

**SEDAR Committee Summary
August 7, 2017
Leann Bosarge, Chair**

Expanded 2017 Red Snapper Season for Private Anglers

Dr. Crabtree summarized the Secretary of Commerce determination that extending the red snapper season for private recreational anglers would also extend the rebuilding timeline by as many as six years, or to 2038. The extension would also result in a more modest pace of rebuilding. Despite these effects, the Secretary concluded that the costs of extending the private recreational angler season were outweighed by the benefits to the angling public.

State representatives from Louisiana, Alabama, Texas, and Mississippi commented on observed effort during the extended portion of the season, with most noting a decrease in CPUE per day during the extended portion of the season compared to the initial three-day season.

A Committee member commented on input received by a commercial fisherman from Mississippi, who noted a drop in the catch rate of red snapper. In addition to seeing red snapper displaced by lane snapper, the fisherman also claimed to witness discards of legal size red snapper by private recreational vessels. The Committee member supported consistency in regulations, a need to resolve recreational data collection issues, and the fact that the circumvention of the Council process by the Department of Commerce does not absolve the Council from dealing with any potential effects of such decisions.

A Council member asked NOAA General Counsel about the legal basis for the action taken by the Department of Commerce. The NOAA GC noted that the federal register notice announcing the expanded recreational red snapper fishing season for private anglers cites several provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Committee postulated on the basis for the decision to extend the season, including economic drivers, and noted that these alone could not form the basis of a fisheries management decision.

Staff from the SEFSC presented data on simulations used to estimate the effect of an extension of the recreational red snapper fishing season for private anglers, if the three day season was extended to 45 days, which also assumed that commercial landings would be equivalent to approximately 99% of the commercial ACL. The main points of the presentation were:

- The 45-day season was projected to land over 2.1 million fish, compared to over 800,000 in the three-day season
- The 45-day season would land approximately 20.1 million pounds of red snapper across all sectors, or 8.3 mp more than the three-day season and 6 mp more than the allowed yield in the current rebuilding plan
- The 45-day season would extend the rebuilding timeline by four years to 2036

Council members noted that a great deal of uncertainty is present in projections, especially those which are carried out 15 years into the future. Further, the models presented represent landings estimates, and it was noted that incorporation of actual landings data are the best way to determine the effects of the season extension on the rebuilding plan for red snapper. Staff added that a plan amendment may be necessary to address rebuilding, in order to make sure we rebuild by 2032, which is the maximum amount of time allowed for red snapper to rebuild in accordance with the National Standard guidelines.

Committee members discussed delaying the SEDAR 52 assessment of red snapper until 2018 in order for 2017 harvest data to be incorporated in the SEDAR 52 standard assessment. Staff from the SEFSC noted costs in doing so, such as having to move other assessments, that data preparation was already underway, and that hotel cancellation costs would be likely. Benefits may include incorporation of MRIP calibration updates, 2017 data, and more realistic projections. One Council member expressed concern about constantly postponing the assessment to include more data, and the delivery timeline for the completed assessment.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **to delay the current red snapper standard assessment to 2018 and to make 2017 the terminal year.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

SEDAR Schedule

Staff reviewed the SEDAR schedule with the Committee. The feasibility of assessing cobia in 2018 was discussed and determined to be unlikely, especially in light of the Committee's desire to move the current red snapper assessment to 2018. Further, a stock identification effort is underway for cobia, from which the Gulf migratory group may benefit through the inclusion of new data.

The Committee recommends, and I so move, **to move the cobia stock assessment to 2019 with a terminal year of 2017.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

This concludes my report.