

This is a review and discussion of actions taken at the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (Council) meeting on June 17-21 in Pensacola and July 17 in New Orleans, LA and scheduled discussions for the Council's Aug. 26-30 meeting in San Antonio, TX. This document will be updated following the Council's August meeting.

Authors: Martha Bademan, Jessica McCawley, and Tony Bresnen

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2013 Red Snapper Quota and Recreational Season – Final Action



- Stock is rebuilding ahead of schedule
- Quota increased from 8.46 to 11 million pounds for 2013
- Supplemental recreational season scheduled to begin Oct. 1
 - Current season estimate is 21 consecutive days, but number of days depends on harvest during summer season
- Pending approval by U.S. Secretary of Commerce

Staff recommends creating a consistent supplemental recreational season for Gulf state waters



In June, the Council received the new red snapper stock assessment and learned that the stock is still overfished, but is rebuilding ahead of schedule. In response, the Council held a special meeting on July 17 to increase the red snapper quota and set a supplemental recreational season for 2013. If the Council's actions are approved by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, the overall red snapper quota will increase from 8.46 million pounds (mp) to 11 mp for 2013. This equates to a 5.39 mp quota for recreational and a 5.61 mp quota for commercial harvest in 2013. Quotas for 2014 and 2015 will be set during future Council meetings and are expected to also be approximately 11 mp.

The Council also approved a supplemental red snapper season for 2013 for the recreational fishery so that anglers can harvest this additional quota. This supplemental season is scheduled to begin Oct. 1 and is currently estimated to be 21 consecutive days. However, the length of the season will depend on how much of the recreational quota was harvested during the summer season. The actual dates of the supplemental season will be announced after the recreational harvest estimates from the summer season are released in late August or early September. This season opening is also pending approval by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

If the U.S. Secretary of Commerce approves the proposed quota increase and the federal supplemental recreational season scheduled for 2013, staff recommends creating a consistent supplemental recreational season for Gulf state waters opening Oct. 1, 2013. This slide will be updated when more details about the proposed federal supplemental recreational season are released by NOAA Fisheries Service.

Red Snapper Regional Management – Final Action Expected



- Public hearings and final Council action expected in August
- Would provide states more flexibility in setting seasons, but not necessarily more fishing days
- State must track quota to prevent exceeding allocation
- State would manage landings from state and federal waters
- State allocation percentage a controversial issue



The Council is holding public hearings on regional management of the recreational red snapper fishery in August and is expected to take final action on regional management as early as the August Council meeting. Florida public hearings are scheduled in Panama City on Aug. 7 and St. Petersburg on Aug. 12. The Council's current preferred alternatives are to make each state its own region for red snapper management and allocate the Gulf-wide recreational quota to individual states. Each state would be responsible for tracking their quota to ensure that their allocation is not exceeded. Regional management would give states flexibility in setting the season and bag limit for red snapper, but would not necessarily result in more fishing days because each state would be required to stay within their quota. States would have to abide by the Magnuson-Stevens Act in setting these regulations so that the red snapper stock continues to rebuild and overfishing is avoided. The regional management system being considered by the Council would allow states to manage recreational red snapper landed in their state, whether it is harvested from state or federal waters.

As of this writing, the Council has not yet determined how the Gulf-wide recreational red snapper quota would be divided among the states under regional management. This is a controversial issue because the percentage of red snapper landed by each state over the years has changed. This is an important issue for Florida because landings have shifted toward the eastern Gulf of Mexico as the stock rebuilds and expands off West Florida.

This slide will be updated following the August Council meeting.

Other Red Snapper Management Options - Discussions

- Council will review scoping documents in August
 - Sector reallocation
 - Inter-sector trading



The Council will also continue discussions of other management options for the red snapper fishery and is expected to review scoping documents on sector reallocation and inter-sector trading at their August meeting. Shifting allocation from the commercial sector to the recreational sector could stabilize or lengthen the recreational season. If inter-sector trading was allowed, private recreational anglers or for-hire vessels could lease or purchase red snapper Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQs) from commercial harvesters and harvest them without the IFQ requirements.

This slide will be updated after the August Council meeting.

Headboat Electronic Reporting – Final Action



- Federally-permitted headboats will be required to electronically report fishing records weekly
- Allows for more accurate and timely data collection
- Consistent with reporting requirements in Atlantic federal waters
- Pending approval by U.S. Secretary of Commerce



In June, the Council took final action on an amendment that if approved by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, will require federally-permitted headboats to report their fishing records to NOAA Fisheries Service electronically on a weekly basis. In federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, a headboat is a vessel that meets all or a combination of the following criteria: 1) it is licensed to carry more than 15 passengers; 2) it fishes in federal waters or state and federal waters for reef fish, coastal migratory pelagics, or Gulf dolphin and wahoo; 3) and it charges primarily per person. Florida has about 40 headboats that fish in Gulf federal waters, which is about 52% of the Gulfwide total. This action will allow for more accurate and timely collection of effort, landings, and discard data. It is also consistent with recent action taken in the Atlantic by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Staff Recommendation



- If U.S. Secretary of Commerce approves the 2013 federal Gulf red snapper supplemental season opening Oct. 1, 2013, create supplemental Gulf state waters recreational red snapper season via Executive Order to match federal season
- Input on Council items is welcome
- Next meeting is Oct. 28 – Nov. 1 in New Orleans, LA



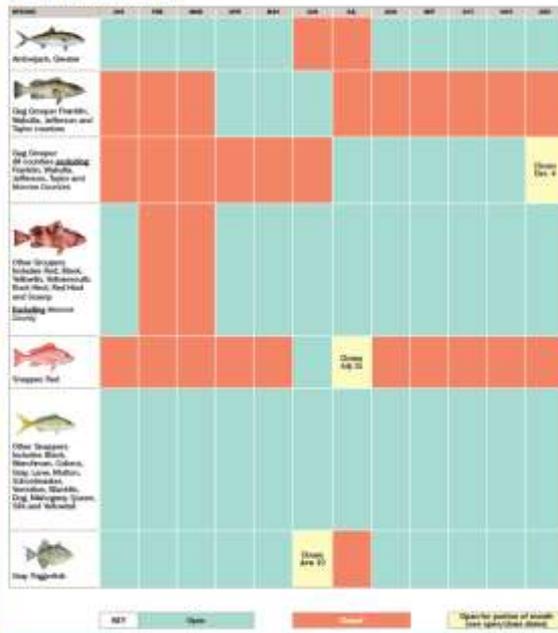
If the U.S. Secretary of Commerce approves a federal Gulf red snapper recreational supplemental season for 2013, staff recommends creating a supplemental Gulf state waters recreational red snapper season via Executive Order to match the federal season opening on Oct. 1. The federal season is currently projected to be open for 21 days continuously, although this estimate could change depending the amount of quota harvested earlier this year. Finalized federal season details will be added to this document when they are released by NOAA Fisheries Service.

Commission input on other Council items is always welcome. The next Council meeting will be Oct. 28 – Nov. 1 in New Orleans, LA.

The following slides are considered back up material and are not anticipated to be part of the Commission meeting presentation



2013 State Recreational Seasons Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish



Red Snapper Regional Management



- Council would delegate recreational quota and allow states to manage harvest of that quota
 - Including bag limit, size limit, seasons, and ability to set closed areas
 - Regional accountability measure proposed
 - If a state exceeds their annual quota, their quota for next year would be reduced by the amount of the overage if the Gulf-wide quota is exceeded



In April, the Council chose preferred alternatives for red snapper regional management. Based on the current preferred alternatives, the states would have the authority to set bag limits, size limits, seasons, and closed areas in federal waters off their states and would be responsible for monitoring and staying within the quota allotted to them by the Council. Also included in the options for regional management is an accountability measure that would reduce a state's annual quota if the state went over their allocation in the previous year. However, this state quota reduction would only occur if the overall Gulf-wide quota was exceeded during the year of the state quota overage.

Red Snapper Regional Management – Florida Proposal



- Florida would initially calculate season length using MRIP and models similar to NOAA Fisheries models
- In time (with additional funding), would like to add MRIP-compatible sampling to identify sampling universe of reef fish anglers (ex. permit system)
 - Could allow for more timely data that could be used to monitor quota in-season



If the Commission accepts delegation of recreational red snapper management and its associated responsibilities, Florida must set its season length and regulations so that its quota is not exceeded. Initially, Florida would calculate its season length using existing Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) survey data and models similar to models currently used by NOAA Fisheries to predict red snapper season lengths. This could be done without additional funding as early as 2014 if regional management is implemented. In time, if additional funding is available, the FWC could also add MRIP-compatible data collection to identify anglers that fish for red snapper (and other reef fish). For example, the FWC could develop a permit system for anglers landing and possessing reef fish, similar to Louisiana's Recreational Offshore Landing Permit, and require anglers to report their catches. Such a system could allow for more timely catch data that could be used to monitor the red snapper quota during the fishing season.