

Subject: Red grouper
Date: Friday, January 4, 2013 10:07 PM
From: Greg <fishntale@gmail.com>
To: John Milner <GulfCouncil@gulfcouncil.org>
Conversation: Red grouper

I fished ft Myers area for over 30 years as a capt and commercial fisherman, red grouper never been better. I agree with dropping the closure but should drop the limit to 2, coming to dock with 24 reds on charter is to much. Thanks. Capt Greg

Sent from my iPhone

Subject: 2 month grouper closure
Date: Saturday, March 10, 2012 5:55 PM
From: Thomas Robinson <Thm53@comcast.net>
To: Info <Info@gulfcouncil.org>
Conversation: 2 month grouper closure

Dear sirs,

I am a 36 year running charter captain out of Naples Florida. The 2 month closure designed to protect the mortality of gag grouper is based on the fisherman avoiding the catch and release of gags. By forcing us to fish for other fish, we are targeting amberjack and snapper. These fish hang out on ledges and wrecks. That is exactly where gag grouper live. I have been catching gag grouper over and over trying to catch snapper and amberjack.

If you would allow up to catch and keep a couple of red grouper per person we would spend less time on the wrecks.

Red grouper like the open flat shaggy bottom. We rarely catch gags on red grouper bottom.

I am all for conservation of the gag specie. Please reconsider your choices where the gag grouper is concerned.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter.

Thomas Robinson

Subject: February/March grouper closure
Date: Monday, March 5, 2012 11:49 AM
From: Tom Marvel <marvelt@yahoo.com>
Reply-To: "tom marvel" <marvelt@yahoo.com>
To: John Milner <GulfCouncil@gulfcouncil.org>
Conversation: February/March grouper closure

Members of the Gulf Council,

At the urging of Bob Shipp I am posting to the full Council an issue I had originally conveyed to Bob Gill and Bob Shipp.

The charter fleet of Southwest Florida desperately needs the Council to reevaluate the reasons for the February and March grouper closure. As I will attempt to make clear, the gag grouper stock needs you to reconsider this as well. The closure occurs at the height of our charter season and is causing economic hardship for all of the offshore charter boats. I was under the assumption that the Council was in the process of reducing/eliminating this closure but in speaking with Steve Atran it became apparent that nothing is in the works.

I am aware that the original rationale behind the February/March closure was to protect spawning gags. The thought process was, I think, that in targeting red grouper the release mortality of spawning gags that were caught incidently would undermine the gag rebuilding plan.

But I am also aware that it is now common knowledge that gags spawn offshore and charter boats, for the most part, fish inshore. The vast majority of offshore charter trips from the Naples/Ft. Myers area are inside of 80 feet of water. Gags don't start showing roe until 25 fathoms. Unless I have misread the original rationale for the closure, the reasoning behind all this doesn't correlate with what is occurring. Given the economic hardship this is creating for the charter fleet it would seem that this closure should be reevaluated.

At the risk of making this post too wordy I press on. This only gets worse. Up until this point you could conceivably write me off (wrongly) as just another harvester begging for more access at the expense of a fish stock. Under the current two month grouper closure we are actually killing more gags than if we were allowed to harvest reds. Charter boats are still chartering. With grouper off the table what do we fish for? Every Council member should know the species mix off Southwest Florida. The only highly edible fish left on the table is snapper, yellowtail and mangrove, primarily mangrove. Mangroves occur on bottom with more structure: natural breaks or ledges and wrecks. This is where gags occur. If reds were open we would be fishing open bottom (flat rock with solution holes) where gags are

infrequently caught. To compound this even further, we are having a mild winter. Mangrove snapper are more catchable during cold/windy winters; the water is more turbid making the hook shy mangroves easier to catch. We are now faced with catching snapper in gin clear water. The entire Naples charter fleet is cast-netting live pilchards and running to an offshore ledge trying to coax an unwilling mangrove snapper to bite using ultra light leader/line. Any gag of size that bites that setup breaks us off. Without a shred of overstatement we are doing the gags more harm than if reds were open.

I would be interested to hear what objections the Council would have to dropping the February/March red grouper closure. The most obvious objection that I could foresee would be the idea that targeting red grouper would increase gag release mortality. However this is so opposite of what is actually occurring I do not think the Council would have to look far to get corroboration of my position.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Tom Marvel