

Public Comment Summary
Reef Fish Amendment 47- Vermillion Snapper MSY Proxy and ACL

Webinar Public Hearing Summary
May 24, 2017

Council/Staff

Steven Atran
Emily Muehlstein
Bernadine Roy

16 members of the public attended.
2 members of the public commented.

Michael Pittman – Charter Owner: Alabama

Red snapper are so abundant that it's difficult to catch vermillion on artificial structure. However, the vermillion snapper population from Louisiana to Destin is healthy, especially on natural bottom. If something has to be done to manage the stock, the Council should consider increasing the size limit to 11 or 12 inches because there isn't much meat on a smaller fish. He ran a headboat for years and every 10-inch fish went into the cooler. A 10-inch vermillion doesn't provide enough meat to make a sandwich, so he suggests an increased size limit. Additionally, if it's necessary he wouldn't mind decreasing the bag limit to 6 or 8 fish.

Matthew Smith – Headboat Operator: Galveston, Texas

Off Texas the vermillion snapper fishery is fantastic. His boat has landed over 30,000 vermillion each year for the past three years. He doesn't think that a 10-inch vermillion provides much meat and on headboats, if it's legal you're going to keep it. Hopefully, nothing has to change but, if it does, he supports a minimum size increase to 11 or 12 inches. Some of the places where he used to catch vermillion are now overrun with red snapper. The vermillion snapper are still there, but they're more difficult to fish for, unless you're targeting them over natural bottom. If the size limit were to increase, there may be a year or two that the stock will have to catch up. The same thing happened with amberjack, but after a few years they grew to the new minimum size limit. He would like the 10-vermillion bag limit to remain and he hopes that doesn't change.

Written Comment Summary

- Vermillion are being fished hard because there are no other species to target. If vermillion is closed or restricted then headboats in the Florida panhandle won't have anything to target and private boats will be adversely impacted.
- Vermillion snapper are the "go to" fish when red snapper is closed. The 10 inch size limit is too short; there isn't enough meat for a sandwich and roe is often found in the little fish. The Council should increase the minimum size limit to 12 inches.
- The Council should use the more cautious approach of $F_{30\%SPR}$ to set MSY

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- Vermillion limits should be left as they are. They seem to be doing quite well under current management.

Other Comments Received

- Destin is overrun with triggerfish and anglers should be allowed to harvest them.
- All fishermen should be limited to a maximum of 5 hooks per line, people should not be fishing with 10-20 hook rigs.
- Red snapper management is working. In the early 90s it was difficult to catch a good limit and now they're hard to avoid. There needs to be more older red snapper for the stock to be restored and hopefully, more harvest in state waters with less harvest in federal waters will help.
- More education on SPR and how it applies to catch limit would help the public become supportive of red snapper regulations.
- Snapper management has been a disaster and bag regulations have caused overharvest of amberjack, trigger, and grouper.
- Longliners take all the fish from the reefs and out of the hands of the small number of recreational fishermen.
- The Council should pay attention to the CCS report on the economics of recreational vs. commercial fishing.
- Commercially harvested fish shouldn't be exported, forcing restaurants to serve imported fish.