



Reef Fish Amendment 40 Sector Separation Guide

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Photos courtesy of: Mike Jennings, James Whitaker, and Jeff Berman.

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How do your comments affect fishery management?

Your comments are reported to the Council and NOAA Fisheries Service, and will be considered as the amendment goes through the development process. Once a public hearing draft and draft environmental impact statement are developed, you will have another opportunity to comment on the management alternatives under consideration. Your input will be considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures.

Introduction

Reef Fish Amendment 40 will consider the formal partition of the recreational sector into two distinct components. The proposed two-way partition would result in a private angling component and a federal for-hire component. Red snapper resources would then be allocated between these components. The intended result is to:

- increase the stability of the for-hire component
- provide a basis for increased flexibility in future management of the recreational sector
- decrease the chance for any recreational quota overruns which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock

Currently, the recreational sector in the Gulf of Mexico includes private recreational anglers and for-hire operators. The for-hire component includes headboats and charter vessels. Current recreational management measures such as season length, daily bag limits and size limits are typically applied to the recreational sector as a whole, without making a distinction between the private recreational and for-hire components.

The federal for-hire component includes vessels with valid or renewable federal reef fish permits. A moratorium on the issuance of new federal reef fish for-hire permits has been in place since 2004, therefore, no new federal reef fish for-hire permits are available. The number of state saltwater licenses and federal charter for-hire permits are shown in Figure 1.

On the other hand, there is no limit to the number of private recreational vessels that can fish for reef fish. There is also no limit to the number of state-permitted for-hire vessels. As a result, the proportion of the recreational red snapper quota harvested by private vessels has been increasing in recent years.

Annual recreational red snapper quotas and landings in the Gulf of Mexico between 1991 and 2011 are shown in Figure 2. A comparison of the recreational landings to annual quotas indicates that, in the last 20 years, landings have exceeded the quota more than ten times.

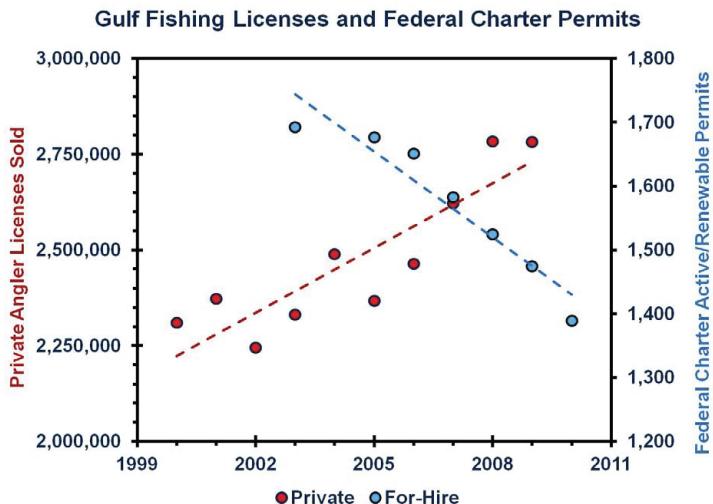


Figure 1. Number of state saltwater licenses and federal charter for hire permits for all Gulf of Mexico states.

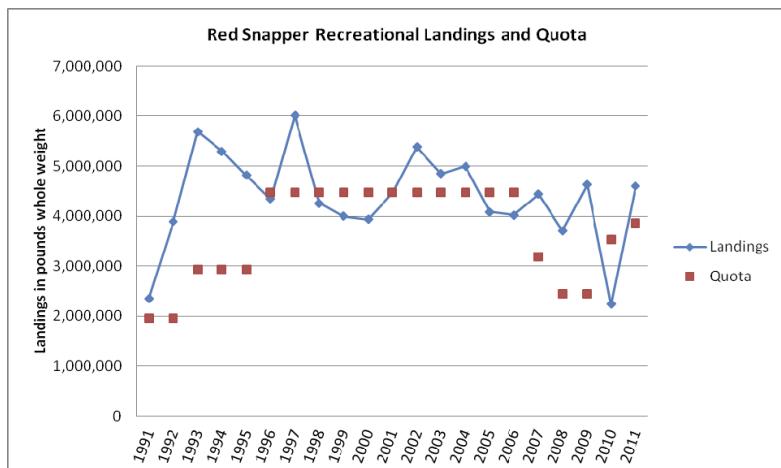


Figure 2. Differences between annual red snapper landings and quotas by sector, 1990 through 2011.

Scope of Actions

The Council is looking at four actions in Reef Fish Amendment 40. While only four actions have been identified to date, additional actions may be added during the amendment process.

Action 1. Define the different components of the recreational sector

Should the recreational component of the red snapper fishery be formally divided into two components:

1. a federally permitted for-hire component that includes for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish for-hire permit
2. a private angling component that includes all other for-hire operators and private recreational anglers

Action 2. Allocation between the components of the recreational sector

How much of the recreational quota should be allocated to each component?

Should allocation be based on average landings during some specified time frame?

What time frames should be considered?



Action 3. Voluntary Participation in the Federal For-hire Component

Should all for-hire operators with federal reef fish permits be included in the federal for-hire component?

Should federally permitted for-hire operators be allowed to opt-out of the new federal for-hire component and remain in the private angling component?

Should the decision to opt-out be permanent or temporary?

How often should the federally-permitted operators who opted out of the new federal for-hire component be allowed to (re)join?

Action 4. Red Snapper Recreational Quota Closures

Should a single recreational quota closure be maintained? The recreational red snapper season will close when the recreational red snapper quota is projected to be caught.

Should quota closure provisions be established for each component? The federal for-hire red snapper season will close when the federal for-hire red snapper quota is projected to be caught; the private angling red snapper season will close when the private angling red snapper quota is projected to be caught.

To comment, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ndzbvny>, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page at www.gulfcouncil.org.





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