

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshops Summary

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Workshop Attendance:

7/28/14 – Pensacola – 24

7/29/14 – Destin – 41

7/30/14 – Panama City – 8

7/31/14 – Carrabelle – 24

8/11/14 – St. Petersburg – 42

FWC Staff Present: Jessica McCawley, Jim Estes, Martha Bademan, Luiz Barbieri, Tony Bresnen, Dan Ellinor, Rich Abrams, Steve Shea (Destin and Carrabelle), Michelle Semsprott (Panama City), Tom Graef (St. Pete), Nancy Sheridan (St. Pete), Gina Russo (St. Pete)

Commissioners Present: Bo Rivard (Panama City), Charles Roberts (Carrabelle)



Workshop Summary

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held a series of Gulf of Mexico red snapper public stakeholder workshops to discuss state and federal management of recreational red snapper, and to explore potential future approaches to managing this fishery. Each workshop began with a presentation from FWC staff on the biology, management history, and options being considered by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) for red snapper. Questions were allowed during the power point presentation.

After the presentation, workshop attendees were split into small groups to list their expectations for the red snapper fishery and management methods or regulations they would like to see in place for the fishery. The following pages contain a summary of the ideas gathered from stakeholders at each workshop.

Breakout Group Question #1: Considering limitations and management challenges, what are your expectations for the recreational red snapper fishery?

Pensacola

- More stability in fishing seasons for planning trips
- Catch bigger fish in the future
- Have fish available for future generations

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

- Have a large, consistent stock throughout the Gulf

Destin

- Opportunity for the charter-for-hire industry to book red snapper trips
- Increased fishing opportunities for private anglers and for-hire fishermen
- More stability in fishing seasons for planning trips
- More equality between commercial, private recreational, and for-hire fishermen
- Have flexibility in fishing days

Panama City

- More stability in fishing seasons for planning trips

Carrabelle

- More fish available to harvest
- More fishing days, especially in the spring and fall
- Sustainable harvest in the future
- More predictability when seasons are selected
- Effective predator control (sharks, goliath grouper, dolphins)

St. Pete

- Maximize harvest (increased bag limit) of red snapper as the stock continues to grow
- Improve trust between fishery managers and stakeholders by using plain language when reporting scientific information
- Equitable access to red snapper across the Gulf
- Increased flexibility in setting and modifying regulations

Breakout Group Question #2: What management methods or regulations would you like to see implemented to improve the recreational red snapper fishery?

Pensacola

- Manage by depth – have the state manage red snapper out to 180 feet
- 2-day trip limits should be allowed
- Increase the number of fishing days and increase the bag limit
- Explore a “first fish caught” concept to eliminate discards
- Begin the season in May and have several smaller seasons throughout the year such as a fall season in September/October
- Have the season occur outside of peak spawning
- Have large rolling closed areas in the Gulf
- Remove the federal government from management or implement regional management independent of NOAA Fisheries

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

- Manage all reef fish as a single stock and have a single reef fish bag limit
- Implement an easy to use reporting system to improve recreational data collection using options such as fish tags, a phone app, or stamp
- Validate the size/biomass of the pre-exploited red snapper stock
- Be more transparent with the collection and publishing of data
- Establish a way for anglers to contribute to funding red snapper research
- Consider other stakeholder groups in management decisions, like tackle stores
- Comments were submitted in favor of and against a slot limit
- Comments were submitted in favor of and against sector separation; those in favor of sector separation wanted 3 separate sectors: commercial, for-hire, and private
- Comments were submitted against a 1-fish bag limit
- Comments were submitted against a days at sea program
- Comments were submitted against a hook size requirement
- Modify the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), removing accountability measures from the recreational sector and implementing fairness for all fishing sectors
- Manage the recreational sector in numbers of fish and not pounds
- Revisit recreational/commercial allocations
- Don't allow commercial IFQ holders to sell quota
- Manage recreational and commercial together (no separate quotas)
- Simplify regulations

Destin

- Invest in more artificial reefs to provide additional habitat
- Have a 6 month (or year-round), 2-fish per person season
- Have a spring and a fall season
- Have the season occur outside of peak spawning
- Have better enforcement and create "check stations" for enforcement to check boats
- Punish poachers with larger penalties and fines
- Accountability for the whole recreational sector
- Improved science and data collection for the recreational fishery
- Improve recreational data collection through reporting after every trip, electronic logbooks, or a stamp program
- Consider vessel monitoring systems for all vessels fishing for red snapper
- Have a tag program for private anglers and charter for-hire vessels that could function like alligator tags
- More frequent stock assessments
- Comments were submitted in favor of and against a slot limit
- Comments were submitted against weekend-only seasons,
- Comments were submitted against intersector trading

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

- Comments were submitted in favor of sector separation and for-hire IFQs if the IFQ is tied to the federal permit and non-transferable
- Revisit recreational/commercial allocations every 5 years
- Fair management of all fishing sectors
- Simply the Gulf Council/federal process
- Remove the federal government from management
- Raise red snapper in hatcheries to release later to supplement wild populations
- Base harvest seasons on Florida boat registration numbers; odd numbers fish odd days, even numbers fish even days

Panama City

- Convert the red snapper recreational quota into numbers of fish
- Have a 6 month, 1 fish per person season
- Have a spring and fall season in the Panhandle
- Consider weather days when setting seasons
- Do not encourage anglers to target red snapper during peak spawning
- Comments were submitted against a weekends-only season
- Implement regional management and have a regional approach within Florida (a Panhandle season and a West Florida season)
- Comments against Florida taking over management in federal waters
- Repeal the “30B” rule, which prohibits federally-permitted for-hire vessels from harvesting red snapper in open state waters when federal waters are closed
- Eliminate Section 407(d) of the MSA which requires the recreational red snapper fishery in the Gulf to close when the quota is projected to be met
- Manage all reef fish under one season
- Keep the first 2 reef fish caught (not limited to red snapper)
- Lower the size limit to reduce discards
- Improved recreational data collection
- Improved surveys to see how many anglers fish offshore in the Gulf
- A way to confirm landings and the accountability of anglers (to prevent anglers from taking multiple trips in a day)

Carrabelle

- Use a tagging system or survey to collect more accurate recreational data, and increase the number of dockside angler intercepts
- Allow anglers to donate to red snapper research
- Accurate stock assessments
- Manage red snapper using a combination of depth and season (like the shallow-water grouper closure)

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

- Eliminate all fishing outside of 20 fathoms during peak spawning for gag and red snapper
- Have a spring and fall season
- Manage all reef fish under one season
- Increase the minimum size limit
- Have a 4-fish per person per day daily bag limit
- Allow recreational fishermen to sell catch to licensed fish houses
- Increased red snapper habitat through more artificial reefs
- Convert the red snapper recreational quota into numbers of fish
- Eliminate discards from commercial fishermen
- Raise red snapper in hatcheries to release later to supplement wild populations
- Comments were submitted both in favor and against sector separation
- Comments submitted in favor of a weekends-only season
- Manage recreational and commercial together (no separate quotas)
- Simplify or reduce regulations

St. Pete

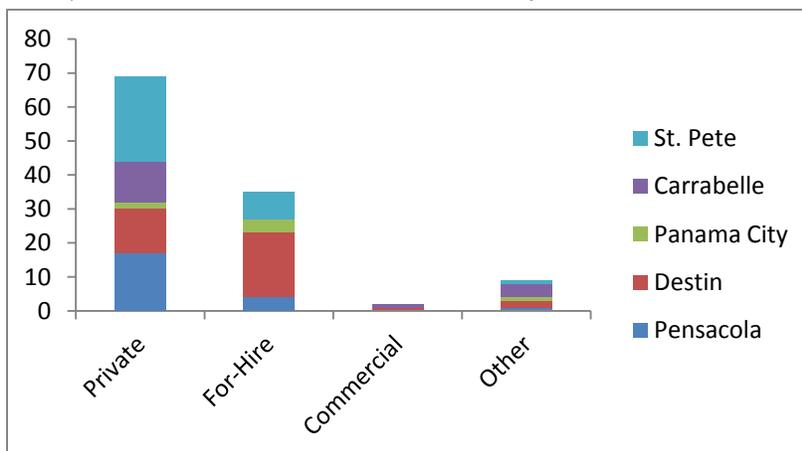
- More equitable fishing days between state and federal seasons to allow anglers off Southwest Florida more fishing opportunities
- Implement regional management and have a regional approach within Florida (Panhandle season and West Florida season)
- Mandatory reporting of red snapper harvest through a phone application
- Have a 6 month red snapper season with a 2-fish bag limit
- Have the option to choose days to fish
- Have a fall season
- Take into account fishing days lost due to bad weather
- No more non-compliant seasons – have state and federal consistency
- If the recreational quota is not met one year, the next year's quota should be increased by the amount of the remaining quota
- More accurate, accountable data that captures landings by private recreational fishermen and fishing tournaments
- Use a tagging system, survey, or phone app to collect more accurate recreational data
- Create a trophy catch program which would also function as a reporting system
- More accurate stock assessments with reliable catch estimates
- Make changes to the MSA to make each state's season not impact other states
- Repeal the "30B" rule, which prohibits federally-permitted for-hire vessels from harvesting red snapper in open state waters when federal waters are closed
- More stakeholder representation in decision-making
- Have the state propose proven traditional management options (like size and bag limits)

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

- Increase the minimum size limit
- Keep all fish caught to eliminate discards
- Effective predator control (sharks, goliath grouper, dolphins)
- Modify recreational/commercial allocations by completing Amendment 28 and look into economic impacts of allocations
- Follow National Research Council recommendations by defining the universe of anglers
- Comments were submitted against sector separation
- Comments were submitted against a charter for-hire IFQ
- Comments were submitted against hook size requirements
- Comments were submitted against intersector trading
- Comments were submitted against weekends-only seasons
- Look into managing the stock using more catch per unit effort information
- Consider the retrieval rate on fishing reels as a way to reduce barotrauma

After the small group session, FWC staff polled workshop attendees on demographics information, management options being considered by the Council, and management ideas discussed during the workshops. Below are the responses we received from attendees on each topic or question.

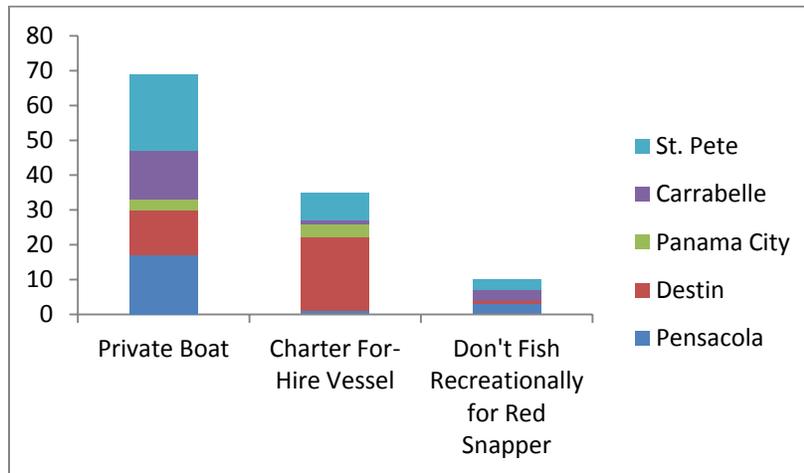
1) Sector Identification of Workshop Attendees



Most workshop attendees identified themselves as private recreational anglers.

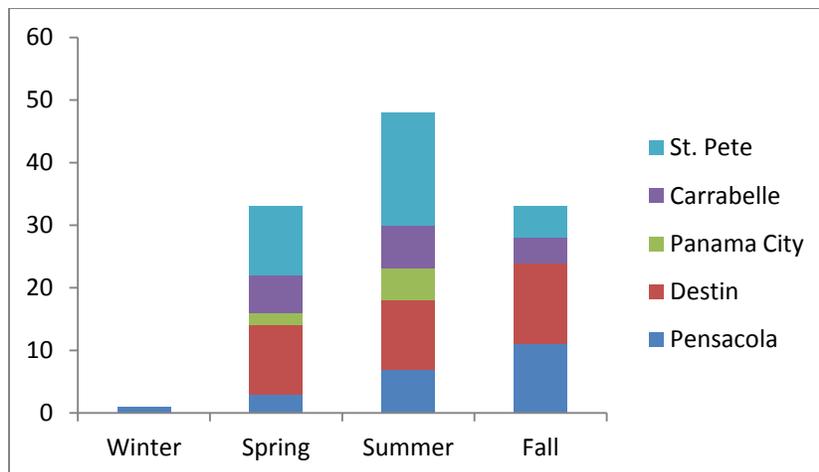
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

2) As an Angler I Most Often Fish for Red Snapper on A.....



Similar to the responses above, most workshop attendees fish for red snapper on private recreational vessels.

3) What is the Best Time of Year for Red Snapper Season?



The response to this question was mixed, with winter being the only time of year workshop attendees didn't desire for red snapper season.

The next set of questions was focused on workshop attendees' views of red snapper management options currently being considered by the Gulf Council. For each management option, attendees were asked to rate each option on a continuum from Very Favorable (VF) to Very Unfavorable (VU).

Key:

VF – Very Favorable

F – Favorable

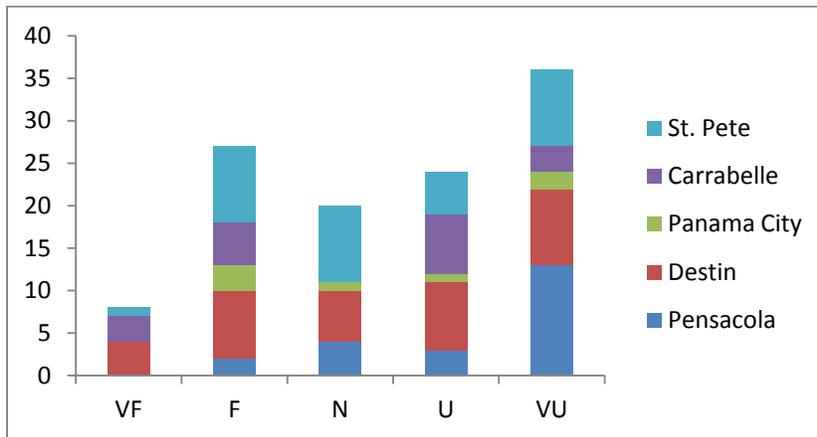
N – Neutral

U – Unfavorable

VU – Very Unfavorable

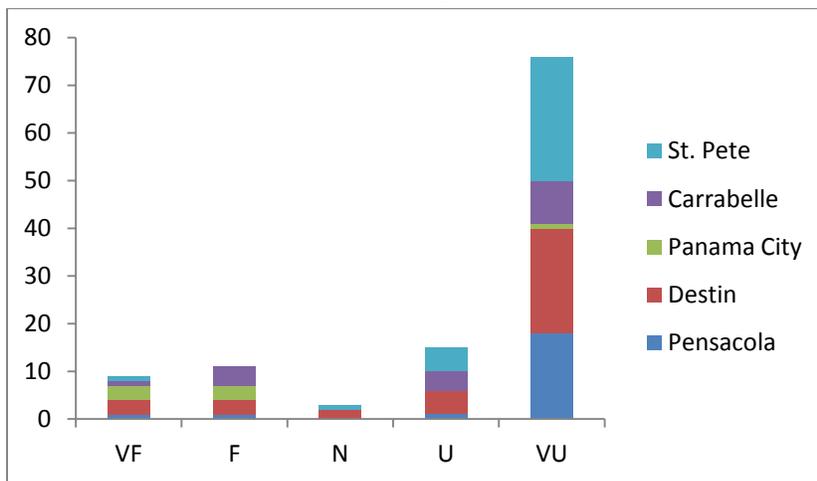
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

4) Implement a Slot Limit for Red Snapper



The response to this management option was mixed, but overall more votes were cast as “unfavorable” or “very unfavorable.”

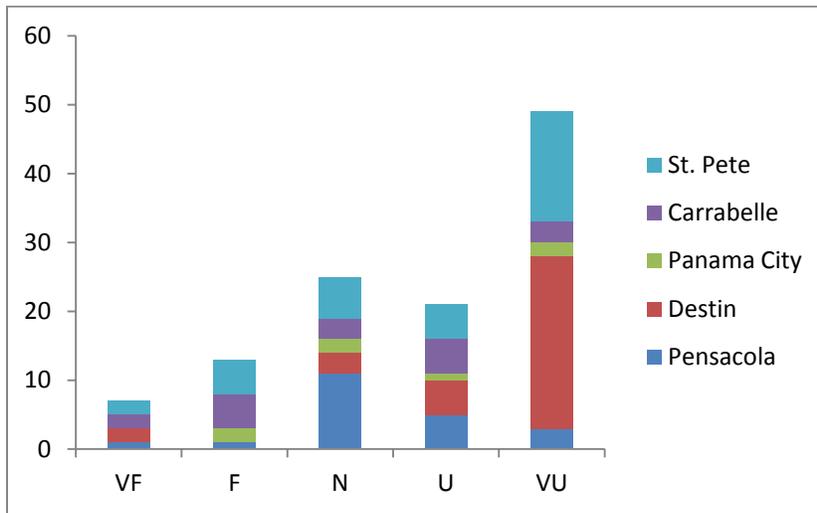
5) Implement a One-Fish Bag Limit for Red Snapper



This option was viewed as very unfavorable at all 5 workshops.

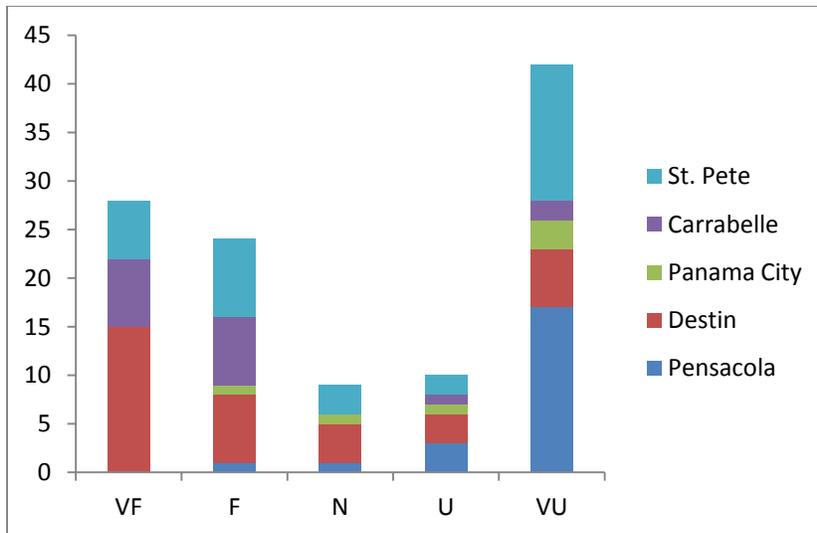
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

6) Have Weekends-Only Seasons for Red Snapper



This option received mixed responses, but overall most votes were cast as “very unfavorable.”

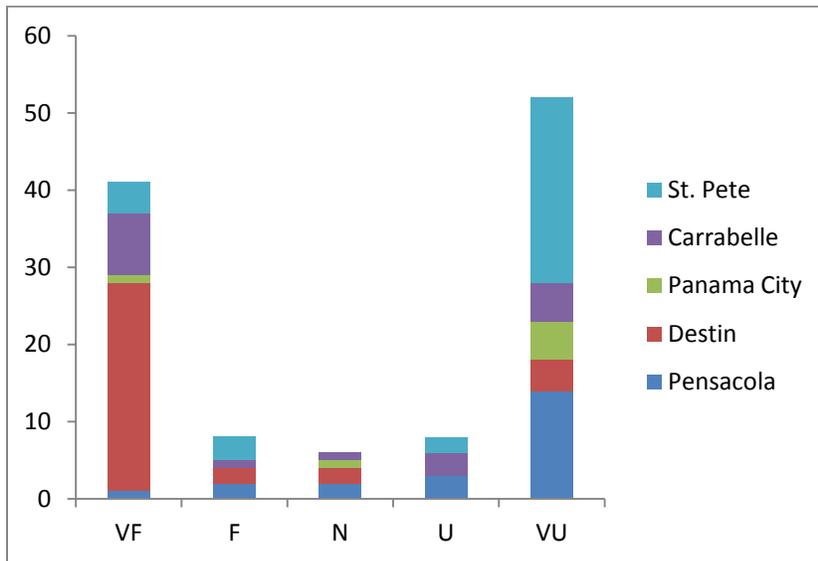
7) Implement a Tagging System for the Recreational Red Snapper Fishery



The response to this option was generally mixed, however “very unfavorable” received the most votes.

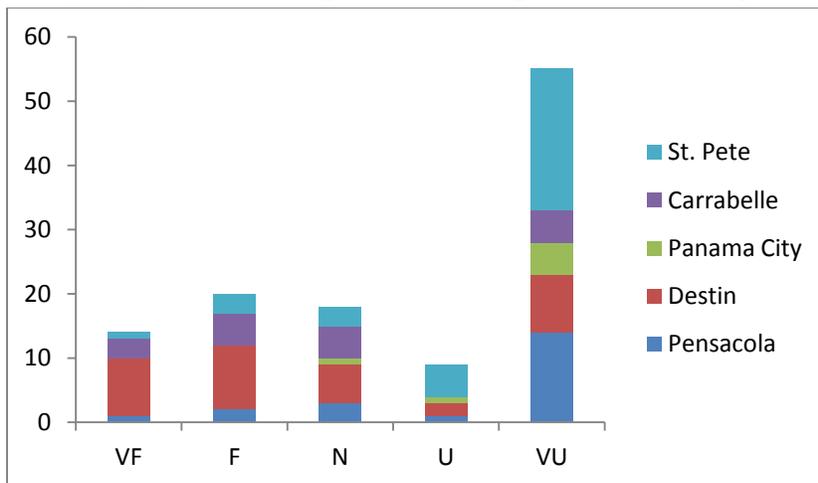
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

8) Separate the Recreational Sector for Red Snapper into 2 Subsectors



The response to this option was generally mixed between “very favorable” and “very unfavorable”, however “very unfavorable” received the most votes.

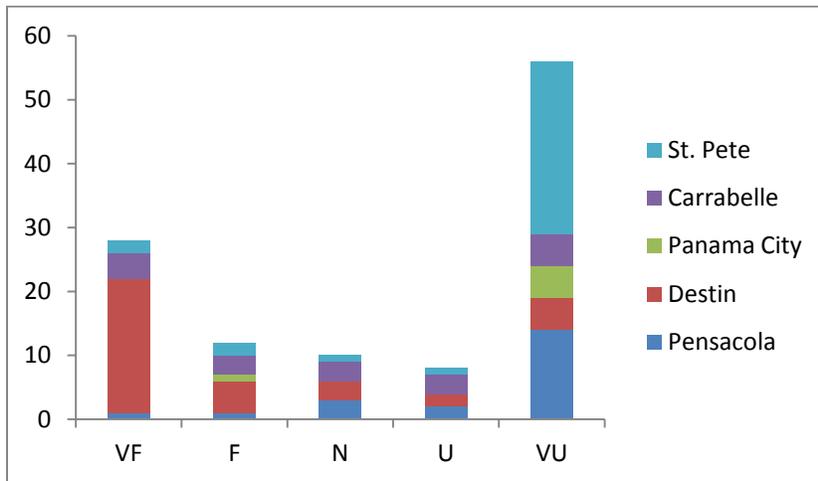
9) Implement a “Days-at-sea” Program for Federally-Permitted Charter For-Hire Vessels



This option was viewed as very unfavorable at all 5 workshops.

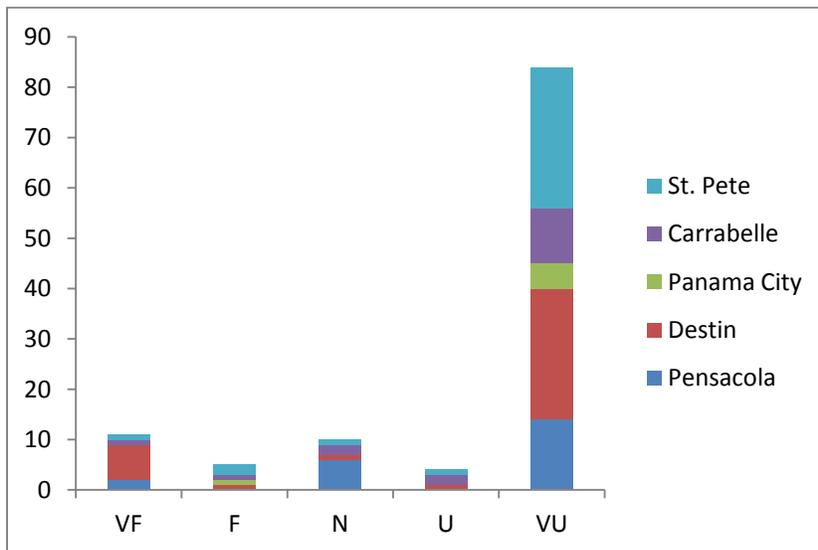
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

10) Implement an IFQ Program for Federally-Permitted Charter For-Hire Vessels



The response to this option was generally mixed between “very favorable” and “very unfavorable”, however “very unfavorable” received the most votes.

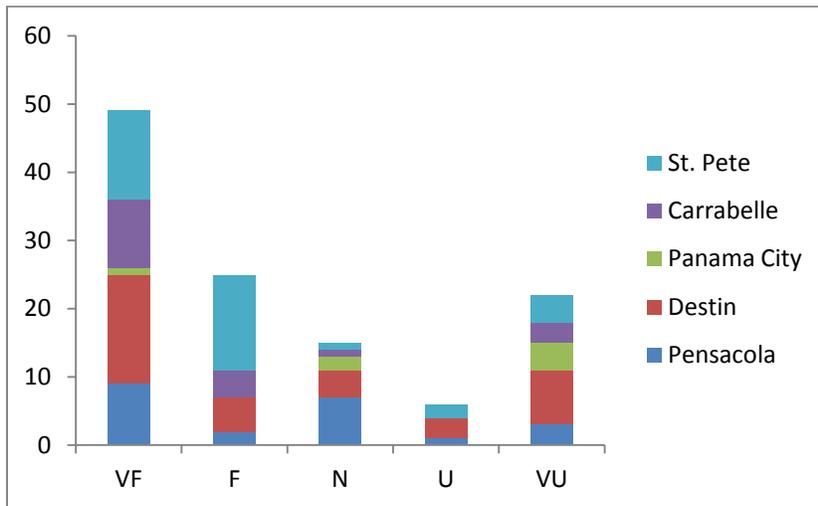
11) Implement an Inter-Sector Trading Program of Commercial IFQ Shares with the Recreational Sector



This option was viewed as very unfavorable at all 5 workshops.

Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

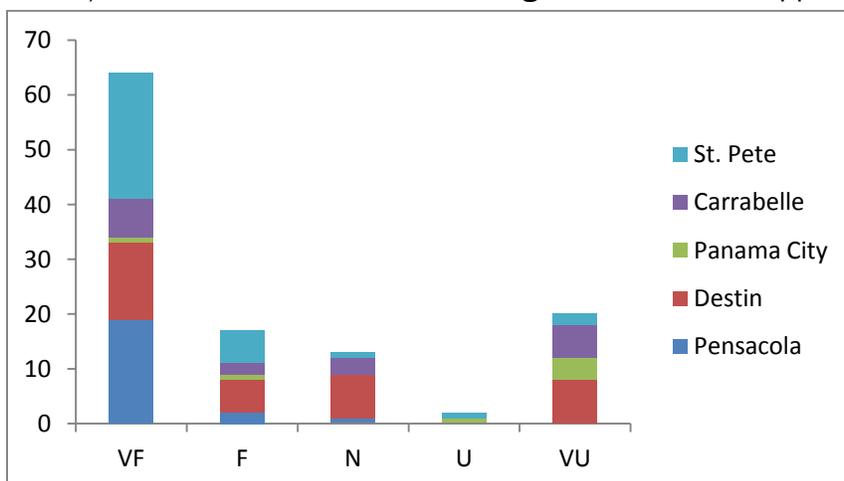
12) Implement Regional Management for the Recreational Red Snapper Fishery



This option was generally viewed as either “favorable” or “very favorable” to most workshop attendees.

The next set of management options were focused on workshop attendees’ ideas for future red snapper (and sometimes other reef fish) management options. For each management option, attendees were asked to rate each option on a continuum from Very Favorable (VF) to Very Unfavorable (VU).

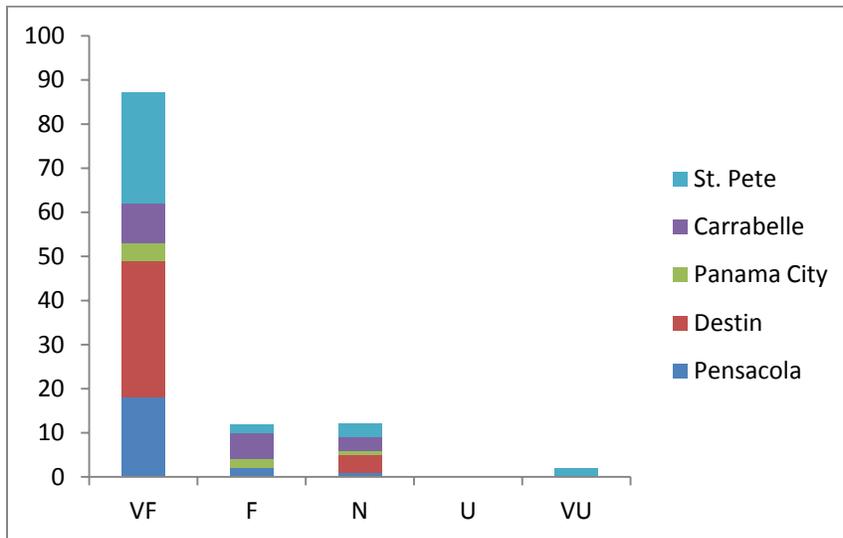
13) Have the FWC Take Over Management of Red Snapper



This option was generally viewed as either “favorable” or “very favorable” to most workshop attendees.

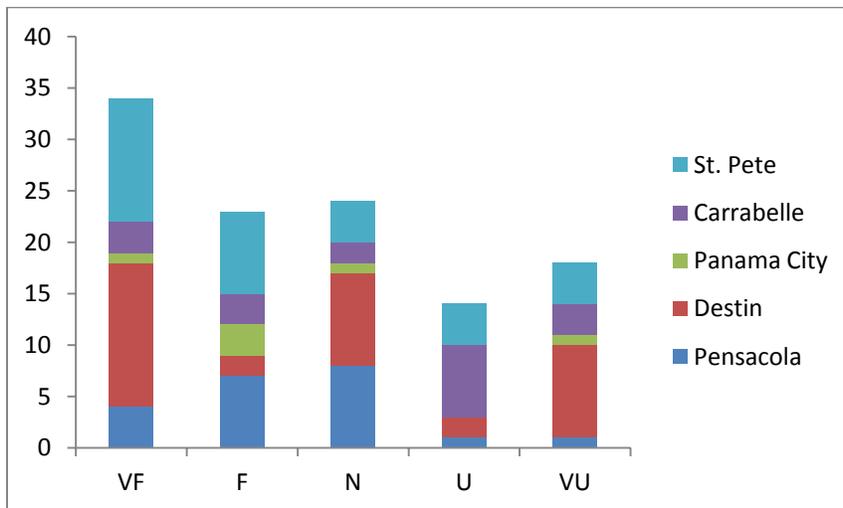
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

14) Simplify Recreational Regulations for Marine Fisheries



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most workshop attendees.

15) Close Recreational Harvest of Red Snapper During the Spawning Season

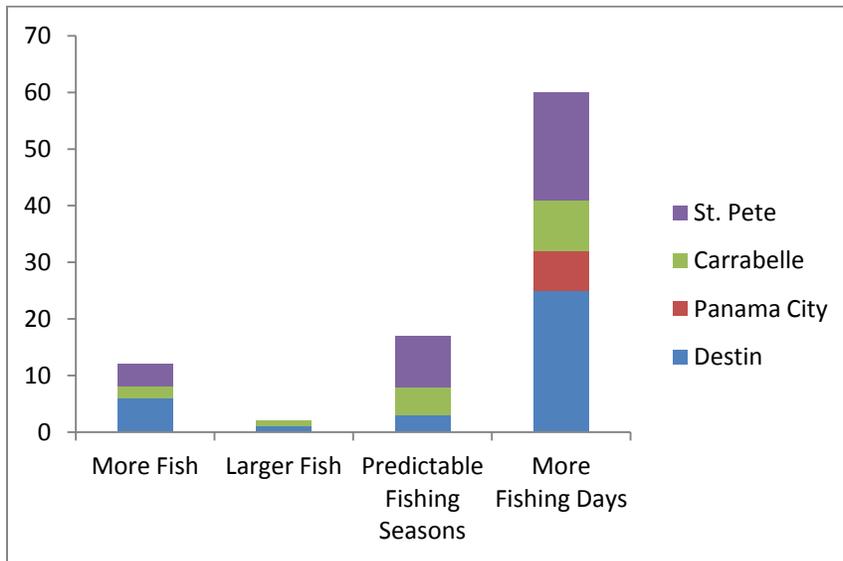


The response to this option was generally mixed, however “very favorable” received the most votes.

The following questions or management options were asked at only one or a few workshops based on the ideas of workshop attendees. Using the legend to the right of the graph, you can see at which workshops these questions were asked. With the exception of the first question, all questions still follow the continuum from Very Favorable (VF) to Very Unfavorable (VU).

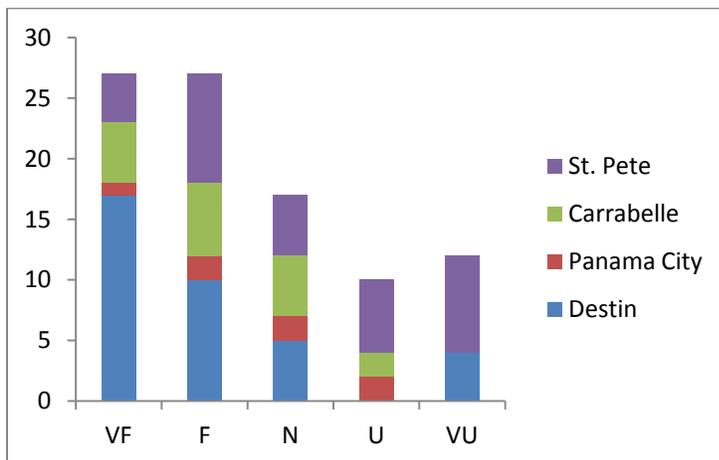
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

16) Which Management Goal is Most Important to You?



In general, most workshop attendees favored “more fishing days” as their top priority.

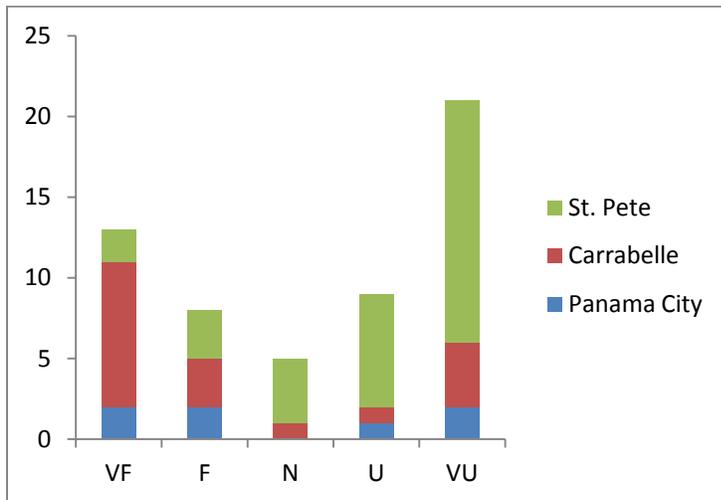
17) Have a Split Season for Recreational Harvest of Red Snapper



This option was generally viewed as either “favorable” or “very favorable” to most workshop attendees.

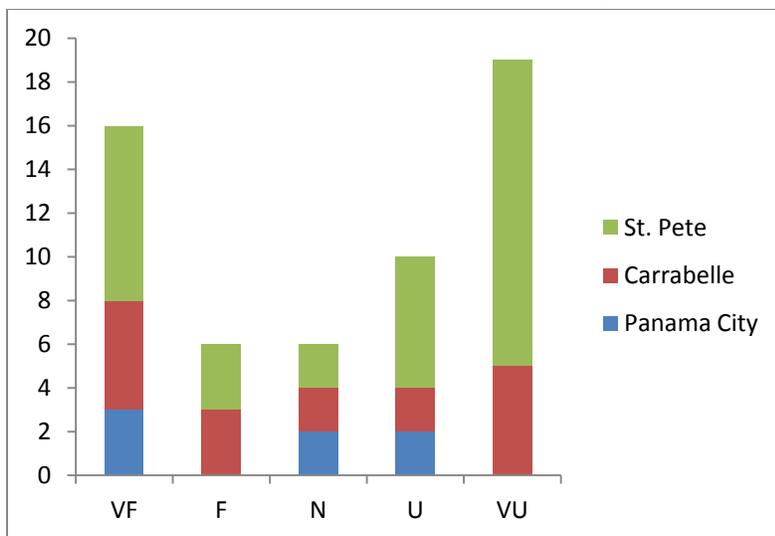
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

18) Have a Single Harvest Season for All Reef Fish



This option received mixed responses, but overall most votes were cast as “very unfavorable”.

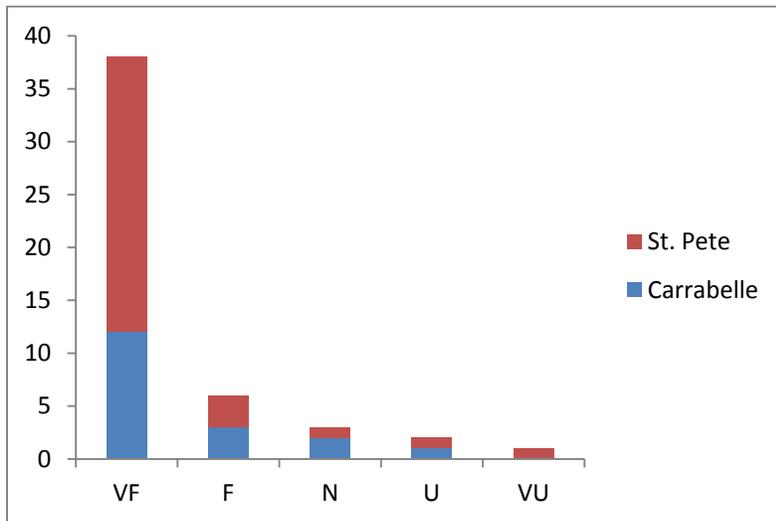
19) Keep the First Two Red Snapper Caught (No Discards)



This option received mixed responses, but overall most votes were cast as “very unfavorable.”

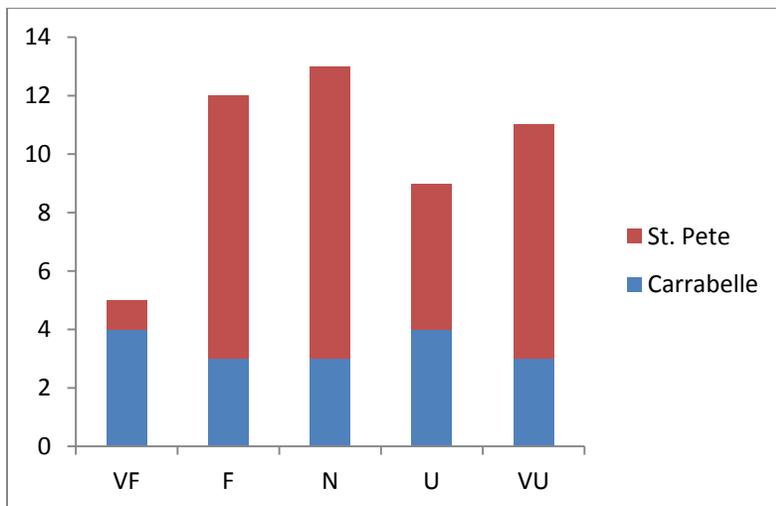
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

20) Create More Red Snapper Habitat Through Artificial Reefs



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most workshop attendees.

21) Manage Red Snapper Using a Combination of Water Depth and Season (Similar to the Shallow-Water Grouper Closure)

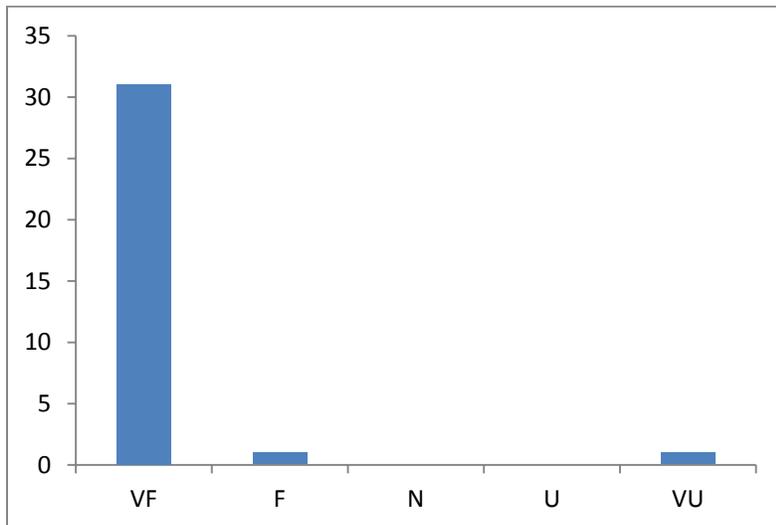


This option received mixed responses, and overall “neutral” received the most votes.

The following options were asked only at the St. Petersburg workshop.

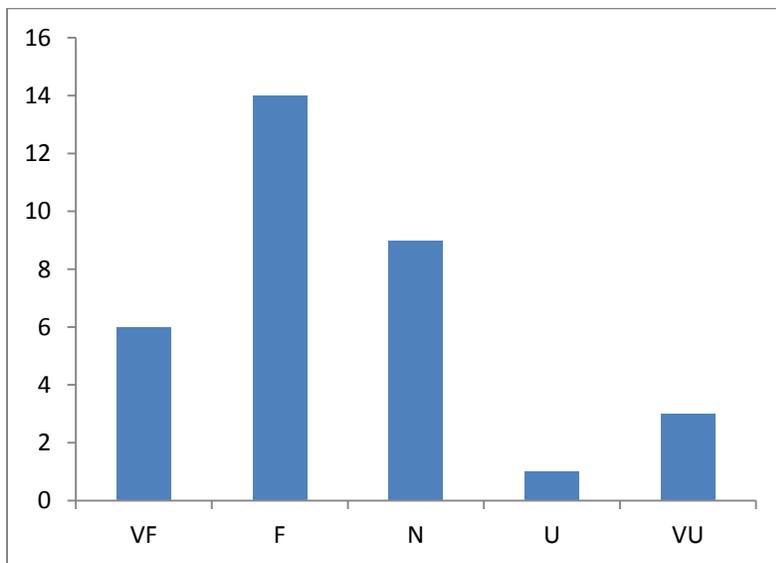
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

22) More Equity for Red Snapper Seasons by Geographic Area



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most St. Petersburg workshop attendees.

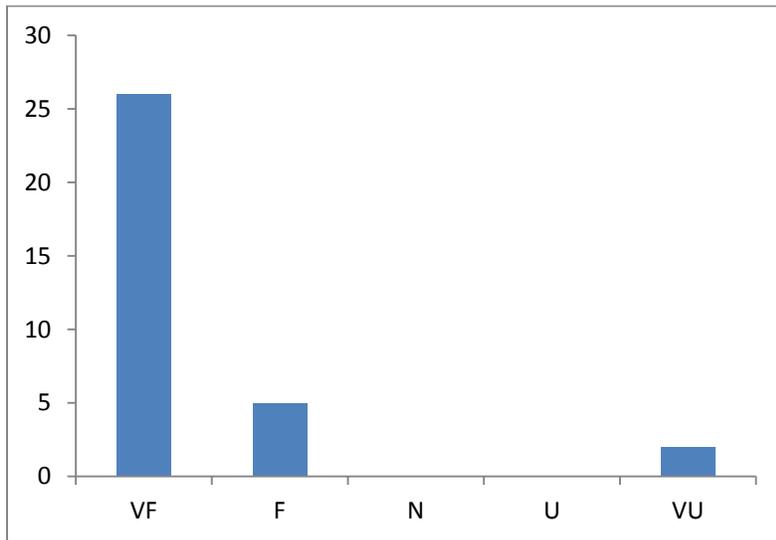
23) Increase the Minimum Size Limit For Red Snapper



This option received mixed responses, but overall “favorable” received the most votes.

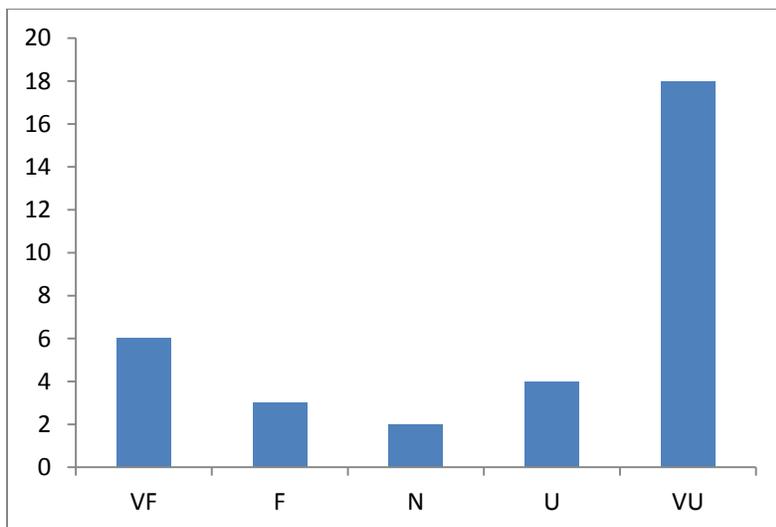
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

24) Have Regional Management of Red Snapper Within Florida (Have a Season in the Panhandle and Potentially a Different Season off West Florida)



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most St. Petersburg workshop attendees.

25) Have the State Go Compliant With Federal Seasons For Red Snapper

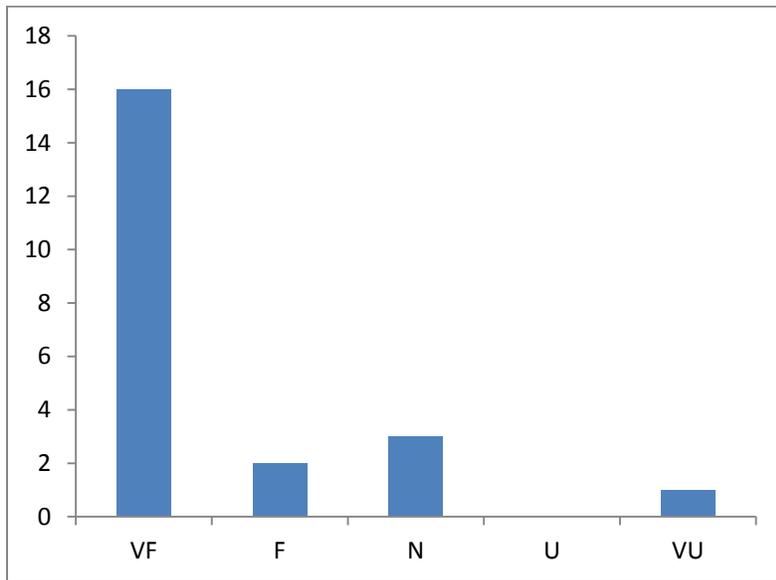


This option was viewed as “very unfavorable.”

The following management goals were asked only at the Pensacola workshop.

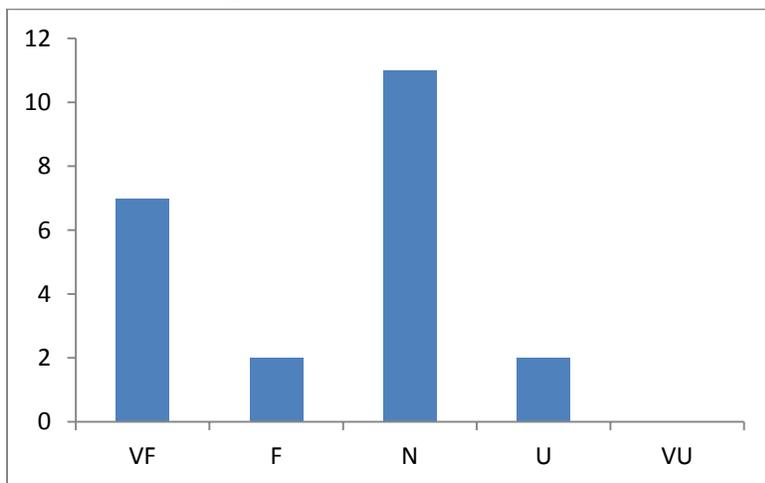
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

26) Have More Fish For the Future



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most Pensacola workshop attendees.

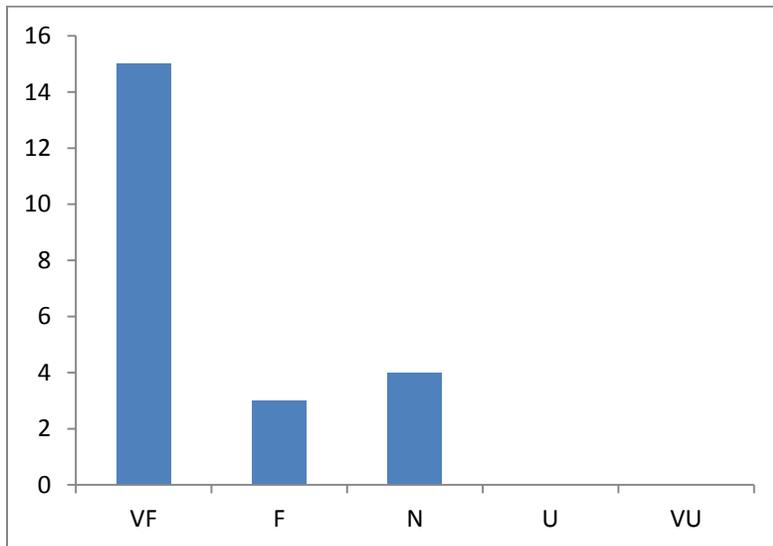
27) Have Larger Red Snapper Available to Harvest



This option received mixed responses, and overall “neutral” received the most votes.

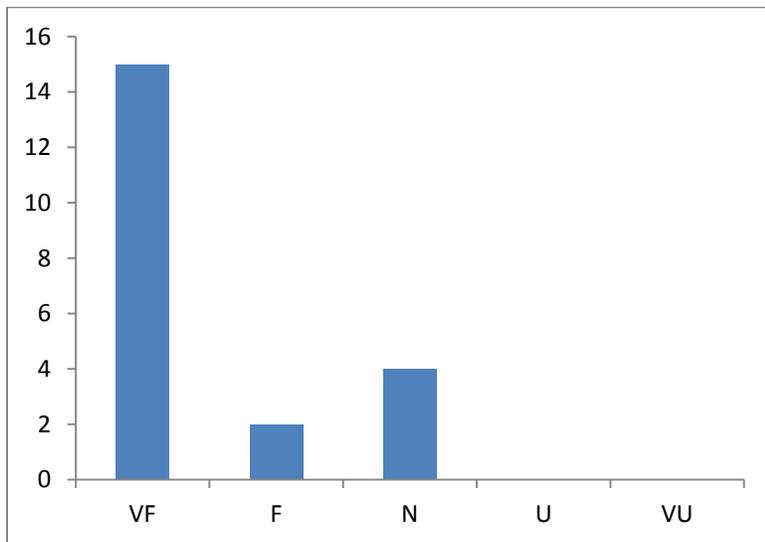
Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Workshop Summary

28) Have More Predictable Red Snapper Seasons



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most Pensacola workshop attendees.

29) Have More Fishing Days Available to Harvest Red Snapper



This option was viewed as “very favorable” to most Pensacola workshop attendees.