

Red Grouper (*Epinephelus morio*)

Description:

Red grouper is common eastern Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) reef fish that can be found from shallow reefs out to depths exceeding 390 ft (120 m). It is easily identified by its red/orange/brown coloration with mottled white and gray splotches. Red grouper in the Gulf are considered not overfished and not experiencing overfishing (SEDAR 61 2019); however, the stock is very susceptible to episodic mortality from red tide, and may have experienced substantial mortality from red tide in 2018.

Gulf Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 61 2019)

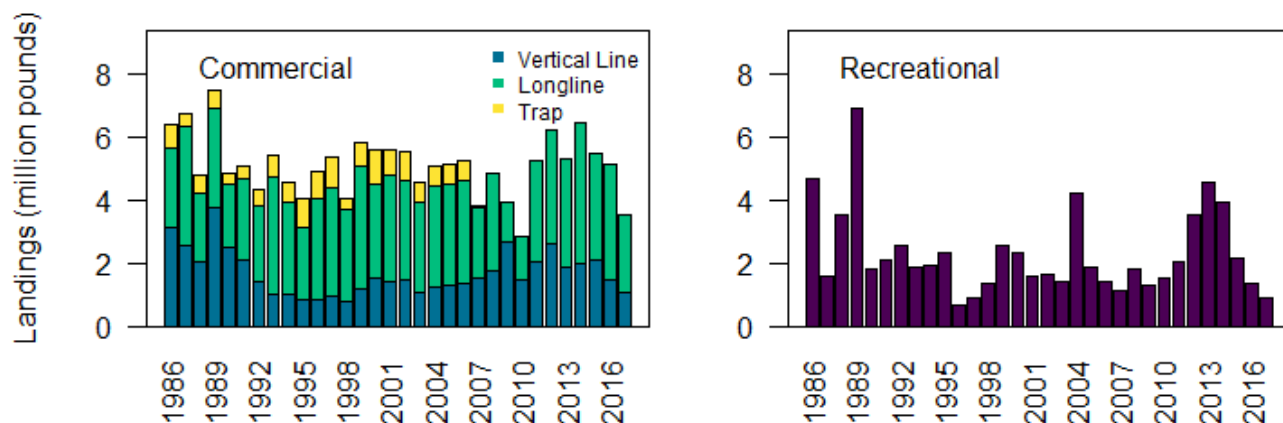
Natural mortality rate (M):	0.144/year
Reproductive maturity:	50% of females mature at ~11.5 inches (29.2 cm) fork length (FL); age 2.2 years
Maximum age:	29 years
Maximum weight:	50.7 lbs (23 kg) whole weight
Maximum length:	41.7 inches (106 cm) FL
Discard mortality:	41.5% comm. longline; 19% comm. handline; 10% trap; 11.6% recreational



Life History and Distribution: (SEDAR 61 2019)

Red grouper is commonly caught in Florida waters from Panama City to the Florida Keys along the inner to mid-continental shelf, and is rare in the western Gulf. The species inhabits perforated hardbottom such as limestone reef caverns and crevices. Juveniles live in shallow-water nearshore reefs until they become sexually mature and move offshore. Red grouper is a protogynous hermaphrodite, transitioning from female to male at older ages, and forms harems for spawning. Age and size at sexual transition from female to male is ~11.4 years and 27.9 inches (70.8 cm) FL. Red grouper spawn from February until mid-July with peak spawning occurring during March through June.

Landings History: (SEDAR 61 2019)



Federal Regulations: Commercial = 76% of ABC; Recreational = 24% of ABC

- Commercial: Managed under an individual fishing quota program with no closed season. Minimum size limit is 18 inches (45.7 cm) total length (TL).
- Recreational: 2/person within 4/person grouper aggregate. Minimum size limit is 20 inches (50.8 cm) TL. Closed February 1 – March 31 beyond 20 fathoms (120 ft or 36.6 m).