



Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System
Final Public Hearing
June 18, 2014



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management

Version 1

This is a final public hearing to create a Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, which would require private recreational anglers to report their intention to harvest or attempt to harvest reef fish species such as red snapper, gag grouper, and amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico. This data reporting system would be used to collect more accurate, precise, and timely catch and effort estimates for key recreational reef fish fisheries off Florida's Gulf coast. The proposed Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would be included in the Commission's Reef Fish Rule, 68B-14, FAC.

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Background

- Anglers requested FWC staff develop more reliable and timely recreational data collection system for Gulf reef fish
- In 2013, FWC staff developed proposal and was awarded 5 year grant to fund improved Gulf recreational reef fish data collection program
- Proposal introduced to Commission in February 2014
- Public workshops held in March 2014
- Commission direction at draft rule hearing held in April 2014
 - Add sunset provision
 - Develop potential incentive
 - Present outreach plan



For years, Gulf reef fish anglers have asked FWC staff to develop an improved recreational reef fish catch and effort data collection system for the Gulf of Mexico. Many of these anglers feel that data collected under the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) do not accurately reflect the state of reef fish fisheries and are not precise or timely enough to use for fishery management decisions such as setting seasons and determining if federal quotas have been reached. In 2013, FWC staff developed a proposal to improve Gulf reef fish data collection based on feedback from Gulf reef fish anglers. The FWC was awarded a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) that will cover the costs of these data collection improvements for five years.

This proposal was first introduced to the Commission in February. The Commission directed staff to hold public workshops on the proposal, and these workshops were held in March. Staff presented the Commission with feedback from the workshops and a draft rule to create the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System in April. The Commission approved the draft rule, but also directed staff to add a sunset provision. The Commission also directed staff to return to the Commission with ideas for potential incentives for the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System and to present a plan for reaching out to Gulf reef fish anglers. All of these items will be addressed in this final public hearing presentation.

FWC Proposal Goals

- Establish a Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System to better identify the universe of private reef fish anglers
- Use this reporting system to improve recreational harvest and effort data collection for Florida's reef fish species via targeted angler surveys



The overarching goal of FWC's proposal is to improve the quality of recreational fisheries data used for assessment and management of recreational reef fish fisheries off Florida's Gulf coast. This is to be achieved by 1) establishing a Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System to better identify the universe of offshore private reef fish anglers, and 2) using this reporting system to improve recreational harvest and effort data collection for Florida's reef fish species via targeted angler surveys via mail, e-mail, and follow up phone calls.

Reef Fish Data Collection Needs

- MRIP survey shortcomings
 - Universe of offshore reef fish anglers for telephone surveys is not defined (currently using random calls of coastal households to estimate fishing effort)
 - Low number of dockside intercepts on sites originating offshore fishing trips
- Growing number of Gulf reef fish anglers asking for data collection improvements that provide
 - More accurate and timely estimates of fishing effort
 - More reliable, credible, and timely catch estimates
- Louisiana recently developed survey and Offshore Recreational Fishing Permit to improve recreational data collection for offshore species including reef fish



About 16 million saltwater angling trips are taken from the Gulf Coast of Florida each year. About 10-15% are offshore trips for species like red snapper, grouper, and amberjack. The current Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) effort sampling methodology does not adequately sample the offshore component of these fisheries for two main reasons. First, fishing effort is currently estimated from a telephone survey of randomly-selected coastal households rather than anglers. Second, the number of dockside survey intercepts at boat ramps and marinas used by offshore reef fish anglers is low. This results in a relatively high rate of uncertainty in recreational catch and effort estimates for offshore reef fish. Although there have been recent improvements to the MRIP survey, additional enhancements to the effort survey could improve recreational effort estimates for offshore fisheries and better inform fisheries management decisions that are based on such data. Many Gulf reef fish anglers have been asking the FWC for data collection improvements that would provide more accurate and timely estimates of fishing effort as well as more reliable, credible, and timely catch estimates.

Recently, other Gulf states have been discussing ways to improve recreational fishery data collection, particularly for the red snapper fishery. Louisiana has already introduced data collection program improvements in their state that include a special recreational fishing permit for species like red snapper and yellowfin tuna. This permit has been used successfully to identify a universe of anglers targeting these species and generate more accurate estimates of offshore fishing effort in Louisiana that are used to inform fishery management decisions at the state and federal level.

How Can We Improve Effort Data Collection?

Ideal Components:

- Mandatory
- Renewed annually
- Fee-based
- Boat-based
- No adult exemptions

FWC Proposal:

- Mandatory
- Renewed annually
- No cost to anglers
- Angler-based
- Minimal exemptions



From a strictly data collection perspective, the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System should have the following components:

- **Mandatory:** to provide the most inclusive and relevant data set. This is recommended for statistical estimation purposes. If the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System is not mandatory, the population of reef fish anglers that are surveyed would be skewed towards anglers who willingly take the initiative to report their intent to fish for these species, which would result in biased data that cannot be used in stock assessments.
- **Renewed annually:** so the system has the most up-to-date participation and contact information records.
- **Fee-based:** to discourage non-reef fish anglers from reporting their intent to fish for Gulf reef fish, just in case. Even a small fee helps prevent oversubscription.
- **Boat-based:** cheaper to implement. A boat-based reporting system would also decrease the probability of collecting inaccurate information from occasional visiting anglers.
- **No adult exemptions:** provides for the most complete list of anglers who fish for reef fishes in the Gulf (except for anglers fishing aboard for-hire vessels), which would lead to more accurate data.

The Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System proposal includes many of the ideal effort data collection components, but also some compromises based on feedback from anglers. Under this proposal, anglers fishing from a boat that intend to harvest, attempt to harvest, or possess certain Gulf reef fish species would be annually required to report to the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. Staff is proposing that the reporting system be no cost to anglers so that it is not a financial burden to anglers and could be created as soon as possible. Staff is also proposing an angler-based, rather than boat-based reporting system. Many stakeholders prefer an angler-based reporting system because it will provide a direct estimate of the number of Gulf reef fish anglers. An angler-based system would also be compatible with MRIP and other states' data collection systems. Although staff's proposal contains some exemptions from reporting requirements, these exemptions are minimal and should not compromise the integrity of data collected through the reporting system. The following slides contain details about how the proposed Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would be structured.

Proposed Reporting System Structure

- Mandatory for private recreational anglers (i.e., not for-hire sector) on a boat along Florida's Gulf coast intending or attempting to harvest or possess one or more of the following reef fish
 - Red snapper
 - Gag
 - Amberjacks/Rudderfish/Almaco jack
 - Red grouper
 - Black grouper
 - Vermilion snapper
 - Gray triggerfish
- Anglers would renew annually
- No cost to anglers (funding for the first 5 years provided by NFWF Gulf restoration grant)
 - Continuation in future years would require Commission renewal and additional funding



The proposed Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would be mandatory for private recreational anglers fishing from a boat off Florida's Gulf coast that intend to harvest, attempt to harvest, or possess one or more of the following reef fish species: red snapper, gag, amberjacks/rudderfish/almaco jack (closely related jacks that are difficult to tell apart), red grouper, black grouper, vermilion snapper, and gray triggerfish. These species represent the majority of offshore reef fish harvested by Florida Gulf coast anglers and use of the reporting system would improve estimates of recreational harvest of these species.

Similar to the migratory bird permit, anglers would check a box when they purchase their saltwater fishing license to indicate that they intend to fish for or possess these Gulf reef fish species. The data reporting system will be free of charge, but anglers will be required to provide their name, permanent mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address (if available) and could be selected for surveys about their fishing activity for Gulf reef fish (only a subset of anglers in the data reporting system would be surveyed). Anglers would need to renew their participation in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System annually to ensure that contact information and the list of Gulf reef fish anglers remains up to date. The data reporting system would be funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant and would be free of charge to anglers during the first five years of the program (2015-2020). The Commission would need to renew the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System and secure funding to support continuation of this system for it to continue beyond five years.

Proposed Reporting System Exemptions



- Children under 16 years of age
- Anglers fishing from a for-hire vessel or state-licensed recreational fishing vessel – covered by separate data collection systems
- Harvest for scientific or educational purposes
- Propose **including** anglers 65 or older in the registry
 - 18% of Floridians are 65 and older
- **Includes** others exempt from recreational saltwater fishing license requirements as well as lifetime or multi-year license holders



Anglers exempted from participating in the proposed Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System include:

- Children under 16 years of age: children under 16 usually do not fish from a boat without an adult onboard, especially offshore.
- Anglers fishing from a for-hire vessel: the for-hire sector is already well-surveyed using a separate data collection system. The focus of this registry is on private recreational anglers.
- State-licensed recreational fishing vessels: a miniscule number of vessels possess this license. This group is not significant from a data collection perspective. These vessels are also required by statute to report harvest data by other means.
- Persons authorized to harvest for scientific and educational purposes: Any person otherwise authorized or permitted by the FWC to harvest for educational or scientific purposes would also be exempt.

Other anglers exempted from having a Florida saltwater fishing license (i.e., seniors over 65 years of age) as well as anglers who possess lifetime or multi-year saltwater fishing licenses would be required to participate in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System annually so they have the opportunity to participate in fishing surveys. From a statistical standpoint, it is important to include anglers 65 years or older because a large portion of Florida residents (18% according to the 2012 U.S. Census) are in this age bracket. By including anglers that are 65 years and older, we would be able to better sample the actual population of anglers that fish for reef fish in the Gulf. Including lifetime or multi-year license holders in the data reporting system would be beneficial because it would identify which of these anglers are fishing for Gulf reef fish and ensure that contact information for these anglers is current.

Why Do We Need This?



- Current Recreational Fishing Survey (MRIP) not designed for special case fisheries such as red snapper:
 - Very short federal season (9 days in 2014)
 - Large uncertainty in effort estimates without a well-defined universe of anglers
 - Need to compensate for the low number of dockside intercepts on sites where offshore fishing trips originate
- Without the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, we may not be able to develop catch and effort estimates for red snapper (due to the short season)
- Provides localized data collection and could allow for region-specific management



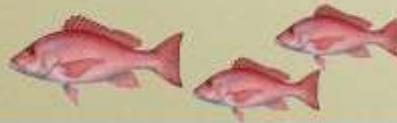
The survey currently used to collect information on saltwater recreational fisheries covers a broad range of species from both inshore (e.g., spotted seatrout, red drum, snook, tarpon) and offshore (e.g., red snapper, gag, greater amberjack, red grouper) habitats. The Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System creates a more specific, dedicated sampling universe that is likely to provide more accurate and precise estimates of reef fish recreational catch and effort. In other words, the survey based on data collected through the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System will be focused exclusively on reef fish anglers and not diluted by the large number of anglers or trips that are focused on inshore species.

This dedicated reef fish survey will be even more critical for estimating catch and effort of Gulf red snapper. Since the current survey (broad in nature) is not capable of capturing the necessary data during the short federal fishing season, the only viable way of collecting that information is to use a more robust survey that is based on a well-identified universe of anglers.

The more localized data collection structure provided by the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System allows for a better understanding of regional differences in reef fish catch and effort and would help inform potential region-specific management (state-by-state or within Florida) for species that might benefit from this type of approach.

Why Does the Public Want This?

- Examples of what we hear from anglers
 - Who gets called for the reef fish effort survey? Nobody has ever called me...
 - Why don't you call the people who fish? Calling just anybody will cause a higher margin of error
- The Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System resolves this issue
 - Much larger number of calls—targeted to people who reef fish
 - ALL calls to identified reef fish anglers



The dedicated data collection system provided by the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System addresses a number of problems long identified by Florida reef fish anglers. Because the current survey includes both inshore and offshore anglers, it is believed to be insufficient in generating reliable estimates of catch and effort for the reef fish component of the fisheries. For example, many avid reef fish anglers report never having been selected to participate in the survey. Anglers also ask why the current MRIP telephone survey does not directly survey people who fish. The proposed improved survey, based on data collected through the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, would resolve this issue. More calls would be made directly to people who target reef fish.

Why Mandatory?

- Unbiased recreational fishing surveys require scientific design and statistical rigor
 - Need to contact relevant anglers (those fishing for reef fish in the Gulf)
 - This universe of anglers constitutes the phone book we will use to conduct surveys - we need a complete phone book
 - Non-mandatory registries or directories shown to cause statistical biases that lead to estimation errors
 - Must be mandatory for data to be accepted for federal stock assessments



Why do we need the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System to be mandatory? Simply put, to make sure the survey follows the principles of scientific design and statistical rigor, and results in accurate data for management decisions. Florida's reef fish anglers have been questioning the accuracy and validity of catch and effort estimates developed through the current survey. FWC has listened to these concerns and worked with NOAA Fisheries and other Gulf states to develop a scientifically valid survey for Florida that focuses on reef fish species and would be conducted through the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. The Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would provide the phone book of identified Gulf reef fish anglers for effort surveys. This phone book must be complete to avoid biased statistical estimates. If the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System were voluntary instead of mandatory, the population of reef fish anglers that are surveyed would be skewed towards anglers who willingly take the initiative to report their intent to fish for these species, which would result in biased data that would not be accepted for use in federal stock assessments. Our ability to have these data accepted for Gulf-wide federal stock assessments requires compatibility with similar data being collected by other Gulf states and the adoption of survey protocols that are scientifically valid and provide unbiased estimates.

Having our data accepted for federal stock assessments is important because the Gulf-wide assessment (i.e., assessing reef fish populations in federal waters PLUS in state waters of all Gulf states) is what determines the overall health of these stocks. Although species like red snapper, greater amberjack, gag, and red grouper are becoming more abundant off Florida the bulk of these fisheries is still in federal waters. Therefore, to make sure that fisheries regulations reflect the true health of stocks it is important that assessments include both state and federal waters. FWC is working closely with NOAA Fisheries and other states to make sure all data are used for Gulf-wide assessments.

Proposed Final Rule



68B-14.009 Reporting Requirement

- A recreational harvester aboard a vessel may not harvest, attempt to harvest, or possess the following species in or on state waters of the Gulf of Mexico excluding Monroe County without reporting intent to the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System:
 - Red snapper
 - Gag
 - Amberjacks/rudderfish/almaco jack
 - Red grouper
 - Black grouper
 - Vermilion snapper
 - Gray triggerfish

- Proposed effective dates: April 1, 2015 – June 30, 2020 



The proposed final rule would create a new rule, Chapter 68B-14.009, FAC, (Reporting Requirement) to establish the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. This proposed rule would state that a recreational harvester aboard a vessel may not harvest, attempt to harvest, or possess red snapper, vermilion snapper, gag grouper, black grouper, red grouper, gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, or almaco jack in or on state waters of the Gulf of Mexico excluding Monroe County, unless they have reported their intention to do so to the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. Staff is proposing to exclude Monroe County because anglers fishing for grouper in state waters off Monroe County follow Atlantic grouper regulations. Under 379.401(1) Florida Statutes, failure to file such reports is a non-criminal infraction.

Anglers that fish for, harvest, or possess these reef fish species in the Gulf would be required to provide proof that they are in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, which in most cases will be on their saltwater fishing license.

Staff proposes that the reporting requirements take effect on April 1, 2015. In the meantime, staff would reach out to recreational anglers about this new data collection system and encourage Gulf reef fish anglers to report their intent to fish for, harvest, and possess these species when renewing their fishing licenses. As requested by the Commission, the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would sunset after funding for the program ends on June 30, 2020. If the Commission decides to extend the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System beyond June 30, 2020, Commission action would be required.

Proposed Final Rule



68B-14.009 Reporting Requirement

- Anglers that would not be required to report intent
 - Children under 16 years of age
 - Anglers fishing from for-hire vessels
 - Anglers fishing from a state-licensed recreational fishing vessel
 - Persons authorized to harvest for scientific and educational purposes

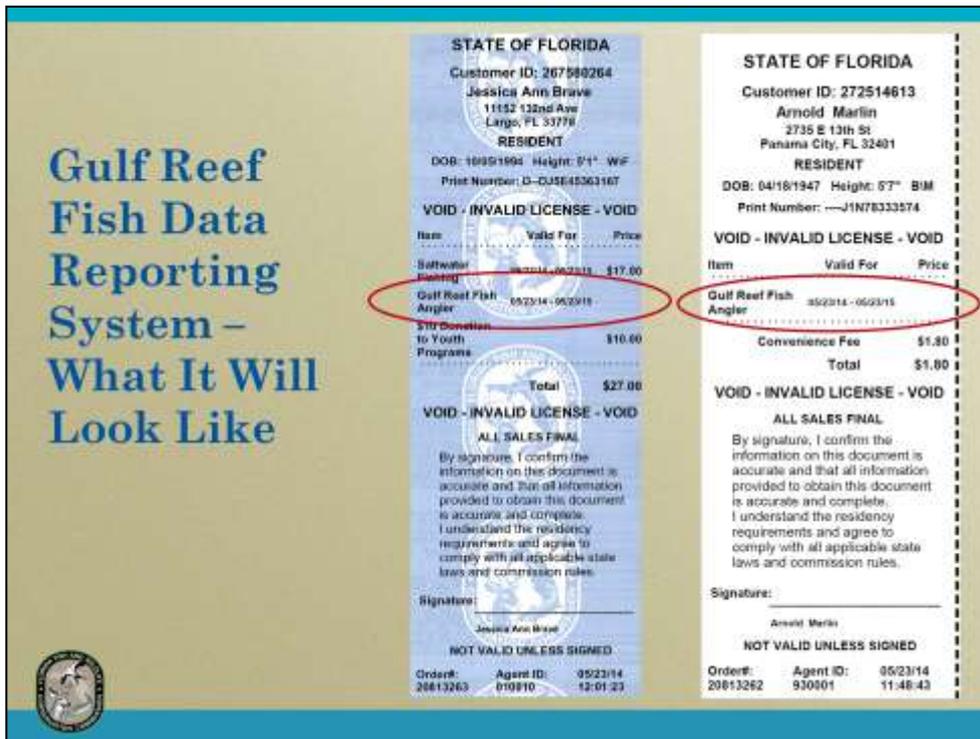
68B-14.002 Definitions

- Remove definition of recreational harvester



This proposed final rule would also include the exemptions to the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System discussed on slide 7. Children under 16 years of age, as well as anglers fishing from for-hire vessels or anglers fishing from a state-licensed recreational fishing vessel would not be required to report their intent to fish for, harvest, or possess these species. Additionally, any person otherwise authorized by FWC permit to harvest for educational or scientific purposes would be exempt.

Finally, the proposed final rule would modify 68B-14.002, FAC (Definitions) to remove the definition of recreational harvester. This definition conflicts with the definition of recreational harvester in the General Definitions rule (68B-2.001, FAC), which applies to all FWC marine fisheries rules in Division 68B, FAC.



Anglers that are included in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System will have a line on their fishing license stating that they are a “Gulf Reef Fish Angler.” The blue document on the above left is an example saltwater fishing license like those printed by license vendors. The license holder, Jessica Ann Brave, has reported herself in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, so her license notes that she is a Gulf Reef Fish Angler.

Anglers that are not required to have a fishing license but need to report their intent to fish for, harvest, and possess Gulf reef fish would use our existing licensing system to do so. These anglers would receive documentation that they are listed as a Gulf Reef Fish Angler like the white document shown above. As with a fishing license, this document would need to be carried on the angler when he or she is fishing for reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico.

Proposed Outreach Strategy

- Direct communication with
 - Stakeholder groups
 - Licensing vendors and tackle shops
 - FWC license holders (emails)
 - Fishing clubs/shows
 - Blogs, online forums, and fishing apps
- Targeted outreach to seniors
 - Registered vessel owners that are 65 years of age or older
 - People that have aged out of licensing system over last 9 years
 - Publications directed to seniors
- Messaging in FWC publications and website
 - Article in July 2014 saltwater recreational fishing regulations
 - Frequently asked questions
 - Video for YouTube and FWC social media sites



Staff is proposing both broad and targeted outreach approaches to ensure Gulf reef fish anglers, including visitors and those that are not required to have a recreational fishing license, are aware of the system, understand why it is needed, and know how to report their intent to fish for, harvest, or possess these species.

Staff will continue reaching out to key stakeholder groups and organizations and also reach out to license vendors and tackle shops. Staff also would notify current license holders directly via email to let them know about the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. Because all out-of-state visitors are required to have a recreational saltwater fishing license to go saltwater fishing, these approaches will help us reach non-residents. Staff would reach out to anglers at fishing clubs, shows, and through blogs and online forums. Staff also plans to contact fishing regulation app administrators about ensuring anglers that use these apps get information about the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System.

Staff is also proposing targeted outreach to seniors. Florida registered vessel owners that are 65 years of age and older would be notified about the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. Staff also would contact people 65 and older that held recreational saltwater fishing licenses in the last nine years but are no longer required to have a license because they have “aged out” of license requirements. Additionally, staff would contact publications that are directed at senior readers to publicize the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System.

Of course, staff will also spread the word through FWC publications, our website, social media, and press releases. Staff is planning an article on the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System for the July 2014 edition of the Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations publication. Staff also created a list of frequently asked questions for our website and is creating a video about the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System for the FWC YouTube channel and other social media sites.

Enforcement Strategy

- Educational approach
 - Focus on customer service and being ambassadors of conservation
 - Verbally encourage Gulf reef fish anglers on the water to report themselves in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System via phone or web without any enforcement action



Because FWC law enforcement officers are the face of our agency to many anglers, FWC law enforcement plays a key role in agency customer service and are in a position to serve as ambassadors of conservation. They also have a unique opportunity to educate the public about the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. As with all new Commission rules, the Division of Law Enforcement would use an educational approach in enforcement of this Data Reporting System. If they encounter Gulf reef fish anglers that have not yet reported themselves in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, the fishermen would be encouraged to do so via phone or web while the anglers are out on the water. This approach would be all verbal without any enforcement action taken.

The enforcement philosophy of FWC officers would be to first provide education and outreach to the fishing community. The next step would be to encourage reporting via phone or web while on the water. If necessary “verbal” warnings, and then “written” warnings in sequential steps would be used in gaining compliance prior to any enforcement or citation action being taken. There will be many opportunities for fishermen to comply with the rule prior to a citation and only those that intentionally refuse to comply with the rule would be cited for a violation.

Proposed Incentive for Survey Participation



- Incentives should be used with caution because they can introduce bias into universe of anglers by influencing certain groups more than others
- Rewarding Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System anglers that respond to surveys is more feasible
- Possible incentive: Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System anglers that respond to catch and effort surveys could be entered into a lottery for a lifetime, five-year, or annual recreational saltwater fishing license



At the request of the Commission, staff has developed a proposed incentive for participation in surveys through the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. In general, incentives should be used with caution because they can introduce bias into the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System if they skew who reports themselves as a Gulf reef fish angler.

Incentives that reward Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System anglers that are selected for and respond to surveys are more feasible. Such incentives would have less of an effect on who identifies themselves as a Gulf reef fish angler in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System than incentives that encourage people to initially report to the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System, even if they otherwise would have no intention to fish for, harvest, or possess these species.

Staff is proposing to enter Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System anglers that respond to catch and effort surveys into a lottery for a lifetime, five year, or annual recreational saltwater fishing license. This incentive would encourage identified Gulf reef fish anglers to contribute to the data collected by the FWC and could boost survey response rates.

Staff Recommendation



Approve the proposed final rule

- Create Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System for private recreational reef fish anglers to improve data collection

Before April 1, 2015, proposed effective date

- Start early sign-up period for anglers purchasing or renewing licenses
- Outreach to Gulf reef fish anglers



Staff recommends approving the proposed draft rule to create a Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System for private recreational anglers to improve recreational reef fish data collection, as outlined on the previous slides.

Based on rulemaking timelines, staff suggests a targeted effective date of April 1, 2015. In the meantime, staff would open the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System for an early sign-up period for anglers purchasing or renewing FWC licenses starting July 1. Staff would also reach out to anglers that fish for Gulf reef fish to ensure they are aware of the system, understand why it is needed, and know how to report their intent to fish for, harvest, or possess these species.

Staff has evaluated the rule under the standards of 68-1.004, FAC, and found it to be in compliance.

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



Current Recreational Fishing Survey

- MRIP – survey used to estimate recreational fishing harvest and effort in saltwater fisheries throughout FL and most of the southeast
 - Federal survey, but partly conducted by FWC biologists
 - Separate surveys for private anglers and for-hire vessels
- Two main components
 - Dockside surveys estimate catch
 - Telephone surveys estimate effort
- Data used in stock assessments and management (e.g., quota management, predicting season lengths)



Data on the recreational fisheries harvest, number of fish caught and released, and fishing effort (number of recreational fishing trips) is currently collected through NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) in most southeastern states. The MRIP survey collects information through two main components: 1) information on catch is obtained from onsite surveys, and 2) information on fishing effort is obtained from phone surveys of residents in coastal counties using random digit dialing. Separate surveys are used to gather catch and effort data from private anglers, charter boats, and headboats. In Florida, MRIP dockside surveys are conducted by FWC biologists and the phone survey is conducted by a third-party contractor hired by NOAA Fisheries. These data are important because they are used in stock assessments and analyses that can have direct implications on management, particularly for federally-managed species like red snapper that have annual quotas. MRIP data is used to evaluate fisheries regulations, predict the length of fishing seasons, and to track and manage fishery quotas.

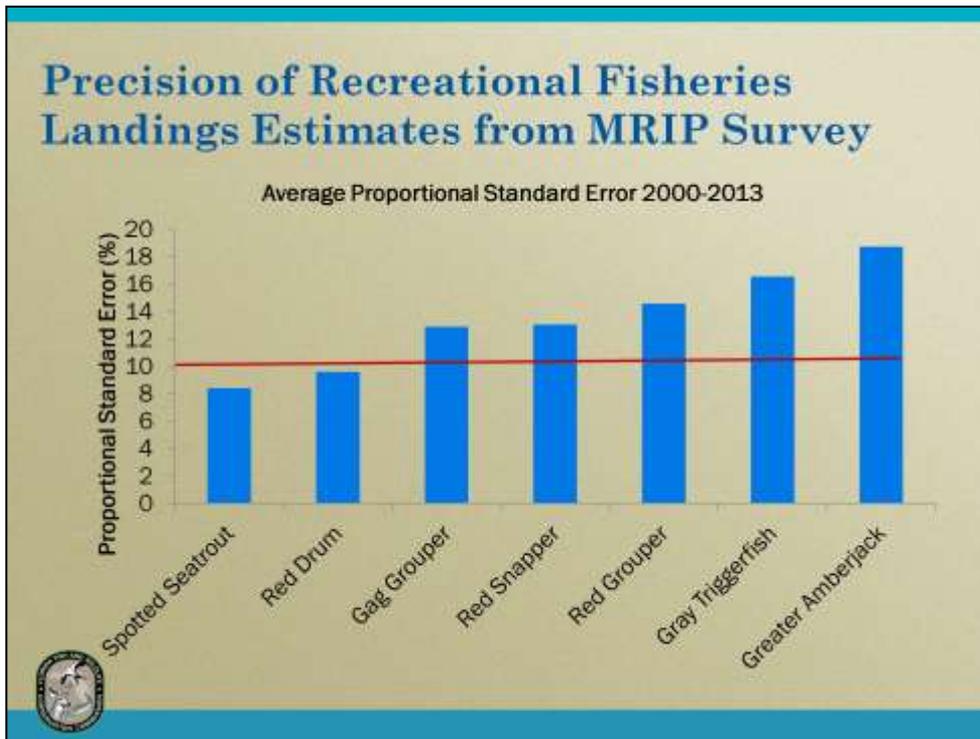
Proposed Data Collection Improvements

- **Catch:** More dock-side intercepts targeting sites with offshore boats over a longer time period
- **Fishing effort:** Identify offshore anglers through a reporting system. Surveys would target offshore anglers through mail, e-mail, and then follow up phone calls



Proposed recreational fisheries data collection improvements include:

- 1) Additional targeted survey efforts to collect catch data from offshore private recreational fisheries. A comprehensive list of recreational fishing access points is currently maintained by FWC and used for the access point intercept survey portion of the MRIP. This site list will be used to identify a sub-set of sites throughout the west coast of Florida where private recreational boats return from offshore fishing trips. Offshore private boat fishing sites will be selected for supplemental assignments using valid statistical sampling approaches. Supplemental dockside sampling assignments will be based on five sampling regions (see map above) to allow collection of more detailed information on reef fish catches from different portions of Florida's Gulf coast. These data may allow development of region-specific management.
- 2) Focused fishing effort surveys based on a better-defined universe of offshore anglers obtained through the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System. A subset of anglers that have reported in the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System would be surveyed to estimate fishing effort. These surveys would involve a combination of regular mail, e-mail, and follow up phone calls.



In statistics, the term "standard error" is used to describe the precision of the statistic being estimated. Proportional standard error (or PSE) is simply the standard error expressed as a percentage of the statistic being estimated. Low PSE values indicate that your modeling assumptions are valid and that your sample size was sufficient to generate a good estimate (a complete census would result in a PSE of zero). In this graph, the statistic being estimated is the annual landings in pounds for a number of species on the Gulf coast of Florida. Note that the PSE values for spotted seatrout and red drum (mostly inshore fisheries) do not exceed 10% while PSE values for offshore reef fish species (gag, red grouper, gray triggerfish, and greater amberjack) are all above 10% and, in some cases, above 15%. This indicates that landings estimates for the reef fish species are less precise than those for the inshore fisheries. This difference is most likely due to undersampling of these offshore fisheries in the current MRIP design. Use of the Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System will allow more targeted surveys and reduce the uncertainty of reef fish recreational catch and effort estimates.

For-Hire Sector Reporting

Charter

- Effort component comes from For-Hire Telephone Survey
 - 10% weekly sample of active vessels
 - FWC staff conduct the calls
 - Mandatory participation for federally-permitted vessels

- Catch sampled through MRIP dockside intercept survey
 - Similar to private boat and shore sampling at public access fishing sites
 - Sampling stratified: 8 regions, day-type (weekend vs. weekday), and time of day (6 hr intervals)



For-Hire Sector Reporting

Headboats

- Headboat Logbook Program (*long-running census*)
 - Electronic reporting of trip-level harvest and discards
- Port agents sample headboats to verify logbook reporting
 - Mandatory for federally-permitted vessels
 - Focus on: counts by species, lengths, weights



Public Workshops – March 2014

- Fort Myers – 22 attendees
- St. Petersburg – 29 attendees
- Perry – 22 attendees
- Destin – 35 attendees
- Pensacola – 37 attendees
- Teleconference – about 25 callers



At the request of the Commission, staff held six public workshops on the proposed data reporting system and data collection improvements in early March. Workshops were held in Fort Myers, St. Petersburg, Perry, Destin, Pensacola, and over the phone. In total, about 145 people participated in the workshops.

Summary of Feedback from Public Workshops

- Support for improved data collection, but some felt the proposed data reporting system would be intrusive and that data could be collected other ways
- Call it a registry, not a permit
- Some felt the data reporting system should be boat-based instead of angler-based
- Concerns about fees and cost of permit after 5 years
- Concerns about how the data reporting system would be enforced



Many that attended the public workshops were supportive of improved recreational data collection for Gulf reef fish and the data reporting system concept. However, some felt that the proposed data reporting system would be intrusive and that data could be collected other ways, like through boat registrations. Several people were supportive of staff's proposal but felt that it should be called a registry instead of a permit. They felt that since this is a data collection program, calling it a registry fits the purpose of the proposal better and would be better accepted by anglers than a permit. Staff is proposing that the title of the program be Gulf Reef Fish Data Reporting System because this captures the intent to improve data collection, while avoiding some legal conflicts associated with calling it a registry. Some workshop participants felt that the data reporting system should be boat-based instead of angler-based because this could provide for even more accurate data collection.

Many people were concerned that the costs for the data reporting system would be passed on to anglers after the first five years. Some people were also concerned about transaction fees that phone and internet license vendors would charge anglers if they chose to report to the data reporting system online or over the phone and do not purchase another license or permit at the same time. These fees (which range from \$1.80 to \$4.36) are charged by phone and internet license vendors on all licensing and permitting transactions, even when the license or permit is free. However, there would be no cost to anglers that report themselves as a Gulf reef fish angler in-person at tax collector offices, tackle shops, and other places that sell FWC licenses and permits.

Finally, many workshop attendees asked about how the data reporting system would be enforced and what the penalty would be for not reporting.

FWC's NFWF Fisheries Project

- \$24 million total commitment, spread over 5 years
- Large expansion of data collection for offshore Gulf of Mexico fisheries
 - **Fisheries surveys**
 - For-hire: Observer program (harvest and discards)
 - Private Recreational: improved surveys for reef fish/offshore
 - Commercial: improved biological sampling
 - **Scientific surveys**
 - Increases sampling 3-fold
 - Enhanced surveys covering from eggs and larvae through adults

