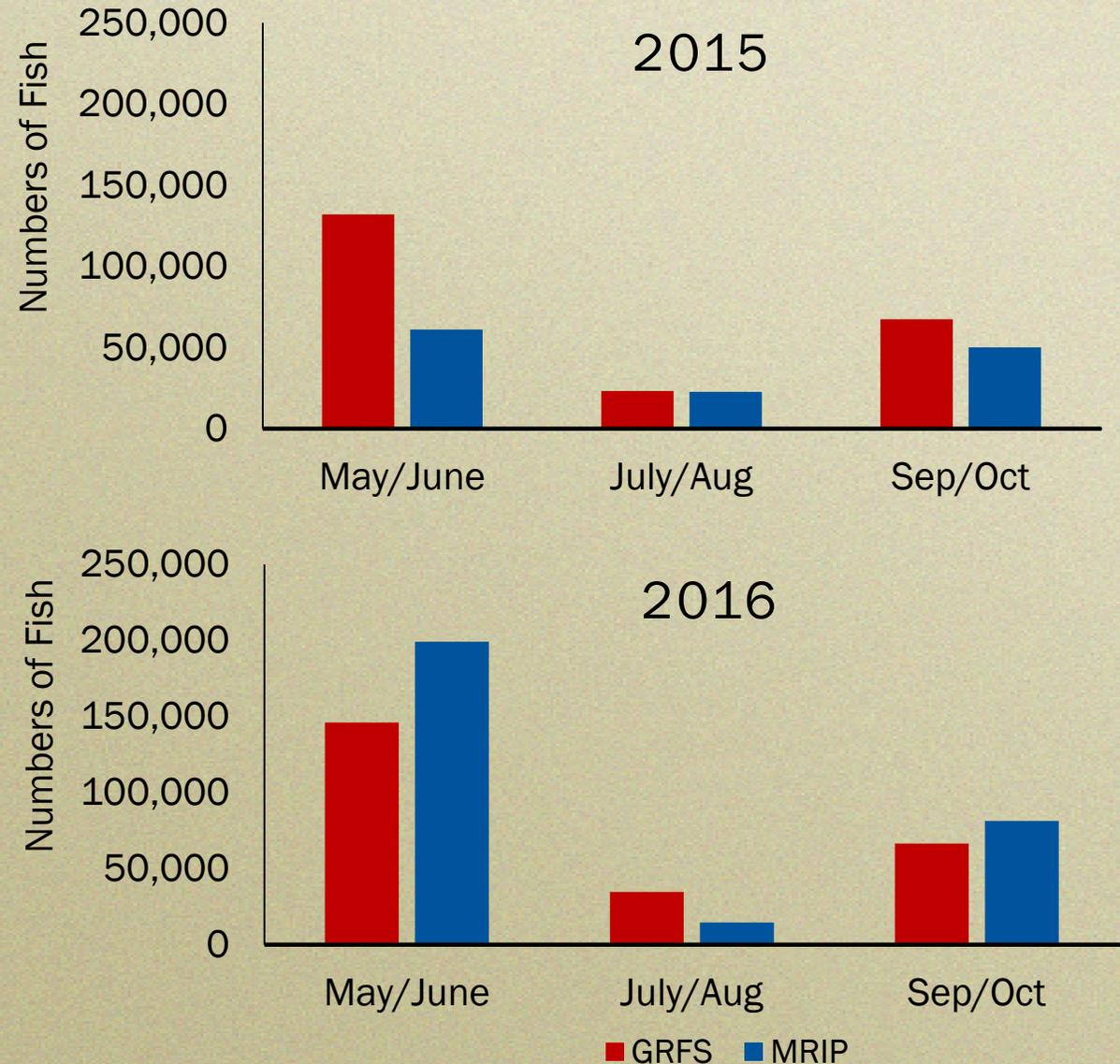


Adjusting for the Sign-up Status of Gulf Reef Fish Anglers Interviewed in Dockside Surveys



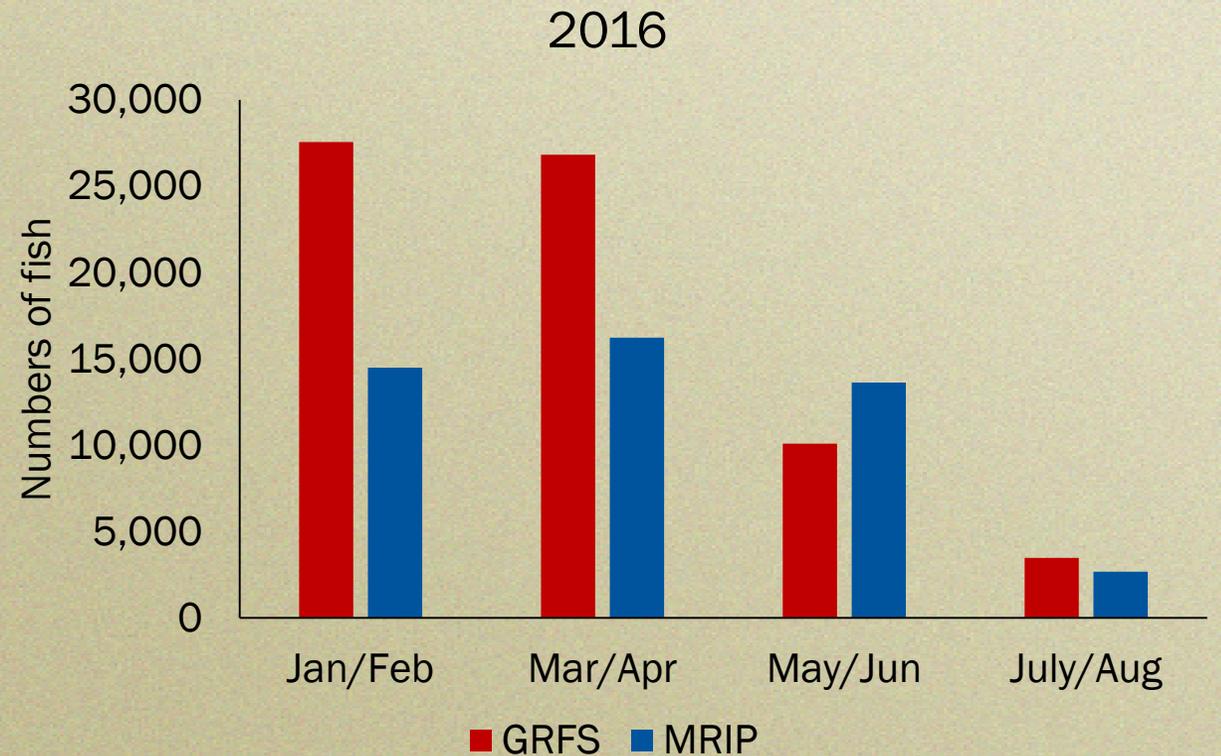
Gulf Red Snapper Harvest: GRFS and MRIP

- 2015 May/June estimates from GRFS higher than MRIP
 - Expected because effort is estimated with a mail survey (versus phone)
- 2016 May/June estimates showed the opposite pattern
 - However, GRFS more stable (consistent, less variable) between years



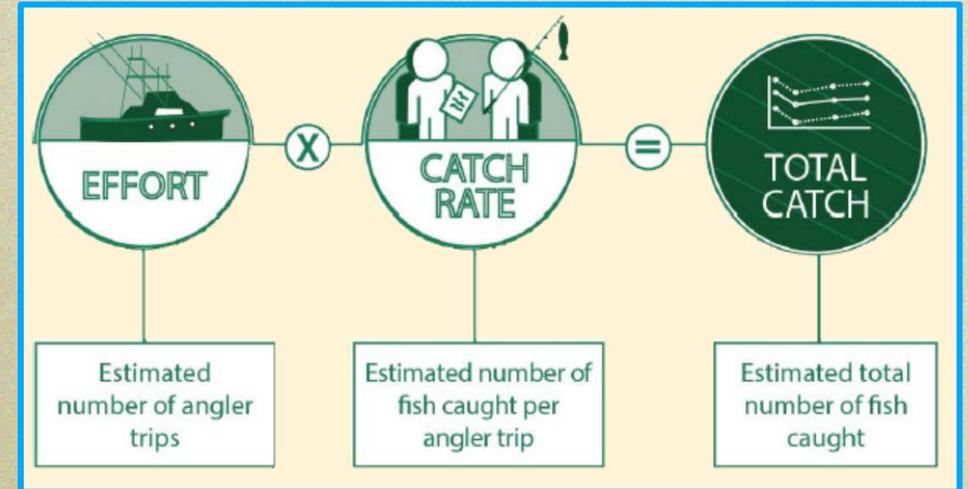
Gulf Gray Triggerfish Harvest: GRFS and MRIP

- GRFS began in May 2015 after gray triggerfish season closed
 - No landings estimated by GRFS
- For 2016, GRFS estimates generally higher than MRIP
 - Expected because effort is estimated with a mail survey (versus phone)



Gulf Reef Fish Survey and MRIP: The Future

- The GRFS design has been developed in close partnership with NMFS and their statisticians
- GRFS sunsets June 30, 2020
- In early 2017, FWC and NMFS will begin a formal review to evaluate statistical methods and identify necessary improvements
 - Expected completion of review in late 2017
- Surveys in LA, AL, and MS currently undergoing same certification process



January Council Meeting Update – Red Snapper



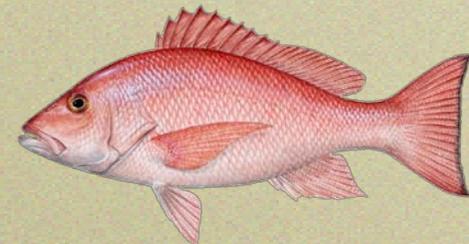
- Discussion of expanding separate, allocation-based management of charter boats and headboats to red snapper plus gag grouper, red grouper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish
- Commercial IFQ program updates
 - Final action anticipated in April that would make minor changes to red snapper and grouper/tilefish IFQ programs
 - Discussion of amendment that could affect who can own shares, create allocation caps, and change how shares and allocation are transferred and distributed



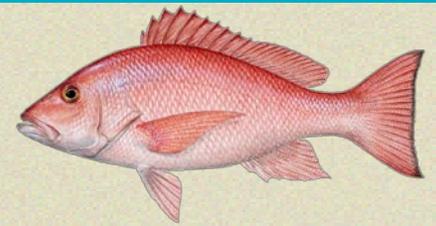
Red Snapper – 2016 Preliminary Recreational Landings



- Landings are incomplete but include preliminary data from
 - MRIP (FL, AL, MS) and headboat data through Oct. 31
 - LA data through Dec. 15
 - TX data through May 15
- 99% of overall recreational ACL harvested
 - Private anglers harvested 150% of ACT, 120% of ACL
 - Federally-permitted for-hire harvested 87% of ACT, 70% of ACL
- If overall recreational ACL is exceeded, the component that triggered the overage would have to pay back overage in 2017



State Red Snapper Season Draft Rule



- In November, the Commission directed staff to prepare a draft rule to set the state season for 2017 to be similar to the 2016 season

Current season in FWC rule – resulted in 78 days for 2016

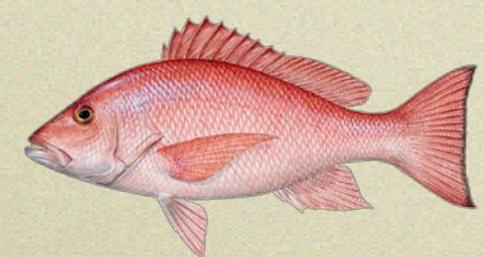
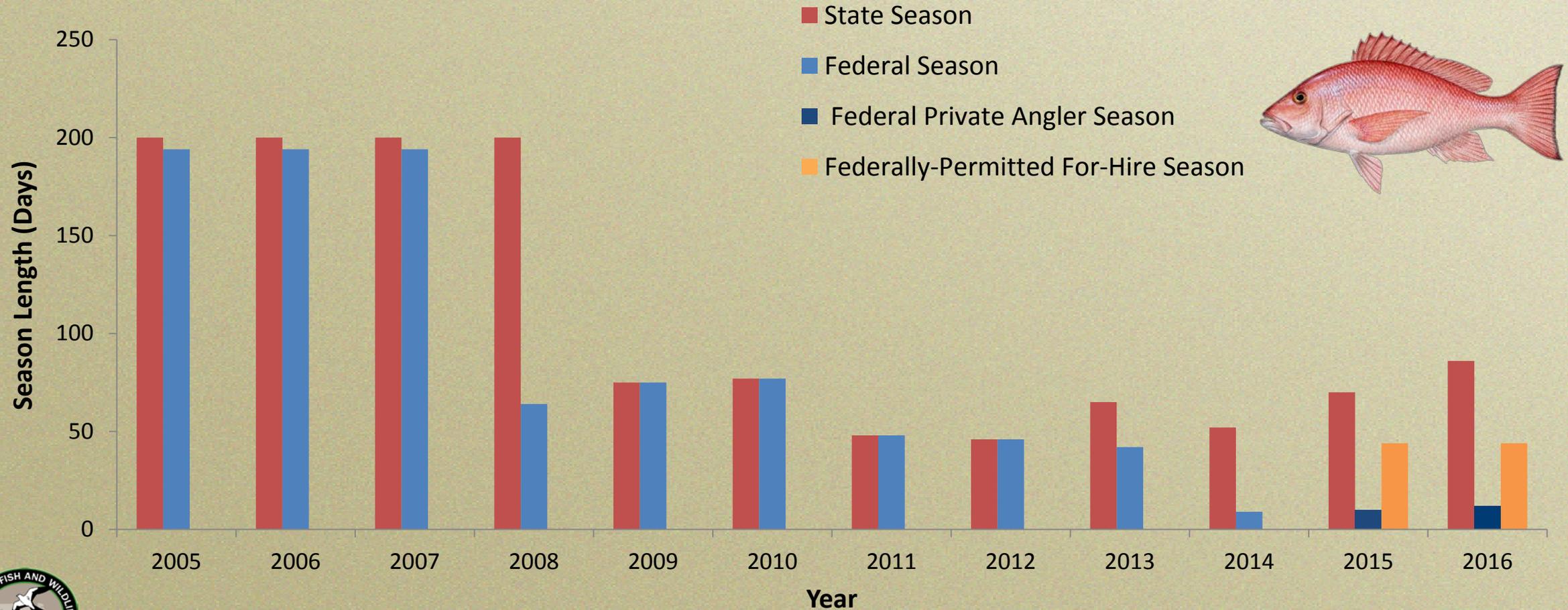
- May weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) starting May 7
- Open continuously from Memorial Day weekend through July 10
- Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in September and October, plus Labor Day
- **2016 only**: Additional 7 days opened in November due to Hurricane Hermine

Proposed season – results in 78 days for 2017

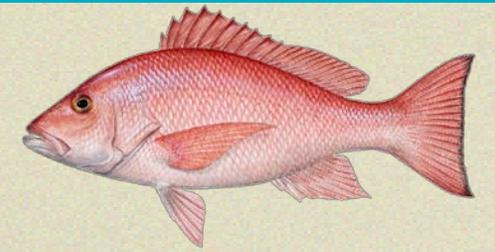
- May weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) starting the first Saturday in May
- Open continuously starting the Saturday before Memorial Day through the Sunday following Independence Day
- Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in September and October, plus Labor Day



Florida State and Federal Recreational Gulf Red Snapper Season Lengths, 2005-2016



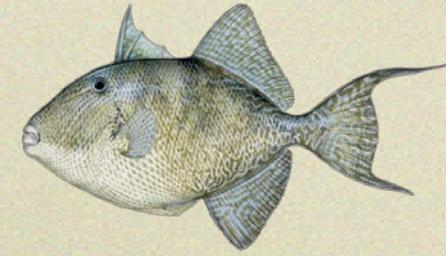
State Season Considerations



- Large proportion of Gulf recreational red snapper harvested off Florida
 - State waters harvest primarily in the Panhandle
- All season days are not created equal
- State season landings are counted toward private angler allocation
- Federally-permitted for-hire may only fish in state waters when state and federal waters are both open
- Federal season may be shortened to account for inconsistent state seasons
- 2016 landings data incomplete, but 99% of total ACL caught
 - 120% of private angler ACL caught
 - If overall ACL is exceeded, 2017 private angler ACL will be reduced



Gray Triggerfish – Council Update

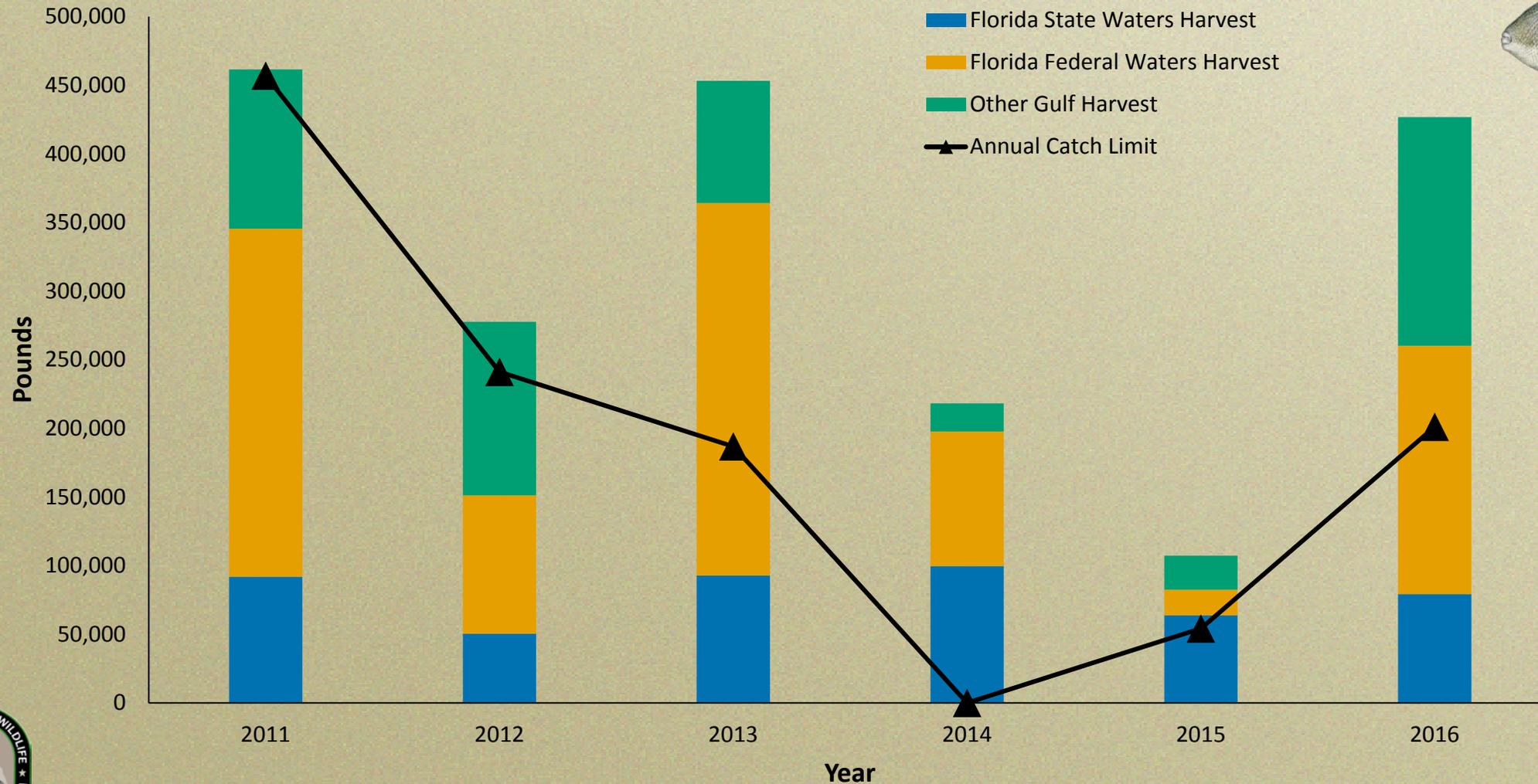
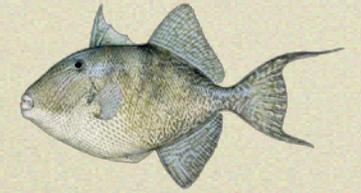


- Rebuilding plan preferred options
 - Decrease recreational bag limit from 2 to 1 fish
 - Increase recreational size limit from 14 to 15 inches
 - Annual recreational closures during January, February, June, and July
 - Increase commercial trip limit from 12 to 16 fish
- Preliminary recreational landings indicate 213% of 2016 ACL harvested
 - 2016 overage must be paid back in 2017
- No harvest of recreational gray triggerfish in Gulf federal waters during 2017

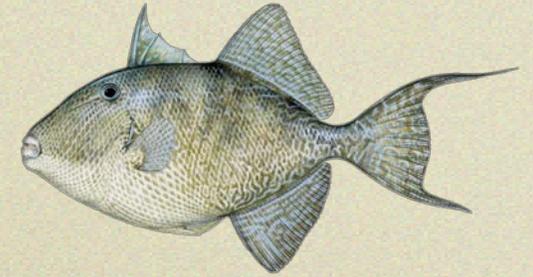
Commission also closed state waters for 2017 but expressed interest in a limited fall season



Gray Triggerfish Recreational Harvest off Florida



Possible 2017 Recreational Gray Triggerfish State Season – Stakeholder Feedback So Far



Open for limited season in 2017

- Many believe stock is improving and fishery should be open
- Maintains state waters fishing opportunities

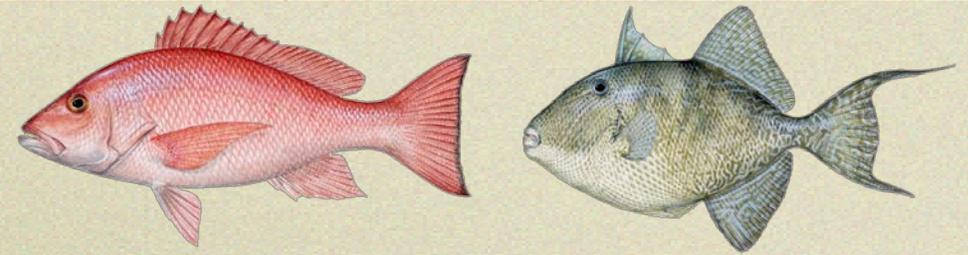
Keep state waters closed in 2017

- Helps break cycle of quota overages
 - All Gulf harvest in excess of ACL (19,987 pounds) will be deducted from 2018 quota
- Preserve federal waters fishing opportunities for 2018
- Contributes to stock rebuilding

Staff will continue to gather stakeholder input on a limited fall 2017 gray triggerfish season



Staff Recommendation



- Consider modifying last year's Gulf **red snapper** season structure

Proposed season – results in 78 days for 2017

- May weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) starting first Saturday in May
- Open continuously starting the Saturday before Memorial Day through Sunday following Independence Day
- Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in September and October, plus Labor Day
- Continue to gather input on reopening Gulf **gray triggerfish** for a limited fall 2017 season

If approved and directed, return for a final public hearing on red snapper and discussion of gray triggerfish at the April Commission meeting

