

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 8, 2018
Subject: Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Update

Purpose:

Provide an overview of recent federal Gulf red snapper discussions, an update on the 2018 recreational red snapper harvest season for state waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and proposed draft rule that would improve data collection for the Gulf state waters for-hire red snapper/reef fish fishery.

Summary:

Staff will present an update on actions since the last Commission meeting that could affect the Gulf recreational red snapper fishery. This item will be updated following the January Gulf Council meeting, but topics may include:

- Development of Council amendments that could delegate management of red snapper caught in federal waters to each of the Gulf states
- Council discussions on potential establishment of IFQ-type programs for charter boats and headboats fishing for red snapper and other reef fish
- An update on the status of Florida's and other states' proposed fishery management pilot programs (and potential federal Exempted Fishing Permits, or EFPs) that could authorize each state to lead management of recreational Gulf red snapper/reef fish in Gulf federal waters off their state in 2018

As part of Florida's proposed fishery management pilot program, staff will present a proposed draft rule that would improve data collection capabilities for certain Gulf reef fish species, including red snapper, by identifying the population of state-waters-only for-hire operations fishing for these species during 2018 and 2019. Florida Statutes require that for-hire operations that are licensed by FWC must maintain and report data as required by FWC rule. The proposed draft rule would require charter, headboat, and saltwater fishing guide operations that target or harvest certain reef fish in Gulf of Mexico state waters (excluding Monroe County) to report their intention to harvest or attempt to harvest the following species: red snapper, vermilion snapper, gag grouper, red grouper, black grouper, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, or almaco jack. The rule also would allow for data collection targeted specifically from these state waters for-hire fishing operations, which would help improve harvest data and quota tracking. This requirement would not apply to vessels fishing under a valid federal Gulf of Mexico Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approving the proposed draft rule to improve Gulf red snapper and reef fish harvest data collected from charter, headboat, and fishing guides that only fish in state waters. Staff may request direction on Gulf red snapper items, including the 2018 recreational season and implementation of Florida's proposed pilot program.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Martha Guyas, Division of Marine Fisheries Management