

## Gulf Red Snapper – 2018 Recreational Season



Draft Rule  
February 8, 2018



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This is a review and discussion of recent federal Gulf red snapper items and potential options for the 2018 recreational red snapper harvest season for state waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

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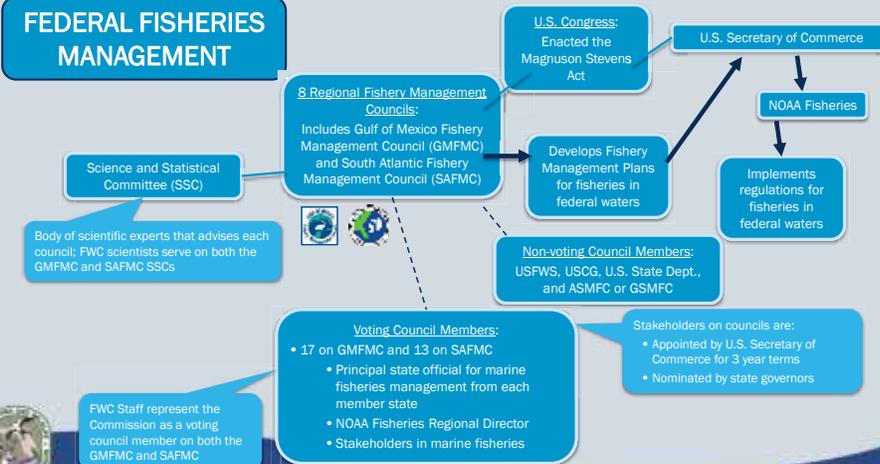
Unless otherwise noted, images throughout the presentation are by FWC.

## Outline

- Federal fisheries management overview
- Gulf red snapper management basics
- 2017 recreational season and landings
- Gulf Council red snapper updates
- 2018 recreational season
  - Florida's Gulf recreational red snapper pilot program – Exempted Fishing Permit
  - Reporting – proposed draft rule
- Next steps



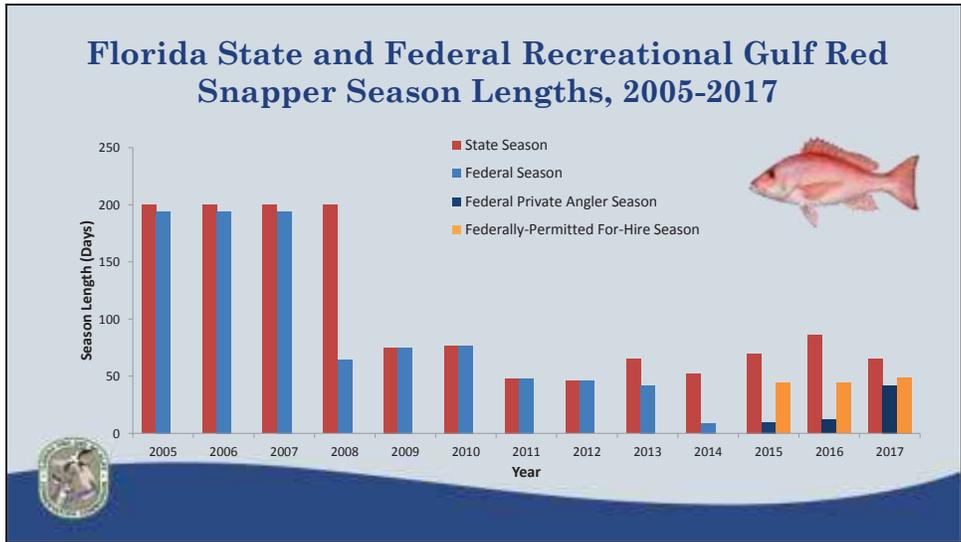
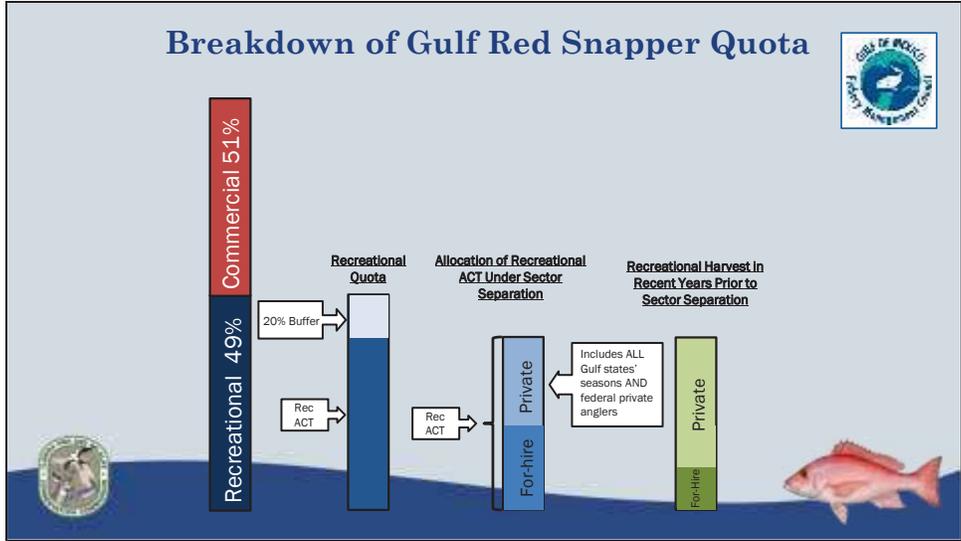
## FEDERAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



## Gulf Red Snapper Overview

- Stock has history of overfishing and until recently was considered overfished
- Council manages red snapper using annual catch limit (ACL), which is applied to harvest from federal and state waters, and allocated among sectors
  - **Commercial:** 51%
  - **Recreational:** 49%, which is subdivided into components with separate seasons
    - **Federally-permitted for-hire:** 42.3%
    - **Private anglers:** 57.7%
      - NOAA Fisheries sets federal waters seasons based on how quickly quotas will be harvested
      - FWC and other state fishery management agencies set seasons for their state waters
        - State seasons that are inconsistent with the federal private angler season result in a shortened federal season to account for state harvest





- ## 2017 Recreational Red Snapper Seasons
- Federal season for private anglers (42 total days)**
- Initially set by NOAA Fisheries to be June 1-3
  - U.S. Department of Commerce re-opened federal waters to private anglers
    - Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from June 16 – Sept. 3
    - Plus Monday and Tuesday of 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend and Labor Day
  - Lawsuit filed that challenges re-opening of the fishery in federal waters
    - Case is on hold through the end of the year
- Gulf state waters season (65 total days)**
- Saturdays and Sundays in May, open continuously May 27 – June 18, then matched federal season
- Federally-permitted for-hire season (49 total days)**
- June 1 – July 19

## 2017 Season Update – Preliminary Recreational Landings

- Landings are incomplete but preliminary data indicate overall ACL was likely exceeded this year
  - Landings estimates thus far only include MRIP data through Oct. 31 and includes Texas landings through May 14
    - Private anglers at 170% of ACL (213% of ACT)
    - Federally-permitted for-hire at 73% of ACL (91% of ACT)



## State Pilot Program for 2018 Season – Exempted Fishing Permit Opportunity

- NOAA Fisheries invited each Gulf state to apply for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to participate in pilot program opportunity created by Congress
  - EFPs are permits that allow harvest for certain purposes that otherwise would not be allowed under federal regulations
- All Gulf states have submitted EFP proposals
- EFPs will be mechanism for 2018 and 2019 federal private recreational season
- State proposals subject to approval by NOAA Fisheries
- Florida EFP proposal could be used to set federal private angler and state recreational seasons for 2018 and potentially 2019



## Florida EFP Opportunity – Proposal Goal

Test data collection and quota monitoring methods by FWC for management of the private recreational and state for-hire components of the red snapper fishery



## Florida EFP Proposal – Harvest Regulations

- Regional, split seasons for state and federal waters off Florida (state charter captains can harvest out to 9 nautical miles)
  - **Panhandle** (Escambia through Gulf counties): projected season of May 25 – June 5
  - **Peninsula** (Franklin through the Gulf-portion of Monroe County): projected season of June 6–17
    - Additional fall season (3-day weekends) if unused quota is available
- 2-fish bag limit and 16-inch minimum size limit apply
- Anglers encouraged to use descending devices or venting tools
- GRFS, for-hire, and iAngler app reporting



## Gulf Reef Fish Survey

- FWC initiated the GRFS to improve reef fish recreational data collection and supplement the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)
- Includes all recreational anglers fishing from a private vessel off Florida's Gulf coast who intend to harvest, attempt to harvest or possess any of the following reef fish species:
  - Red snapper, gag grouper, greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, almaco jack, red grouper, black grouper, vermillion snapper, or gray triggerfish
- Sign up through FWC licensing system
  - Subset of GRFS anglers are surveyed about their trips



## Florida EFP Proposal – Data Collection and Quota Monitoring

- Anglers would be required to sign up for Gulf Reef Fish Survey
- State for-hire operations that target red snapper and other reef fish would have to report their intent to harvest with FWC
  - *This would require a change to FWC rules*
- MRIP, Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and special for-hire surveys would be used to estimate harvest and effort
  - Red snapper harvested under this EFP must be landed in Florida to facilitate quota monitoring
- Anglers and state captains would be encouraged to report trip information via iAngler app



## Proposed Draft Rule

- **68B-14.009 Reporting Requirement**—Require for-hire operations that target or harvest reef fish in Gulf of Mexico state waters (excluding Monroe County), to report their intention to harvest or attempt to harvest reef fish species listed under GRFS, including red snapper
  - Vessels fishing under a valid federal Gulf of Mexico Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish would be excluded from this requirement
  - Reporting would be required in accordance with 379.354(7)(e) F.S.



## Council Input on EFP

- Council reviewed each of the five Gulf states EFPs for recreational red snapper management for 2018 and 2019
- Discussion about adding quota payback provision to the Florida EFP
- Council voted to recommend approval of each state's EFP, with the condition that if federal for-hire vessels are included in any state's EFP, it would not shorten the length of the federal for-hire season
- NOAA Fisheries is reviewing each state's EFP and could approve EFPs by mid-April



## Future Red Snapper State Management through Council Process



- Individual state management plans for moving beyond the EFP being developed for all five Gulf states
- Would allow each state to manage the recreational fishery in Gulf state and federal waters
- State-by-state allocations could be based on past landings, geographical distribution of red snapper biomass, and/or number of angler trips
- Council considering Florida plan that would have an option for “full delegation” that would provide maximum flexibility for managing within a Council-set ACL
- Discussions will continue at upcoming Council meetings
- Earliest this could likely occur is 2020

Letter drafted with Commission approved delegation options after December meeting



## Council Development of IFQ-Type Management of For-Hire Vessels



- Council has been developing individual headboat and charter vessel plans
  - Headboat plan could include red snapper, gag grouper, red grouper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish
  - Charter plan could include red snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish
- Magnuson-Stevens requires the Council to poll industry (who have “substantially fished”) on potential IFQ programs before the Council takes final action
  - Council-preferred option for headboats: vessels who have landed annual average of 100 fish of above species combined can vote
  - Charter options: 1 vote per permit or 1 vote per unique permit holder



## Red Snapper Sector Reallocation



- Current Allocation:
  - Commercial: 51% and Recreational: 49%
- In 2016, Amendment 28 shifted 2.5% from the commercial sector to the recreational sector based on updates to recreational landings history
  - 2017 court order vacated the amendment and reinstated the current allocations
    - Determined Amendment 28 placed the commercial sector at a disadvantage, violating National Standard Four of the MSA
- At the February Council meeting, there were discussions to start developing an amendment to re-examine the current commercial and recreational red snapper allocation



## Next Steps for 2018 Recreational Season

- **Today:** Consider draft rule for improving data collection for state for-hire operations under EFP
- **Mid- to late-February:** NOAA Fisheries will advertise the state EFPs for a 15-45 day public comment period
- **Mid-April:** EFPs could be approved by NOAA Fisheries
- **April 25-26:** FWC Meeting
  - Final public hearing on improving for-hire reporting
  - Finalize 2018 recreational season for Florida via Executive Order
- **Late May:** Tentative opening of Florida recreational season



## Staff Recommendation

Staff requests approving the proposed draft rule:

- **68B-14.009 Reporting Requirement**–Require for-hire operations that target or harvest reef fish in Gulf of Mexico state waters (excluding Monroe County), to report their intention to harvest or attempt to harvest red snapper or GRFS reef fish species
  - Vessels fishing under a valid federal Gulf of Mexico Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish would be excluded from this requirement
  - Reporting would be required in accordance with 379.354(7)(e) F.S.

