



PUBLIC HEARING GUIDE

8/21/12



Reef Fish Amendment 39: Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper



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What is a Public Hearing?

A public hearing gives you an opportunity to comment on a fishery management plan or amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is developing. Public hearings are conducted later in the amendment development process, after the Council has begun selecting preferred alternatives for proposed actions, but before taking final action. Suggestions, issues, and concerns expressed during the public hearings will be presented to the Council for review and consideration before final action is taken. Focusing your comments on the pros and cons of specific alternatives in each action provides the most useful guidance to the Council. If you are unable to attend a public hearing in person, you can submit your comments online. For online comment forms, video presentations, and full documents, visit our website at www.gulfcouncil.org and click the thermometer icon at the center of the homepage.

How does a public hearing affect fisheries management?

Comments provided during the public hearing process are reported to the full Council prior to final action. Your input is considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures to address the issue(s) at hand.

How else can I get involved?

There are many ways you can help the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identify fishery management needs and develop reasonable management alternatives, each dependent on how actively involved you want to become. The first step to becoming involved is to educate yourself about the management process by visiting our website at www.gulfcouncil.org, signing up to receive our communications, and contacting council members and staff to discuss management. You can attend meetings, serve on panels and committees that advise the Council on fishery issues, and even apply to become a Council member.

Introduction to Amendment 39

Recreational red snapper fishing in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico is managed with a 2-fish bag limit, 16-inch minimum size limit, and a fishing season that begins on June 1 and closes when the quota is projected to be caught. The fishing season has become progressively shorter since 1996 and fishermen have asked for more flexibility to make regulations that provide greater socioeconomic benefits to their particular area.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is considering regional management as a way to provide greater flexibility in the management of recreational red snapper. Participating states or regions could adopt management options more appropriate to their local area while continuing to achieve federal conservation goals. The regional management measures adopted by a region must be designed to constrain harvest within the region's portion of the recreational quota. Red snapper would remain a federally managed species and the Council and National Marine Fisheries Service would continue to oversee management and ensure that the annual recreational quota is not exceeded.

Under regional management of recreational red snapper, management measures for the different regions must remain consistent with the Fishery Management Plan. If a region does not implement management measures that are consistent with the fishery management plan then National Marine Fisheries Service will suspend delegation until the identified inconsistencies are corrected. If a suspension of delegation occurs or if a region opts out of regional management then default federal regulations will be put in effect for the harvest of red snapper in that region.

Amendment 39 - Summary of Actions

Action 1. Regional Management

Currently, recreational regulations are the same across all federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The Council is considering establishing a program that will allow different regulations to be selected in different regions of the Gulf. The Council must decide whether to delegate authority to the regions to determine their management measures or to have the Council specify the management measures to be used in each region.

Alternative 1: No action.

Preferred Alternative 2: Delegate authority to a state or states to establish certain management measures for the harvest of an assigned portion of the recreational red snapper quota.

Alternative 3: Allow the Council to specify distinct recreational red snapper management measures for selected regions.

Action 2: Establish Regions for Management

If regional management is adopted, the next step is to decide how to establish regions and how many regions to establish. The Council could select and establish the regions or the states could determine their own regions by submitting a regional management proposal to the National Marine Fisheries Service. Establishing multiple regions will make management more complex as the quota is subdivided and different management measures may be created for each region. If multiple states are joined into one region, the states will have to agree on shared management measures.

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Establish an east (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi) and west (Louisiana, Texas) region.

Preferred Alternative 3: Establish five regions representing each Gulf state.

Alternative 4: Allow each state or group of neighboring states to determine its own region through submission of a regional management proposal (*may only be selected if Action 1, Alternative 2 is also selected*).

Action 3: Apportioning the Recreational Red Snapper Quota Among Regions

Currently, there is a Gulf-wide recreational red snapper quota. Adoption of regional management will require the quota to be distributed among the regions. The Council will have to follow its Fishery Allocation Policy in determining how to apportion the quota among the regions. The table below shows the percentage of annual recreational red snapper landings by state from 1986-2012.

Year	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas
1986	10.9%	53.7%	17.7%	0.1%	17.7%
1987	17.6%	42.0%	12.9%	2.5%	25.1%
1988	15.6%	29.1%	31.7%	0.7%	22.9%
1989	16.5%	15.0%	21.7%	10.5%	36.3%
1990	39.8%	20.8%	14.2%	2.8%	22.3%
1991	28.6%	15.7%	31.9%	5.9%	17.9%
1992	31.3%	7.9%	23.8%	15.8%	21.1%
1993	27.9%	17.2%	22.1%	12.1%	20.8%
1994	30.1%	13.7%	20.4%	7.6%	28.2%
1995	30.2%	9.7%	27.0%	2.7%	30.4%
1996	30.8%	17.6%	16.1%	3.7%	31.8%
1997	37.5%	14.1%	16.5%	9.3%	22.6%
1998	27.9%	27.8%	14.5%	3.7%	26.1%
1999	38.1%	28.5%	15.7%	3.9%	13.8%
2000	28.4%	35.1%	18.1%	1.1%	17.4%
2001	41.3%	39.2%	6.1%	2.0%	11.5%
2002	39.2%	37.8%	6.1%	3.5%	13.4%
2003	36.9%	35.7%	8.8%	5.8%	12.9%
2004	25.7%	56.2%	5.7%	0.8%	11.5%
2005	26.0%	47.3%	11.9%	0.1%	14.7%
2006	18.0%	50.1%	14.9%	0.6%	16.4%
2007	18.8%	58.6%	12.6%	0.1%	9.8%
2008	14.3%	59.5%	15.7%	1.0%	9.5%
2009	18.6%	52.2%	14.0%	1.4%	13.8%
2010	12.2%	64.8%	2.5%	0.4%	20.2%
2011	41.1%	39.1%	7.6%	1.1%	11.2%
2012	28.1%	41.5%	14.8%	3.7%	12.0%

Source: Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) annual catch limit dataset, including MRIP, TPWD, and Southeast Headboat Survey (HBS) landings. Alabama and the Florida Panhandle HBS landings are initially reported to the same headboat fishing area. Landings have been assigned to each state based on the HBS vessel landing records (May 2013). Actual landings are provided in the Appendix (Table F-1).

Note: Alternative 3 can be selected as preferred alongside Alternative 2, and more than one option may be selected as preferred in Alternative 3. Alternative 4 may only be selected if Action 2, Alternative 2 is selected as preferred.

Alternative 1: No action.

Alternative 2: Apportion the recreational red snapper quota among regions selected in Action 2, based on the average of historical landings for the years:

Option a: 1986-2012

Option b: 1996-2012

Option c: 2006-2012

Option d: 50% from 1986-2012 and 50% from 2006-2012

Alternative 3: In calculating regional apportionments exclude from the selected time series:

Option a: 2006 landings

Option b: 2010 landings

Alternative 4: Establish eastern and western recreational red snapper quotas, divided at the Mississippi River, based on regional acceptable biological catches (ABCs) resulting from the separate east Gulf and west Gulf stock assessments.

Alternative 5: Apportion the recreational red snapper quota among the Gulf states based on 50% of the average of historical landings from 1986-2011 and 50% of the average of historical landings from 2006-2011, excluding landings from 2010 and rounding the resulting proportions to whole numbers.

Action 4: Regional Management Measures

National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf Council are responsible for making management measures that aim to ensure the entire recreational harvest, including harvest in state waters, does not exceed the Gulf-wide recreational quota. Under regional management it would become the region's responsibility to establish management measures that constrain harvest to that region's portion of the quota. The Council will decide which management measures may be modified at the regional level.

Note: More than one alternative may be selected.

Alternative 1: No action.

Preferred Alternative 2: Allow individual regions to set recreational red snapper season start and end dates and season structure.

Preferred Alternative 3: Allow individual regions to set recreational bag limits from 0 to 4 red snapper per angler per day.

Preferred Alternative 4: Allow individual regions to establish recreational red snapper minimum size limits from 14 to 18 inches total length.

Alternative 5: Allow individual regions to establish a maximum recreational red snapper size limit.

Preferred Alternative 6: Allow individual regions to establish closed areas within the federal waters adjacent to their region that apply only to vessels registered within their region.

Preferred Alternative 7: Allow individual regions to establish sub-allocations for the private and for-hire (charter and headboat) sub-sectors.

Action 5: For-Hire Vessels Federal Permit Restrictions

Vessels with a Gulf charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish must follow the more strict federal regulations when state regulations are different. If the Council chooses to delegate management to the regions, then this rule would have regulatory effect only if delegation is suspended, rescinded, or a region chooses not to participate. If the Council does not choose delegation for regional management, this rule would remain in effect.

Alternative 1: No action.

Preferred Alternative 2: Do not require vessels with Gulf charter vessel/headboat permits for Gulf reef fish to comply with the more restrictive of federal recreational red snapper regulations when fishing in the same waters.

Action 6: Post-Season Accountability Measures Adjusting for Regional Overages

Post-season Accountability Measures are designed to correct any quota overages that may occur. Currently, there are no accountability measures in place for recreational red snapper. Each year the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee reviews landings and resulting yield projections to determine an updated Acceptable Biological Catch. The Council then updates the quota through a framework action. In this action the Council is considering how to handle quota overages under a regional management scenario.

Alternative 1: No action.

Option a: Allow 1-year grace period before implementation.

Option b: Allow 2-year grace period before implementation.

Alternative 2: If the combined recreational landings from all regions exceed the Gulf-wide recreational sector quota, then the quota will be reduced in the following year by the amount of the overage.

Preferred Alternative 3: If a region exceeds its apportioned regional quota, then the region's quota will be reduced in the following year by the amount of the overage. If total landings from all regions do not exceed the Gulf-wide recreational quota then the region's quota will not be reduced.

Option a: Allow 1-year grace period before implementation.

Option b: Allow 2-year grace period before implementation.

Alternative 4: If the combined recreational landings from all regions exceed the recreational sector quota, then the recreational quotas for the following year would be based on buffers calculated by the annual catch limit/annual catch target control rule.

Option a: Allow 1-year grace period before implementation.

Option b: Allow 2-year grace period before implementation.

Action 7: Establishing Default Regulations

If the Council chooses to delegate management authority to different regions, then default regulations will have to be in place to ensure that federal conservation goals are achieved. The default regulations, would be applied to the federal waters off of a region if that region's delegation is suspended or if a region chooses not to participate.

Alternative 1: No action.

Preferred Alternative 2: During the suspension of delegation, the recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters off such state would be:

Preferred Option a: Restricted to the default regulations.

Option b: Prohibited until the delegation is reinstated.

Preferred Alternative 3: If a state opts out of delegation, the default regulations would apply for recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters the state.

Summary of Regional Management Based on Current Preferred Alternatives

Action 1: Regional Management

Preferred Alternative 2: Delegate authority to a state or states to establish certain management measures for the harvest of an assigned portion of the recreational red snapper quota.

Action 2: Regions

Preferred Alternative 3: Establish five regions representing each Gulf state.

Action 3: Apportionment

No Preferred Alternative.

Action 4: Management Measures

Preferred Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7: Allow individual regions to set:

- Recreational red snapper season start and end dates
- Season structure
- Bag limits (from 0-4 per person)
- Minimum size limits (from 14 – 18 inches)
- Closed areas (applying only to vessels registered within the region)
- Sub-allocations for the private and for-hire (charter and headboat) sub-sectors.

Action 5: For-hire Permit Restrictions

Preferred Alternative 2: Do not require vessels with Gulf charter vessel/ headboat permits for Gulf reef fish to comply with the more restrictive of federal recreational red snapper regulations when fishing in the same waters.

Action 6: Accountability Measures

Preferred Alternative 3: If a region exceeds the apportioned regional quota, then the region's quota will be reduced in the following year by the amount of the overage. *If total landings from all the regions do not exceed the Gulf-wide recreational quota then the region's quota will not be reduced.

Action 7: Default Regulations

Preferred Alternative 2a & 3: During the suspension of delegation, the recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters off such state would be restricted to the default regulations. If a state opts out of delegation, the default regulations would apply for recreational harvest of red snapper in the federal waters off the state.

The Council is collecting input on this proposed amendment at a series of meetings across the Gulf coast. Each of the following meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m. local time and conclude no later than 9:00 p.m.

August 1, 2013

Call-in session

(Starts at 6:00 p.m. Eastern time)

888-323-2711

Password: Regional Management

August 5, 2013

D'Iberville, MS

Courtyard Marriott

11471 Cinema Drive

D'Iberville, MS 39540

(228) 391-1200

August 7, 2013

Panama City, FL

Holiday Inn Select

2001 N. Cove Blvd.

Panama City, FL 32405

(850) 769-0000

August 8, 2013

Mobile, AL

Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel

64 South Water Street

Mobile, AL 36602

(251) 438-4000

August 12, 2013

St. Petersburg, FL

Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Parkway

950 Lake Carillon Drive

St. Petersburg, FL 33716

(727) 540-0050

August 12, 2013

Corpus Christi, TX

Hilton Garden Inn

6717 South Padre Island Drive

Corpus Christi, TX 78412

(361) 991-8200

August 13, 2013

League City, TX

Hampton Inn & Suites

2320 Gulf Freeway South

League City, TX 77573

(281) 614-5437

August 14, 2013

Baton Rouge, LA

DoubleTree

4964 Constitution Avenue

Baton Rouge, LA 70808

(225) 925-1005

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. Submit comments online at: <http://tinyurl.com/abzvya2>, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page.



NOTES



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