



February 19th, 2014

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council RAP Session Wrap-Up

Good day,

I want to follow up one last time to let you know what happened at the last Gulf Council meeting. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met and heard the summary of the RAP Sessions.

A huge number of issues were presented to the Council, and they took some actions as a direct result of the input that you contributed. The following is a brief summary of the Council's actions during the meeting.

Fisheries Dependent Data Collection

One of the most prevalent themes that emerged from the RAP Sessions was angler concern about information the Council uses to determine how many fish are caught recreationally each year. That data collection system (MRIP) is a national program that combines dockside intercept surveys with telephone surveys to determine what recreational anglers are catching. In the Gulf, Texas and Louisiana (for red snapper only) use their own survey methods and submit data for use in federal management. The Council does not have control over the data collection programs and therefore cannot directly change them. But, they did take steps toward improving the fisheries dependent data collection in the following way:

- The Council directed staff to develop a framework action to establish electronic reporting within the charter component of the recreational sector.
- This spring, the Council will look at a scoping document that addresses improving private recreational red snapper fisheries data. The document was developed with the input from the Council's Private Recreational Data Collection Advisory Panel that met early last summer.

Allocation

Many recreational anglers brought up the idea of reconsidering the allocation (division) of fish between commercial and recreational fishing sectors. Across the board anglers asked that a greater percentage of the allowable harvest be given to recreational anglers. The Council is currently working on a document that reconsiders the 51% commercial/49% recreational split for red snapper. In the document there are no options that would increase the commercial sector's share of the fishery. Instead, all options consider allocating more fish to recreational sector. The Council will be hosting public hearings on Amendment 28 - Allocation of Red Snapper in March. Dates and times will be posted [here](#) when they're available.

Short fishing seasons

Anglers are obviously unhappy with short federal fishing seasons, especially for red snapper. Federal stocks are managed using Annual Catch Limits that are based off of stock assessment results. The red snapper Annual Catch Limit was increased from 8,460,000 pounds to 11,000,000 pounds this past summer, but seasons are still short. Because the Council is unable to open a season that would exceed the red snapper quota, they are considering other ways to lengthen the season while still meeting the rebuilding goals for the stock. The Council directed staff to develop a framework action that considers red snapper slot limits that may protect the breeding stock and add more days by limiting the harvest of large fish.

Red Drum

Anglers suggested that the Council "perform a stock assessment and consider a recreational season" for red drum in the Federal waters of the Gulf. The Council can't initiate harvest of a stock without assessing the population, so at this meeting, the Council decided to make red drum the top stock assessment priority for 2016. Hopefully, a favorable assessment could allow for some harvest of red drum.

Council Member Accountability

RAP Session attendees mentioned that it would be useful for them to know which way each Council member voted on issues. At this meeting the Council asked for role call votes on the more controversial issues.

In addition to these immediate actions, the Council is expected to address a number of issues relevant to recreational fisheries in the upcoming months. There are a number of ways you can continue to stay involved in the management of your fish:

- Visit our website: www.gulfcouncil.org
- Sign up to receive our newsletter: [Gulf Council News](#)
- "Like" us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GulfCouncil>
- Read our Blog - [Gulf Currents](#)
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- Read a copy of [Navigating the Council Process](#)

And, as always, if you have any questions you're welcome to contact me directly at Emily.Muehlstein@gulfcouncil.org.

Your Chum,
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About Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.

Submit comments and stay updated on fishery issues:

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There is also a thermometer for each issue that lets you know where the Council is in the process for

that particular amendment, whether its the scoping phase, final action, or implementation.



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