

Recreational Red Snapper Sector Separation



Draft Options for Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico

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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Amendment 40

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Cover Sheet

Recreational Red Snapper Sector Separation, Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico, including a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Abstract:

This DEIS is prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to assess the environmental impacts associated with a regulatory action. The DEIS analyzes the impacts of a reasonable range of alternatives intended to evaluate a division of the recreational sector into a private angler and for-hire components.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

ACL	annual catch limit
AM	accountability measure
Council	Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FFHR	Federal for-hire
FMP	Fishery Management Plan
IFQ	individual fishing quota
Magnuson-Stevens Act	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
MRIP	Marine Recreational Information Program
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
SEFSC	Southeast Fisheries Science Center
SERO	Southeast Regional Office of NMFS
TAC	total allowable catch
TL	total length

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abbreviations Used in this Document	ii
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Purpose and Need	12
1.3 History of Management	12
Chapter 2. Management Alternatives	14
2.1 Action 1 – Definition of a Federal For-hire Component	14
2.2 Action 2 – Allocation between the Components of the Recreational Sector.....	16
2.3 Action 3 – Voluntary Participation in the Federal For-hire Component	24
2.4 Action 4 – Red snapper recreational accountability measures	26
Chapter 3. Tables	27
Chapter 4. References	30

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.2.1. Alabama - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	17
Table 2.2.2. Florida - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	18
Table 2.2.3. Louisiana - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	19
Table 2.2.4. Mississippi - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	20
Table 2.2.5. Texas - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	21
Table 2.2.6. Gulf-wide red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.....	22
Table 2.2.7. Red snapper allocations for the federal for-hire and private angling components in percentage and in pounds. Pounds allocated are based on a recreational quota of 5.39 mp.....	23
Table 3.1.1. Number of state for-hire permits in the Gulf of Mexico (by state) – 2000 to 2009.	27
Table 3.1.2. Number of federal for-hire reef fish permits – by state (2005 – 2011).....	27
Table 3.1.3. Annual red snapper recreational angler-trips by state.....	28
Table 3.1.4. Annual red snapper recreational angler-trips for two modes (1986-2011).	29

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1.1. Relationship between the number of state saltwater licenses and federal for-hire permits for all Gulf States.	4
Figure 1.1.2. Red snapper recreational landings by private vessels and federally permitted for-hire vessels (charters and headboats combined).	5
Figure 1.1.3. Number of red snapper recreational angler trips by year, Gulf-wide.	6
Figure 1.1.4. Number of red snapper angler trips taken on private and for-hire (charter boat and headboat) vessels.	7
Figure 1.1.5. Gulf-wide: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	8
Figure 1.1.6. Florida: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	9
Figure 1.1.7. Alabama: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	9
Figure 1.1.8. Mississippi: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	10
Figure 1.1.9. Louisiana: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	10
Figure 1.1.10. Texas: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats)	11

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The recreational sector in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) includes a private vessel component and a for-hire component. The for-hire component includes charter boats and headboats. 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 and for-hire components. In this document, sector separation is defined as the partition of a sector into distinct components. Specifically, the separation of the recreational sector would entail the partition of the sector into two distinct sub-sectors, resulting in a private sub-sector and a for-hire sub sector.

Since 2004, federal reef fish for-hire permits have been in moratorium. This means that entrance to participation is capped; no additional federal permits are available. This also means that access to these vessels is limited to the recreational anglers that can fit on these permitted vessels. On the other hand, there is no limiting factor to the number of private anglers and recreational vessels which may target reef fish species; it is an open entry fishery. There is also no limit to the number of state-permitted for-hire vessels. Over time, an increase in the number of private recreational vessels, while federal for-hire vessels have decreased in number (Figure 1.1.1), has resulted in private vessel landings representing a greater proportion of the recreational quota as a whole (Figure 1.1.2). This change in vessel demographics is one issue that may be addressed by sector separation. Additionally, landings data for the private recreational component are associated with a higher degree of uncertainty. When private recreational landings estimates are combined with for-hire landings data, less effective management measures may be implemented in the recreational sector.

Management actions considering recreational sector separation have been included and subsequently removed from Reef Fish Amendment 32 (GMFMC 2011a) and from the Generic Annual Catch Limits/Accountability Measures (ACL/AM) Amendment (GMFMC 2011b). Analyses of sector separation were presented to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) in April and October 2011, and April 2012. At the April 2012 Council meeting, the Council indicated its intent to further discuss issues related to sector separation by initiating a plan amendment. The Council reviewed a scoping document at its June 2012 meeting, which considered sector separation for six reef fish species with existing sector allocations (commercial-recreational). The Council then requested that the sector separation scoping document be combined with the grouper allocation options paper, which was under development concurrently, and that the document address red snapper and groupers (red, gag, and black), only. At its August 2012 meeting, the Council reviewed the sector allocations document, moving to table further discussion until completion of the 2013 red snapper benchmark assessment.

At the January 2013 Reef Fish Committee meeting, the Council expressed its intent to resume discussion of red snapper allocation separate from sector separation; a public hearing draft for

red snapper allocation (Amendment 28) is on the agenda for this meeting. At the October 2013 meeting, the Council requested sector separation be addressed independently, resulting in the development of this document (Amendment 40). Two other documents addressing issues of red snapper management for the recreational sector are on the agenda for this meeting. These include Amendment 39 (regional management) and a Framework Action to consider the provision requiring for-hire vessels to abide by federal regulations if state regulations are less restrictive.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

- Responsible for conservation and management of fish stocks
- Consists of 17 voting members: 11 appointed by the Secretary of Commerce; 1 representative from each of the 5 Gulf States, the Southeast Regional Administrator of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); and 4 non-voting members
- Responsible for developing fishery management plans and amendments, and recommends actions to NMFS for implementation

National Marine Fisheries Service

- Responsible for preventing overfishing while achieving optimum yield
- Approves, disapproves, or partially approves Council recommendations
- Implements regulations

To contextualize sector separation, this section provides background information on changes within the recreational sector focused around licenses, landings, and effort. First, changes in the number of state fishing licenses, state for-hire permits, and federal for-hire permits are summarized. Next, information on recreational red snapper landings and effort is provided, including a comparison between annual landings and the quota, and increases in the number of angler trips for the entire recreational sector and by mode. Overall, these data suggest an increase in recreational effort over time as well as the growth in landings represented by private vessels compared with for-hire vessels. Additionally, this section uses landings, quota, and effort (angler trips) data for red snapper. The ratio of landings over time between for-hire and private vessels varies for other species.

Permits and licenses

State Saltwater Fishing Licenses

Between 2000 and 2009, most Gulf States recorded increases in the annual number of saltwater fishing licenses sold (Figure 1.1.1). During this time interval, the largest increase (56.6%) was recorded for the state of Texas. In Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana fishing licenses increased by 6.2%, 1.5%, and 9.2%, respectively. In Mississippi, the only state with a decrease in the number of fishing licenses during this interval, the number of licenses fell by 18.6%. Overall, the number of recreational saltwater fishing licenses in the Gulf increased by 20.5% (Figure 1.1.1). There is no limit on the number of state saltwater fishing licenses which may be sold.

State For-Hire Permits

Between 2000 and 2009, the number of state for-hire permits sold by Gulf States increased by 20% (Table 3.1.1). In 2009, Florida accounted for 53.7% of the permits, the largest proportion. Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas accounted for 2.8%, 10.3%, 2.1%, and 31.0% of the permits, respectively. There is no limit on the number of state for-hire permits which may be sold. State-permitted for-hire vessels, however, are not permitted to harvest red snapper or other federally managed species from federal waters.

Federal For-hire Reef Fish Permits

Implemented in 2004, Amendment 20 (GMFMC 2003) established a moratorium on the sale of federal for-hire reef fish permits, effectively limiting the maximum number of permits to 1,693. Although existing permits are transferable, by 2011 the number of federal for-hire reef fish permits had decreased to 1,362 or by 19.6% (Table 3.1.2). In 2011, of the five Gulf States, Florida accounted for 60.6% of the permits, the largest proportion of federal for-hire reef fish permits. Texas (16.2%), Alabama (10.9%), Louisiana (8.8%), and Mississippi (3.5%) account for much smaller proportions of the permits in 2011. The decreasing number of federal for-hire permits is compared alongside the increasing number of saltwater fishing licenses sold to private anglers, in Figure 1.1.1.

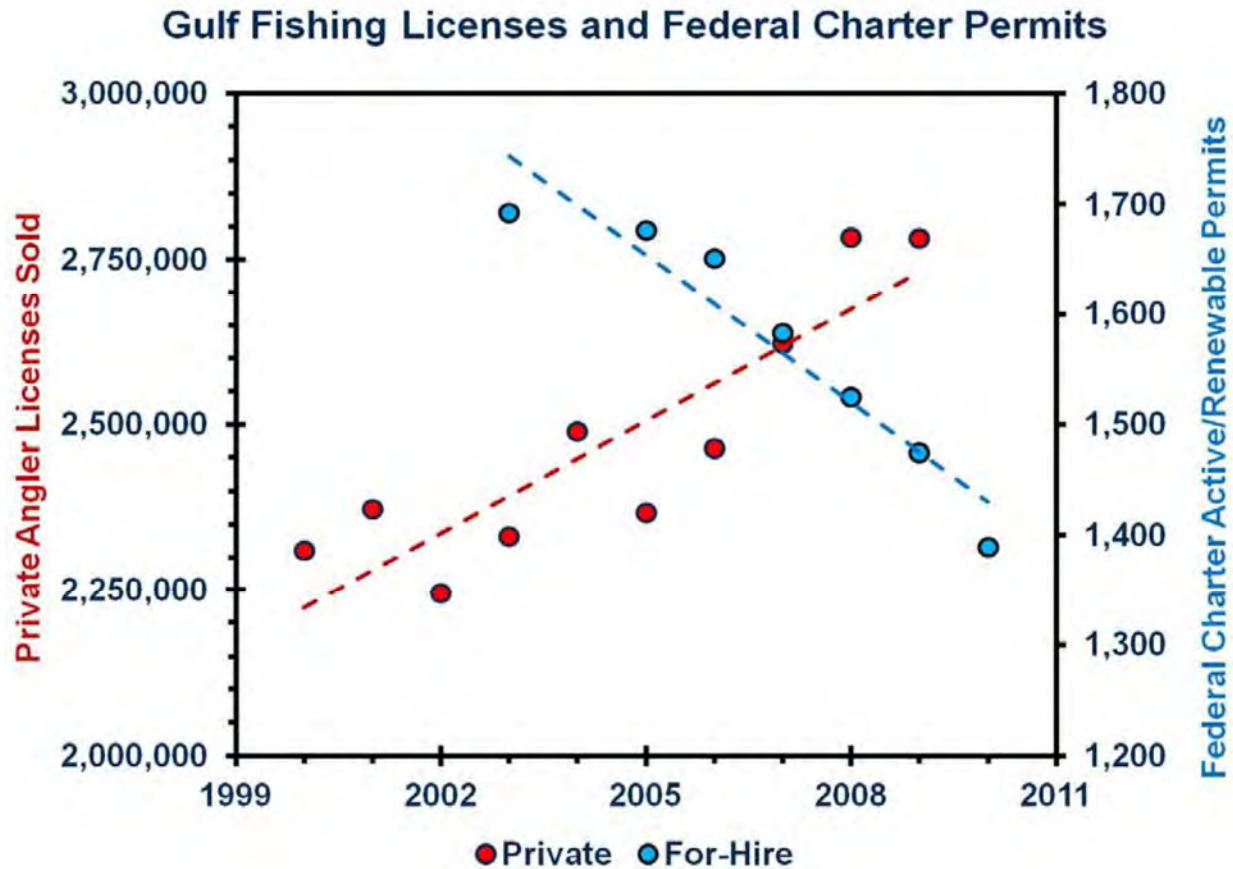


Figure 1.1.1. Relationship between the number of state saltwater licenses and federal for-hire permits for all Gulf States. Source: Gulf Red Snapper Sector Separation Model, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)-Southeast Regional Office (SERO) (4/2011).

Figure 1.1.2 provides a comparison of recreational landings by mode, from private vessel and from for-hire vessels. For most of the 1990s, over one million more pounds of landings each year were made from for-hire vessels than private vessels, with the gap narrowing during the early 2000s. Since 2007, more red snapper have been landed from private vessels than for-hire vessels, Gulf-wide.

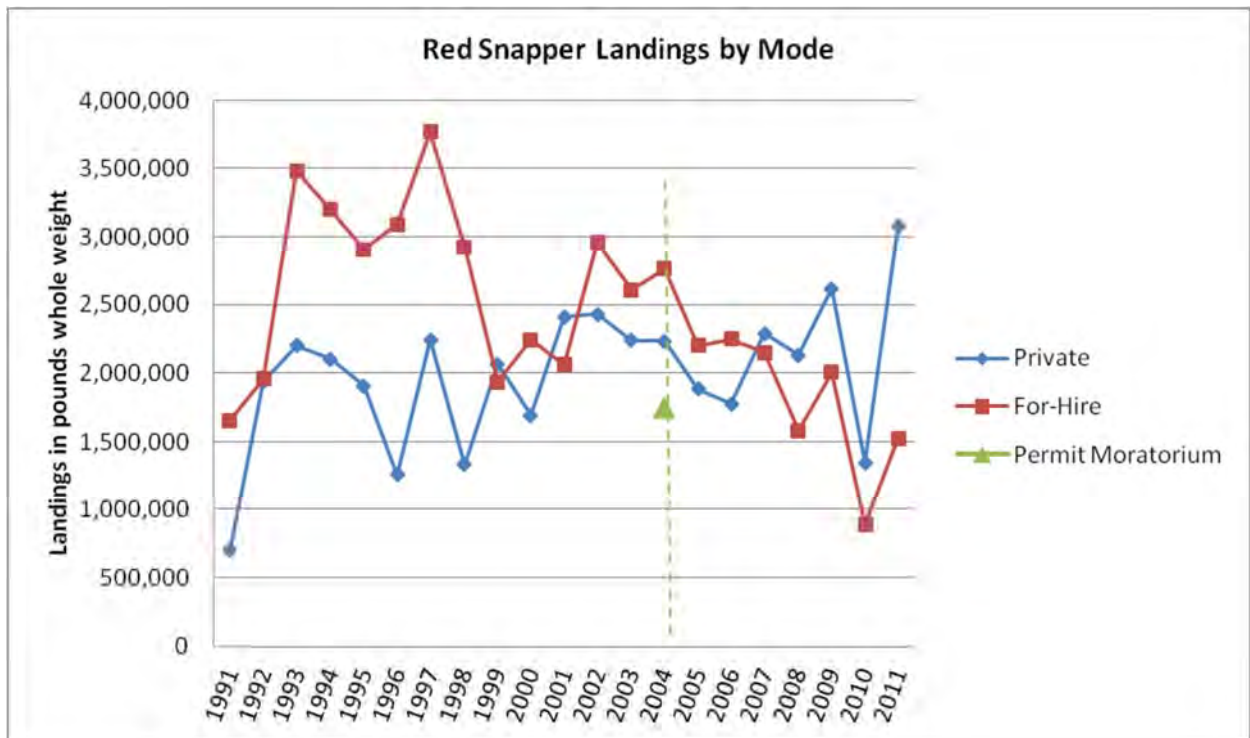


Figure 1.1.2. Red snapper recreational landings by private vessels and federally permitted for-hire vessels (charters and headboats combined). Source: Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) recreational ACL dataset (4/2012).

Red snapper effort

Measured by number of angler trips, recreational angler effort steadily increased overall until just the last few years (Figure 1.1.3). An analysis of annual red snapper angler trips in the Gulf based on a series of 5-year averages illustrates an increase in recreational red snapper-related effort, where the average annual number of angler trips increased from 400,467 (1986-1990) to 599,878 (1996-2000), and 740,950 (2005-2009) (Table 3.1.3).



Figure 1.1.3. Number of red snapper recreational angler trips by year, Gulf-wide.
Source: NMFS-SERO.

While overall angler effort has increased, the moratorium on charter permits has limited growth in the industry and access to vessels. Information on the number of recreational angler trips targeting red snapper taken on private vessels and for-hire vessels is provided in Figure 1.1.4. An evaluation of effort by mode suggests that private recreational anglers now account for an increasing share of the red snapper-related effort in the Gulf. While private angling represented on average 33% of the red snapper angler-trips for the time interval between 1986 and 1990, the private vessels accounted for an average of 46% of angler-trips between 2005 and 2009 (Table 3.1.4). By 2011, 55% of the red snapper angler-trips in the Gulf were attributed to anglers fishing from private vessels.

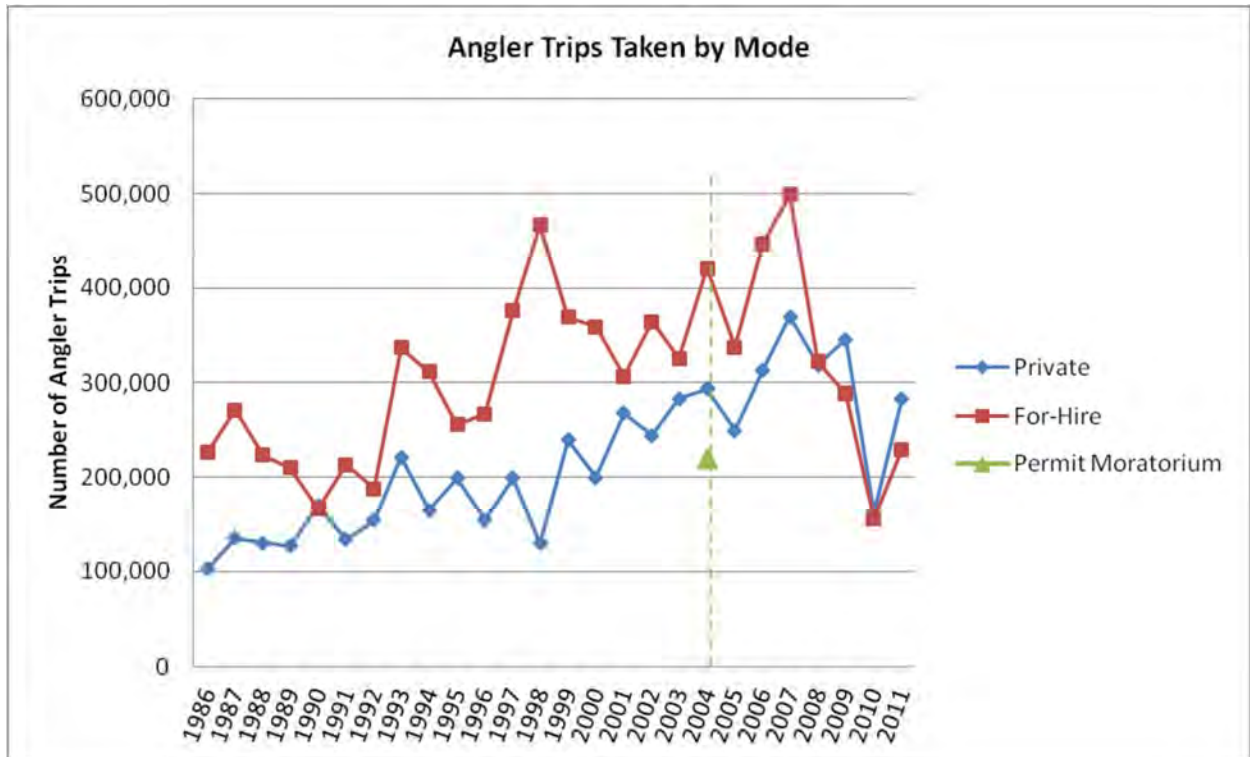


Figure 1.1.4. Number of red snapper angler trips taken on private and for-hire (charter boat and headboat) vessels. Source: NMFS-SERO.

Gulf-wide private and for-hire recreational landings are provided in Figure 1.1.5. Table 2.2.6 provides landings by year for the private and for-hire modes and the proportion of each group’s landings out of the total recreational landings. Since 1986, private landings have increased as a percentage of the total recreational landings, while landings from charter vessels have decreased proportionally. Headboat landings have also decreased over time, but by a smaller percentage than charter vessels.

The proportion of landings Gulf-wide by mode varies with a gradual shift toward private vessels in recent years, particularly since the permit moratorium began. The pattern of landings within each state, and the average proportion of landings for each state over time, vary from the Gulf-wide averages. Figures 1.1.6-1.1.10 provide the proportion of landings by mode for the Gulf States, and Tables 2.2.1-2.2.5 provide the values for the proportions.

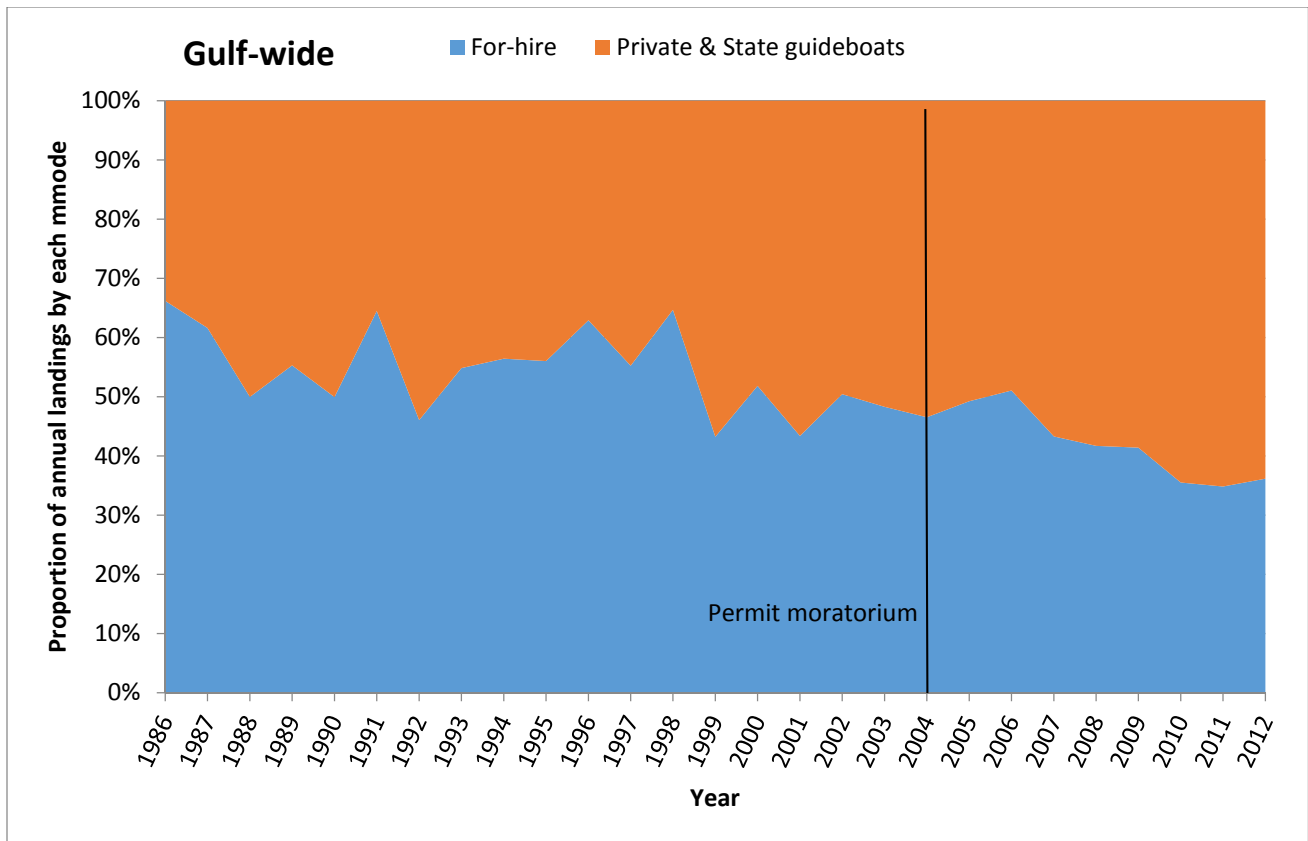


Figure 1.1.5. Gulf-wide: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012). Source: Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)-based September 2013 SEFSC recreational annual catch limit database.

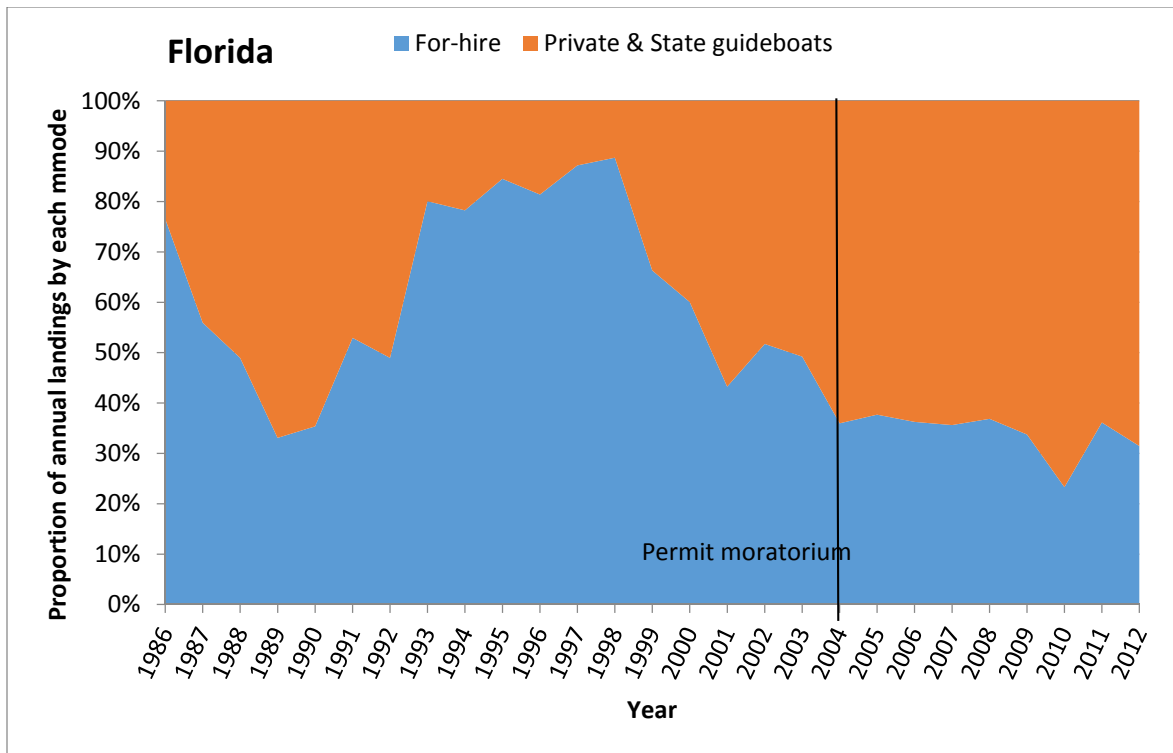


Figure 1.1.6. Florida: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012).

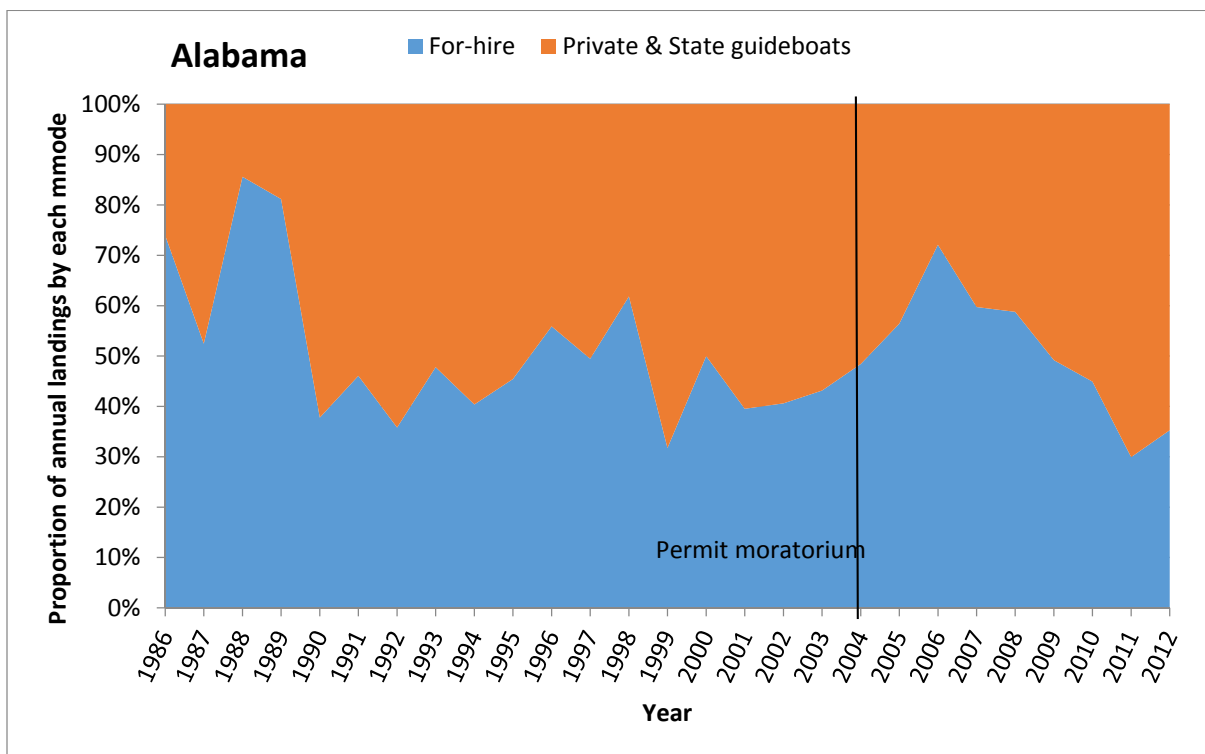


Figure 1.1.7. Alabama: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012).

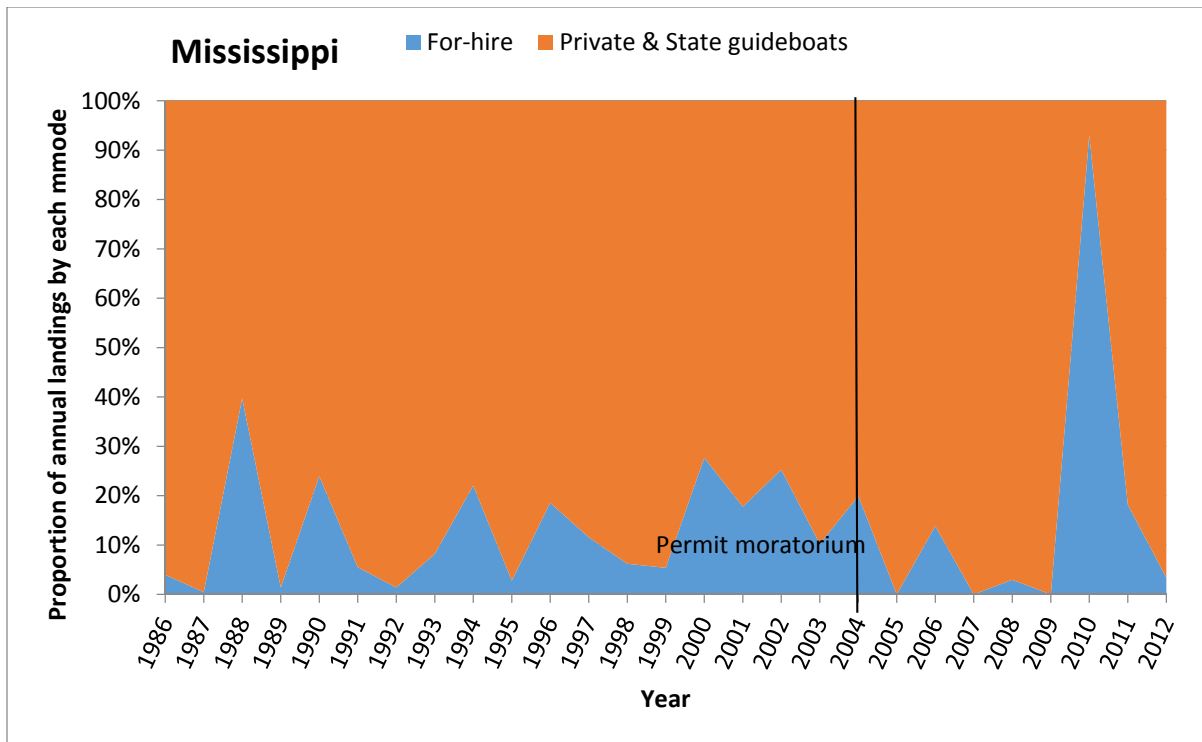


Figure 1.1.8. Mississippi: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012). For the years with 100% landings by private vessels, no data were available for for-hire landings.

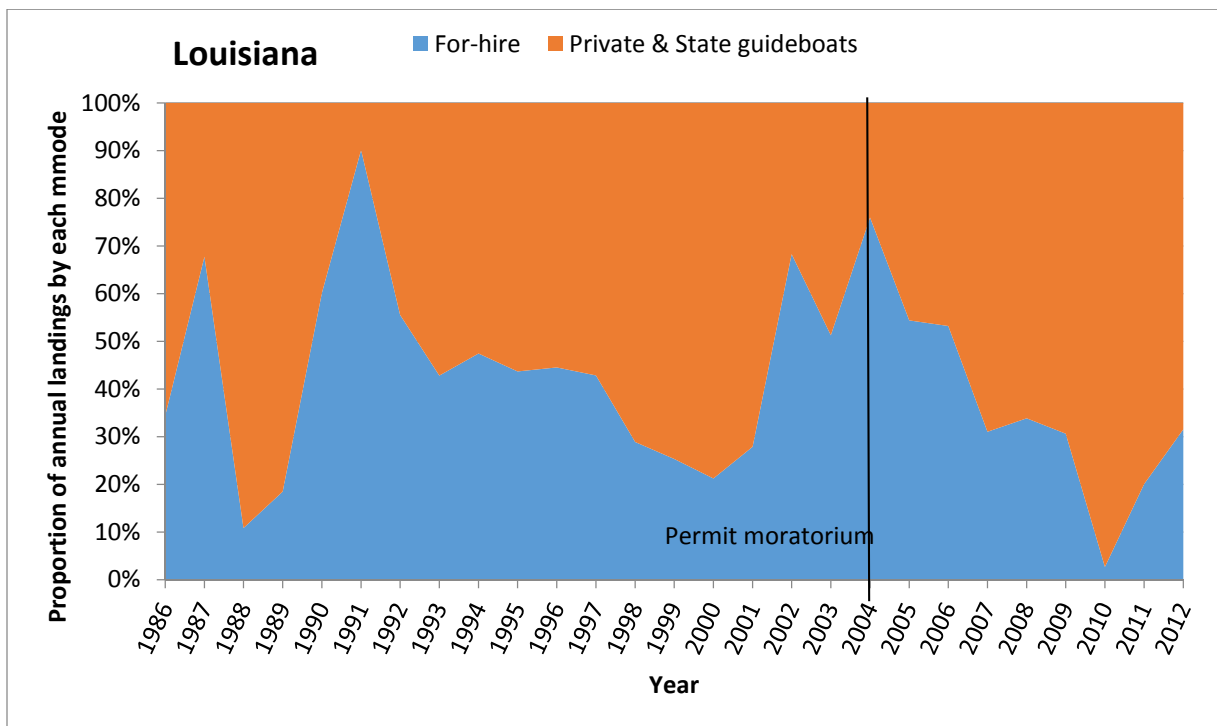


Figure 1.1.9. Louisiana: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012).

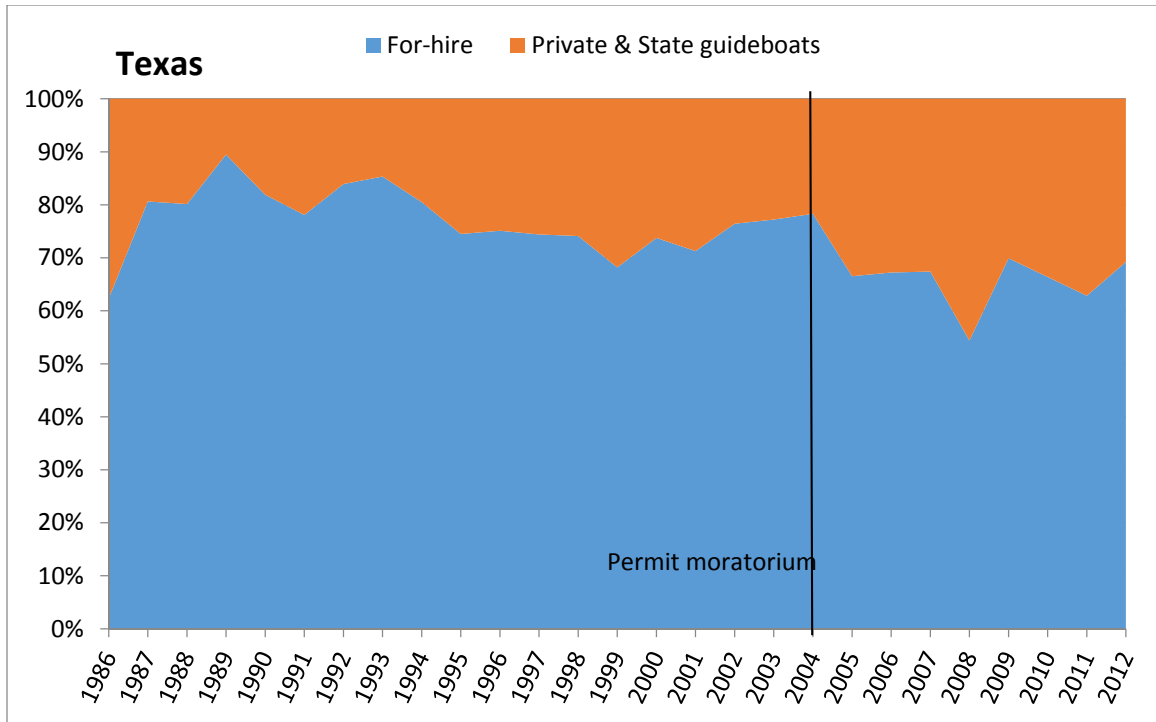


Figure 1.1.10. Texas: Proportion of recreational red snapper landings by mode (federal for-hire; private vessels and state licensed guideboats) (1986-2012).

Further Considerations

A separation of the recreational red snapper sector into two sub-sectors could have additional implications. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act mandates that the recreational harvest of red snapper be closed once the quota is reached. With separate for-hire and private recreational allocations, it is possible that a sub-sector with remaining quota could be shut down, should it be determined that the Gulf-wide recreational quota has been met.

As with allocation decisions that determine access to a resource among user groups, sector separation is a controversial topic, strongly supported by some and opposed by others. Opponents of sector separation argue that separate allocations could deprive recreational fishermen of full access to the resource, particularly in situations where one sector fails to fully harvest its allocation, but un-harvested allocation is unavailable to the other sector. Proponents of sector separation suggest that it could improve accountability and management flexibility, allowing the for-hire and private sub-sectors to potentially be given different fishing seasons, bag, and size limits. Proponents also argue that sector separation would allow the Council to consider alternative management approaches for each sub-sector, e.g., incentive-based approaches or the creation of organizations similar to angling managed organizations proposed by Sutinen and Johnston (2003).

Another potential implication concerns changes in fishing behavior in response to sector separation. Such changes in behavior cannot be predicted; however, it is plausible to consider scenarios under which landings by private anglers in states with state waters extending nine

miles out (Florida and Texas) could significantly increase following sector separation if these states do not enact fishing regulations consistent with the federal regulations.

Finally, it is impossible to predetermine the allocations assigned to the for-hire and private vessel sub-sectors and associated season lengths that each sub-sector would enjoy should sector separation be implemented. The question most often asked by those who wish to know the length of the private recreational and for-hire fishing seasons before taking a position for or against sector separation can only be answered once (and if) the Council makes the policy decision and apportions resources between the for-hire and private recreational sectors.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to define a distinct for-hire component of the recreational red snapper fishery and allocate red snapper resources between the components of the recreational sector to increase the stability for the for-hire component, provide a basis for increased flexibility in future management of the recreational sector, and minimize the chance for any recreational quota overruns which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock. The need for the proposed actions is to prevent overfishing while achieving the optimum yield, particularly with respect to recreational opportunities, while rebuilding the red snapper stock.

1.3 History of Management

This history of management covers events pertinent to red snapper allocation and setting quotas. A complete history of management for the FMP is available on the Council's website: http://www.gulfcouncil.org/fishery_management_plans/reef_fish_management.php and a history of red snapper management through 2006 is presented in Hood et al. (2007). The final rule for the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan (with its associated environmental impact statement [EIS]) (GMFMC 1981) was effective November 8, 1984, and defined the reef fish Fishery Management Unit to include red snapper and other important reef fish.

Currently, the commercial sector fishing for red snapper is regulated by a 13-inch total length (TL) minimum size limit and managed under an individual quota program. Recreational fishing for red snapper is managed with a 16-inch TL minimum size limit, 2-fish bag limit, and a season beginning on June 1 and ending when the recreational quota is projected to be caught. Other reef fish fishery management measures that effect red snapper fishing include permit requirements for the commercial and for-hire sectors as well as season-area closures.

Red snapper allocation and quotas: The final rule for **Amendment 1** (GMFMC 1989) to the Reef Fish FMP (with its associated EA, RIR, and IRFA) was effective in February 1990. The amendment specified a framework procedure for specifying the total allowable catch (TAC) to allow for annual management changes. A part of that specification was to establish a species' allocation. These were based on the percentage of total landings during the base period of 1979-1987. For red snapper, the commercial sector landed 51% and the recreational sector landed

49% of red snapper over the base period. **Amendment 1** also established a commercial quota of 3.1 million pounds. The recreational quota was established through a 1997 regulatory amendment (with its associated EA and RIR) (GMFMC 1995) with a final rule effective in October 1997. Prior to 1997, the recreational sector had exceeded its allocation of the red snapper TAC, though the overages were declining through more restrictive recreational management measures (Table 1.1). With the establishment of a recreational quota, the Regional Administrator was authorized to close the recreational season when the quota is reached as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Commercial and recreational quotas, recreational allocations, and commercial and recreational landings are shown in Table 1.1.

For-hire permit requirements: The requirement of permits for for-hire vessels to operate in the Gulf EEZ was implemented through **Amendment 11** (with its associated EA, RIR, and IRFA) on April 1, 1996. The initial purpose of the permits was to address potential abuses in the two day bag limit allowance. It was thought the by having a permit that sanctions could be applied to would improve compliance with the two day bag limit. In addition, the permit requirement was also seen as a way to enhance monitoring of the for-hire component of the recreational sector. **Amendment 20** (with its associated EA and RIR), implemented on June 16, 2003, established a three-year moratorium on the issuance of new charter and headboat vessel Gulf reef fish permits to limit further expansion in the for-hire fisheries, an industry concern, while the Council considered the need for more comprehensive effort management systems. This moratorium was extended indefinitely in **Amendment 25** (with its SEIS, RIR, and IRFA), implemented June 15, 2006).

CHAPTER 2. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Action 1 – Definition of a Federal For-hire Component

Alternative 1: Maintain the current structure of the recreational sector. The recreational sector includes private anglers and all for-hire operators.

Alternative 2: Establish a red snapper federal for-hire component. The federal for-hire component would include for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish for-hire permit. Establish a private angling component that would include all other for-hire operators and private recreational anglers.

Discussion

In its search for alternative approaches that could potentially improve the management of red snapper resources, particularly for the recreational sector, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has considered and continues to evaluate a variety of management measures. These include the possible devolution of some management responsibilities to the states, the specification of data collection requirements, and a reconsideration of restrictions placed on segments of the recreational sector. In addition, segments of the recreational sector have initiated pilot programs to contribute to improving red snapper management in the recreational sector. The potential partition of the recreational sector proposed in this amendment falls within the range of measures under consideration.

Alternative 1 would manage red snapper for the recreational sector while maintaining the current structure of the sector. All participants in the recreational sector, private anglers and for-hire operators alike, would continue to be subject to the same set of regulations including size and daily possession limits and seasonal closures. **Alternative 1** would not recognize the specificities inherent to different segments of the recreational sector and would limit the Council's ability to implement management measures specific to each segment. The status quo alternative would continue to adopt a one size fits all approach to management and would curtail efforts to consider management approaches that may be more suitable to the various components of the recreational sector.

Alternative 2 would partition the recreational sector into two components. **Alternative 2** would establish a federal for-hire sector including federally permitted for-hire operators and a private angling sector including private anglers and state permitted for-hire operators.

The Council initially considered a separation of the recreational sector into a for-hire hire sector that would include federally permitted for-hire vessels and state permitted for-hire vessels. However, during the October 2013 meeting, the Council indicated that this partition would not be practicable because a sector that includes federally-permitted for-hire vessels and state-regulated vessels would be unmanageable. Because the Council has no authority to manage or place constraints on state permitted for-hire vessels, the Council has decided to consider a for-

hire sector limited to federally permitted vessels only. Therefore, **Alternative 2**, as proposed here reflects the Council's intent. The establishment of **Alternative 2** would expand the range of possible management avenues available to the Council as it continues to seek improvements in the management of recreational red snapper. Potential future improvements may include more flexibility for each segment and a better business environment for federally permitted for-hire operators. The extent to which the federal for-hire sector and the private angling component would benefit from a partition of the recreational sector, with distinct red snapper quotas allocated to each segment, rests on the quality of the management measures that would be implemented after the establishment of separate sectors.

2.2 Action 2 – Allocation between the Components of the Recreational Sector

Alternative 1: Do not divide the recreational red snapper quota into sub-quotas.

Alternative 2: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on average landings between 1986 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 50.03% and 49.97%, respectively.

Alternative 3: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on average landings between 1991 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 49.20% and 50.80%, respectively.

Alternative 4: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on average landings between 1996 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 47.48% and 52.52%, respectively.

Alternative 5: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on average landings between 2001 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 43.91% and 56.09%, respectively.

Alternative 6: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on average landings between 2006 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 40.73% and 59.27%, respectively.

Alternative 7: Allocate the red snapper recreational quota based on 50% of average landings between 1986 and 2012 and 50% of average landings between 2006 and 2012. Resulting federal for-hire and private angling allocations would be 45.38% and 54.62%, respectively.

Discussion

The partition of the recreational sector into two separate sub-sectors, i.e., a federal for-hire sector and a private angling sector, considered in Action 1 is a prerequisite for the consideration of alternative allocations of the recreational red snapper quota considered in this action. Without the establishment of separate federal for-hire and private angling sectors, management alternatives included in Action 2 (except the status quo alternative) and in subsequent actions in this amendment would be irrelevant. Therefore, Actions 2, 3, and 4 assume that, for red snapper, the recreational sector has been split into a federal for-hire component and private angling component.

Available red snapper landings data for the for-hire sector typically combine landings from federally permitted and state permitted for-hire vessels. Based on an approach proposed in a National Marine Fisheries Service-Southeast Regional Office report evaluating sector separation alternatives (SERO 2011), red snapper landings from federally permitted for-hire vessels were estimated by discounting total for-hire red snapper landings by 7%, which approximates the

percentage landed by state permitted vessels. Amounts deducted from aggregate for-hire landings were added to landings assigned to the private angling sector because state permitted for-hire operators are included in the private angling component. Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire and private angling components are provided for the Gulf States in Tables 2.2.1-2.2.5. Gulf-wide annual landings for the federal for-hire and private angling components are provided in Table 2.2.6.

Table 2.2.1. Alabama - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	Alabama				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	264,496	73.94	93,201	26.06	357,697
1987	177,753	52.44	161,203	47.56	338,956
1988	384,041	85.59	64,659	14.41	448,700
1989	377,378	81.17	87,568	18.83	464,946
1990	255,042	37.76	420,329	62.24	675,371
1991	346,294	46.06	405,618	53.94	751,913
1992	468,198	35.82	838,950	64.18	1,307,148
1993	856,563	47.78	936,113	52.22	1,792,676
1994	675,763	40.39	997,391	59.61	1,673,153
1995	678,941	45.43	815,672	54.57	1,494,614
1996	843,392	55.88	665,884	44.12	1,509,276
1997	1,131,182	49.47	1,155,638	50.53	2,286,821
1998	829,598	61.82	512,462	38.18	1,342,060
1999	566,112	31.74	1,217,662	68.26	1,783,775
2000	650,290	49.97	651,159	50.03	1,301,448
2001	776,208	39.52	1,188,010	60.48	1,964,218
2002	949,000	40.60	1,388,439	59.40	2,337,439
2003	900,390	43.15	1,186,498	56.85	2,086,888
2004	765,093	48.43	814,576	51.57	1,579,669
2005	638,274	56.44	492,662	43.56	1,130,936
2006	593,068	72.07	229,805	27.93	822,873
2007	614,657	59.74	414,211	40.26	1,028,867
2008	388,526	58.78	272,462	41.22	660,988
2009	540,983	49.18	558,994	50.82	1,099,977
2010	178,751	44.94	219,004	55.06	397,755
2011	594,767	29.94	1,391,820	70.06	1,986,587
2012	575,510	35.26	1,056,778	64.74	1,632,288

Source: Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP)-based Sept 2013 Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) recreational annual catch limit (ACL) database.

Table 2.2.2. Florida - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	Florida				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	1,193,391	76.53	365,971	23.47	1,559,362
1987	414,624	55.94	326,529	44.06	741,154
1988	376,289	48.97	392,145	51.03	768,434
1989	127,695	33.07	258,411	66.93	386,106
1990	107,998	35.37	197,309	64.63	305,307
1991	194,106	52.94	172,521	47.06	366,628
1992	124,721	48.95	130,075	51.05	254,796
1993	787,595	80.06	196,208	19.94	983,804
1994	517,019	78.24	143,761	21.76	660,780
1995	349,606	84.51	64,058	15.49	413,664
1996	620,520	81.41	141,703	18.59	762,223
1997	649,423	87.18	95,457	12.82	744,880
1998	902,967	88.70	115,015	11.30	1,017,982
1999	691,743	66.30	351,596	33.70	1,043,339
2000	769,531	60.05	511,874	39.95	1,281,406
2001	697,754	43.25	915,492	56.75	1,613,246
2002	1,001,523	51.73	934,523	48.27	1,936,047
2003	823,721	49.23	849,520	50.77	1,673,241
2004	1,066,066	35.98	1,896,581	64.02	2,962,647
2005	665,391	37.69	1,100,011	62.31	1,765,402
2006	696,410	36.26	1,224,421	63.74	1,920,831
2007	948,493	35.61	1,715,011	64.39	2,663,503
2008	742,895	36.85	1,273,221	63.15	2,016,117
2009	770,011	33.76	1,510,942	66.24	2,280,953
2010	315,335	23.28	1,038,945	76.72	1,354,280
2011	528,911	36.12	935,480	63.88	1,464,390
2012	613,234	31.47	1,335,411	68.53	1,948,644

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Table 2.2.3. Louisiana - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	Louisiana				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	180,523	34.41	344,029	65.59	524,552
1987	158,354	67.76	75,352	32.24	233,706
1988	93,536	10.83	769,984	89.17	863,520
1989	108,410	18.47	478,409	81.53	586,819
1990	138,388	60.15	91,697	39.85	230,085
1991	726,545	90.15	79,364	9.85	805,909
1992	526,512	55.55	421,221	44.45	947,733
1993	583,331	42.82	778,798	57.18	1,362,129
1994	516,883	47.46	572,219	52.54	1,089,102
1995	565,672	43.69	729,000	56.31	1,294,673
1996	335,958	44.55	418,210	55.45	754,168
1997	414,814	42.84	553,380	57.16	968,193
1998	176,887	28.88	435,549	71.12	612,436
1999	168,526	25.35	496,308	74.65	664,834
2000	156,192	21.25	578,693	78.75	734,885
2001	75,390	27.87	195,071	72.13	270,461
2002	232,998	68.30	108,129	31.70	341,127
2003	232,770	51.27	221,251	48.73	454,021
2004	240,869	75.99	76,096	24.01	316,965
2005	256,724	54.40	215,173	45.60	471,898
2006	318,539	53.22	279,963	46.78	598,502
2007	187,219	31.05	415,672	68.95	602,891
2008	192,255	33.84	375,808	66.16	568,063
2009	204,491	30.62	463,269	69.38	667,761
2010	1,538	2.68	55,803	97.32	57,341
2011	65,628	20.08	261,176	79.92	326,803
2012	239,476	31.54	519,729	68.46	759,205

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Table 2.2.4. Mississippi - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	Mississippi				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	114	3.97	2,756	96.03	2,869
1987	208	0.47	44,318	99.53	44,526
1988	7,108	39.71	10,791	60.29	17,900
1989	3,937	1.38	280,364	98.62	284,300
1990	10,912	23.93	34,697	76.07	45,609
1991	8,158	5.51	139,795	94.49	147,953
1992	8,709	1.38	621,510	98.62	630,219
1993	60,993	8.16	686,236	91.84	747,229
1994	89,051	22.04	315,057	77.96	404,108
1995	3,572	2.78	125,033	97.22	128,605
1996	32,493	18.55	142,675	81.45	175,169
1997	63,276	11.56	484,204	88.44	547,479
1998	9,641	6.19	146,058	93.81	155,699
1999	8,954	5.39	157,245	94.61	166,199
2000	12,197	27.69	31,846	72.31	44,043
2001	15,848	17.75	73,414	82.25	89,262
2002	49,459	25.26	146,327	74.74	195,786
2003	30,831	10.23	270,430	89.77	301,260
2004	8,786	19.89	35,382	80.11	44,168
2005	-	-	3,421	100.00	3,421
2006	3,135	13.84	19,520	86.16	22,655
2007	-	-	5,865	100.00	5,865
2008	1,095	2.94	36,183	97.06	37,279
2009	-	-	65,869	100.00	65,869
2010	7,794	93.00	587	7.00	8,381
2011	8,395	18.19	37,766	81.81	46,161
2012	6,408	3.38	183,249	96.62	189,658

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Table 2.2.5. Texas - Red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	Texas				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	327,431	62.34	197,810	37.66	525,242
1987	366,183	80.62	88,017	19.38	454,200
1988	498,841	80.15	123,540	19.85	622,381
1989	877,348	89.47	103,218	10.53	980,566
1990	295,056	81.90	65,186	18.10	360,242
1991	352,890	78.10	98,929	21.90	451,819
1992	705,556	83.91	135,289	16.09	840,845
1993	1,093,543	85.33	187,944	14.67	1,281,487
1994	1,209,929	80.51	292,912	19.49	1,502,840
1995	1,084,666	74.51	371,113	25.49	1,455,779
1996	1,119,145	75.11	370,936	24.89	1,490,081
1997	986,676	74.42	339,106	25.58	1,325,782
1998	818,704	74.10	286,223	25.90	1,104,927
1999	400,984	68.18	187,100	31.82	588,084
2000	521,940	73.75	185,806	26.25	707,746
2001	363,462	71.28	146,423	28.72	509,885
2002	568,093	76.42	175,318	23.58	743,411
2003	514,457	77.23	151,678	22.77	666,135
2004	498,474	78.30	138,178	21.70	636,651
2005	387,307	66.53	194,875	33.47	582,182
2006	443,615	67.22	216,373	32.78	659,988
2007	314,801	67.41	152,180	32.59	466,981
2008	188,239	54.41	157,749	45.59	345,988
2009	461,621	69.91	198,714	30.09	660,335
2010	305,164	66.39	154,489	33.61	459,653
2011	302,914	62.84	179,133	37.16	482,047
2012	426,683	69.21	189,842	30.79	616,526

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Table 2.2.6. Gulf-wide red snapper landings for the federal for-hire (FFHR) and private angling (private) components in pounds and percentage.

YEAR	GULF OF MEXICO				
	FFHR	FFHR %	Private	Private %	Total
1986	1,965,954	66.20	1,003,767	33.80	2,969,721
1987	1,117,123	61.63	695,419	38.37	1,812,542
1988	1,359,815	49.98	1,361,119	50.02	2,720,934
1989	1,494,767	55.31	1,207,971	44.69	2,702,738
1990	807,395	49.94	809,219	50.06	1,616,614
1991	1,627,993	64.49	896,228	35.51	2,524,222
1992	1,833,696	46.06	2,147,045	53.94	3,980,742
1993	3,382,026	54.84	2,785,299	45.16	6,167,325
1994	3,008,644	56.45	2,321,339	43.55	5,329,983
1995	2,682,458	56.03	2,104,877	43.97	4,787,335
1996	2,951,509	62.92	1,739,408	37.08	4,690,917
1997	3,245,371	55.26	2,627,784	44.74	5,873,155
1998	2,737,798	64.68	1,495,306	35.32	4,233,104
1999	1,836,319	43.25	2,409,911	56.75	4,246,230
2000	2,110,150	51.85	1,959,378	48.15	4,069,528
2001	1,928,663	43.37	2,518,409	56.63	4,447,073
2002	2,801,073	50.44	2,752,737	49.56	5,553,810
2003	2,502,168	48.29	2,679,377	51.71	5,181,545
2004	2,579,288	46.56	2,960,812	53.44	5,540,101
2005	1,947,696	49.26	2,006,141	50.74	3,953,838
2006	2,054,767	51.05	1,970,082	48.95	4,024,849
2007	2,065,169	43.31	2,702,939	56.69	4,768,108
2008	1,513,011	41.70	2,115,424	58.30	3,628,435
2009	1,977,107	41.41	2,797,788	58.59	4,774,895
2010	808,583	35.50	1,468,826	64.50	2,277,409
2011	1,500,615	34.85	2,805,374	65.15	4,305,989
2012	1,861,311	36.17	3,285,009	63.83	5,146,320

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Estimated red snapper allocations are based on average percentages harvested by the federal for-hire and the private angling components during various time intervals selected from a 1986-2012 time series. Percentages computed were then applied to the current red snapper recreational quota (5.39 million pounds (mp)). Resulting allocations for the two components of the recreational sector are provided in Table 2.2.7.

Table 2.2.7. Red snapper allocations for the federal for-hire and private angling components in percentage and in pounds. Pounds allocated are based on a recreational quota of 5.39 mp.

Alternative	Time Intervals	Federal For-hire		Private		Total lbs
		lbs	%	lbs	%	
Alternative 2	86-2012 (a)	2,696,779	50.03	2,693,221	49.97	5,390,000
Alternative 3	91-2012	2,651,826	49.20	2,738,174	50.80	5,390,000
Alternative 4	96-2012	2,558,903	47.48	2,831,097	52.52	5,390,000
Alternative 5	2001-12	2,367,016	43.91	3,022,984	56.09	5,390,000
Alternative 6	2006-12 (b)	2,195,161	40.73	3,194,839	59.27	5,390,000
Alternative 7	0.5(a)+0.5(b)	2,445,970	45.38	2,944,030	54.62	5,390,000

Source: MRIP-based Sept 2013 SEFSC Recreational ACL database.

Percentages computed are consistent with the measures established by the Council to manage the recreational sector. Specifically, the contrast between the open entry approach adopted for private anglers and the moratorium imposed on federal for-hire permits is reflected in the progressive change in relative percentages harvested by each component. Over time, while the proportion of landings attributable to private anglers has been increasing, the relative share of federally permitted for-hire vessels has declined. This trend has been increasingly noticeable in recent years. Therefore, federally for-hire vessels would account for relatively greater shares of the recreational landings when averages are computed over longer time intervals (including earlier years). It also follows that the more recent the time period used to compute average landings, the greater the percentage attributed to the private angling component is expected to be.

The allocation considered in **Alternative 2** is based on average landings computed over the longest time series available, i.e., 1986 to 2012 and would allocate 50.03% and 49.97% of the red snapper recreational quota to the federal for-hire operators and the private angling sector, respectively. **Alternatives 3 to 6** would allocate increasing percentages of the recreational quota to the private angling component because they are based on progressively more recent time intervals. For example, **Alternative 6**, which is based on average landings between 2006 and 2012, would allocate 40.73% and 59.27% of the red snapper recreational quota to the federal for-hire and private angling components, respectively.

Alternative 7 would determine the percentages of the red snapper recreational quota allocated to the federal for-hire and private angling components by averaging the corresponding percentages that would be allocated to each component in **Alternatives 2** and **6**. **Alternative 7** would equally weigh average landings between 1986 and 2012 and landings between 2006 and 2012. This allocation approach has been used by the Council in previous allocation exercises, e.g., the jurisdictional apportionment of black grouper and yellowtail snapper resources between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils.

2.3 Action 3 – Voluntary Participation in the Federal For-hire Component

Alternative 1: Include all for-hire operators with a federal reef fish permit in the federal for-hire component.

Alternative 2: Upon implementation of this amendment, allow federally permitted for-hire operators to opt-out of the new federal for-hire component and remain in the private angling component.

Alternative 3: At the beginning of each fishing year, allow federally permitted for-hire operators to opt-out of the new federal for-hire component. At the beginning of each fishing year, allow federally permitted for-hire operators who are not included in the federal for-hire sector to join the federal for-hire component.

Discussion

The potential change to the current structure of the recreational sector and the establishment of distinct for-hire and private angling components has been extensively discussed by the Council and its constituents. These discussions have highlighted both clear support for the implementation of “sector separation” as well as marked opposition to the idea. In light of these considerations, the Council decided to include in this amendment an action that would allow for-hire operators to either join the federal for-hire sector to be created or elect to stay within the private angling sector. The motion directing staff to include a voluntary option in this amendment was approved during the October 2013 Council meeting. This action provides a range of management alternatives that would allow for-hire operators the flexibility to determine the component of the recreational sector within which they would be included. As indicated in Action 2, this action also assumes that distinct federal for-hire and private angling sectors would be established in Action 1.

Alternative 1 would not grant federally permitted for-hire operators the flexibility to opt out of the federal for-hire sector. Once established, the red snapper federal for-hire component of the recreational sector would include all federally permitted for-hire operators. This lack of flexibility would not be consistent with the Council’s expressed intent to allow for-hire operators to determine their participation in this newly establish component of the recreational sector.

Alternative 1 may be challenging to the federal for-hire sector and may adversely impact the quality of the interaction between Council and its constituents, particularly those that are currently opposed to the establishment of a separate federal for-hire sector.

Alternative 2 would give federally permitted for-hire operators one opportunity to select the component of the recreational sector within which they would like to be included. Upon implementation of this amendment, a federally permitted for-hire operator could exercise his option to opt out of the federal for-hire sector and be a member of the private angling sector, or be included in the federal for-hire sector by default. In practical terms, the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service would have to design and make available a vehicle (such as an

electronic fillable form) to allow for-hire operators to opt out of the federal for-hire sector. Additionally, **Alternative 2** would require the establishment of a practicable and readily verifiable means to distinguish vessels operating under the federal for-hire sector from those vessels who elected to be included in the private angling sector. For example, a stamp or permit endorsement could be created for this purpose. Although **Alternative 2** would grant a flexibility inexistent in **Alternative 1**, it would not allow federally permitted for-hire operators to change their mind and switch between the components of the recreational sector once membership into the federal for-hire and private angling sectors have been established. These post-hoc limitations may constitute a challenge for several for-hire operators, for example those who would want to join the federal for-hire sector in subsequent years.

Alternative 3 would allow for-hire operators to switch their membership from one component of the recreational sector to the other on an annual basis. Federally permitted operators who initially elected to opt out of the federal for-hire sector would have the opportunity to reconsider and join the sector at a later date. Similarly, **Alternative 3** would allow operators who stayed in the federal for-hire sector to change their mind and decide later that the private angling sector would be a more suitable option. If it determines that continuously fluctuating sectors could impede the longer term management of the federal for-hire or private angling sectors, the Council may consider the establishment of a predetermined time period (for example 3 to 5 years) during which full flexibility is granted to federally permitted for-hire operators.

Estimated percentages of the recreational red snapper quota to be allocated to each component of the recreational sector assume that all federally permitted for-hire vessels would be included in the newly created federal for-hire sector. Should some federally permitted for-hire operators exercise options provided in **Alternatives 2** and **3** and elect to opt out and remain in the private angling sector (or join the federal for-hire sector at a later date), percentages allocated to each sector would have to be adjusted. In the absence of individual catch histories in the for-hire sector, a direct proration of the quota assigned to federally permitted operators appears to be the most practicable adjustment method. For example, if 10% of the federally permitted for-hire operators elected to opt out, 10% of the federal for-hire quota would be subtracted from the federal for-hire quota and added to the private angling quota. Quota adjustments, which could potentially be required every year if **Alternative 3** were implemented, could impact the management of red snapper in the recreational sector. For example, it could affect the timeliness of the publication red snapper season length estimates. However, this challenge could be mitigated by the specification of an early and clearly defined window of time during which for-hire operators could change their sector participation.

2.4 Action 4 – Red snapper recreational accountability measures

Alternative 1: Maintain the current recreational red snapper season closure provisions. The recreational red snapper season will close when the recreational red snapper quota is projected to be caught.

Alternative 2: Establish separate red snapper season closure provisions for the federal for-hire and private angling components. 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.

Discussion

Alternative 1 would maintain the current red snapper season closure and would apply to the recreational sector as a whole. Under this provision, the recreational sector for red snapper in or from the Gulf exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is closed from January 1 through May 31 each year. During the closure, the bag and possession limit for red snapper in or from the Gulf EEZ is zero. Beginning June 1, the recreational red snapper season is opened and does not close until the entire recreational quota is projected to be caught. At that point, the bag and possession limit for red snapper in or from the Gulf EEZ is zero for the remainder of the year.

Under **Alternative 2**, there would be two red snapper season closures. One would be for the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector. The season would begin on June 1 and close when the federal for-hire red snapper quota is projected to be caught. The other closure would be for all other components of the recreational sector, primarily comprised of the private angling sector, but would include for-hire vessels that wish to opt out of the for-hire quota under Action 3. For this component of the sector, the season would begin on June 1 and close when this component's quota is projected to be caught.

Alternative 2 would provide three advantages should the quota be split under Action 1. The first would be if better landings information became available for one sector, then either in-season monitoring of the harvest or better projections could be used as the basis for the quota closure. For example, if electronic logbooks were used in the federal for-hire sector, then this information could be used to determine when the federal for-hire sector is closed. A second advantage to **Alternative 2** is that if for some reason effort in either of the two components were to be differentially affected, then the season for the sector experiencing the reduced effort could be longer. For example, this could occur if fuel prices spiked resulting in a reduced number of offshore trips by the private-angler component, or if a hurricane were to extensively damage some region where one component was better represented than the other. Finally, this alternative would provide the Council with more flexibility in managing these components. For example, some in the for-hire sector have indicated they would be interested in having the recreational bag limit reduced to one fish to extend the season length. Should the Council agree to this course of action, then the bag limit could be reduced under a framework action, and the for-hire season length would be extended to account for the reduced bag limit.

CHAPTER 3. TABLES

Table 3.1.1. Number of state for-hire permits in the Gulf of Mexico (by state) – 2000 to 2009.

Year	State					Total
	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas	
2000	143	2,957	476	124	1,635	5,335
2001	158	3,193	525	134	1,887	5,897
2002	167	3,303	562	336	1,862	6,230
2003	143	3,406	657	140	1,895	6,241
2004	158	3,355	678	186	903	5,280
2005	150	3,576	695	175	920	5,516
2006	141	3,177	603	146	929	4,996
2007	155	3,556	631	136	996	5,474
2008	197	3,596	664	146	2,095	6,698
2009	180	3,439	661	136	1,987	6,403
% Change 2000-09	25.9	16.3	38.9	9.7	21.5	20.0

Source: NMFS-SERO; Louisiana data: Commercial License Sales (Summary) 1987-2010.

Table 3.1.2. Number of federal for-hire reef fish permits – by state (2005 – 2011).

Year	State					Total
	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas	
2005	161	1,037	120	76	256	1,650
2006	159	1,015	120	74	259	1,627
2007	158	977	112	64	249	1,560
2008	153	939	108	60	243	1,503
2009	148	905	108	54	241	1,456
2010	150	866	107	51	238	1,412
2011	148	825	120	48	221	1,362

Source: NMFS-SERO.

Table 3.1.3. Annual red snapper recreational angler-trips by state.

Year	State					Gulf Trips
	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas	
1986	67,145	132,712	65,926	51,842	59,323	376,949
1987	68,726	236,234	37,466	52,071	59,896	454,394
1988	74,834	169,063	41,446	56,345	59,918	401,607
1989	96,734	120,791	57,359	54,723	55,800	385,408
1990	141,354	76,822	50,742	57,768	57,290	383,977
1991	114,603	125,506	36,875	59,574	58,703	395,262
1992	125,965	77,441	47,385	78,269	57,477	386,537
1993	193,028	180,239	85,278	86,659	57,838	603,042
1994	151,064	151,608	73,811	77,772	72,225	526,480
1995	169,460	85,567	98,786	70,485	79,786	504,085
1996	139,765	119,329	60,296	69,121	85,756	474,268
1997	216,457	177,892	57,346	92,329	81,971	625,994
1998	180,108	259,870	47,124	82,072	91,734	660,909
1999	215,368	275,492	51,874	41,604	53,800	638,139
2000	169,012	258,094	55,487	52,157	65,331	600,080
2001	193,353	272,449	35,056	54,628	59,961	615,447
2002	209,080	281,908	26,044	68,912	71,866	657,810
2003	222,910	260,779	37,110	69,735	68,031	658,566
2004	232,454	350,462	48,176	63,402	71,338	765,832
2005	163,973	300,083	57,519	43,693	65,054	630,322
2006	155,204	394,724	116,984	61,664	89,043	817,618
2007	190,765	478,461	118,149	61,385	76,048	924,809
2008	152,944	374,035	70,269	23,898	39,279	660,424
2009	198,541	303,631	64,384	49,737	55,283	671,576
2010	76,530	181,090	10,967	34,703	46,529	349,819
2011	251,027	186,401	24,996	30,062	49,891	542,377

Source: NMFS-SERO

Table 3.1.4. Annual red snapper recreational angler-trips for two modes (1986-2011).

Year	Private	For-Hire
1986	102,848	226,572
1987	135,371	271,495
1988	130,155	223,924
1989	127,280	210,599
1990	169,955	166,496
1991	133,879	213,855
1992	153,625	187,964
1993	221,545	336,928
1994	165,278	311,059
1995	199,267	256,174
1996	154,764	267,334
1997	199,336	375,877
1998	129,606	467,006
1999	239,650	368,865
2000	200,303	358,993
2001	268,201	306,513
2002	244,292	364,020
2003	283,689	325,229
2004	293,502	420,613
2005	250,095	337,522
2006	312,920	447,298
2007	369,819	499,193
2008	318,855	322,233
2009	345,637	288,557
2010	162,465	156,164
2011	283,486	230,078

Source: NMFS-SERO

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