Public Hearing – Reef Fish Amendment 50:

State Management of Recreational Red Snapper

Background

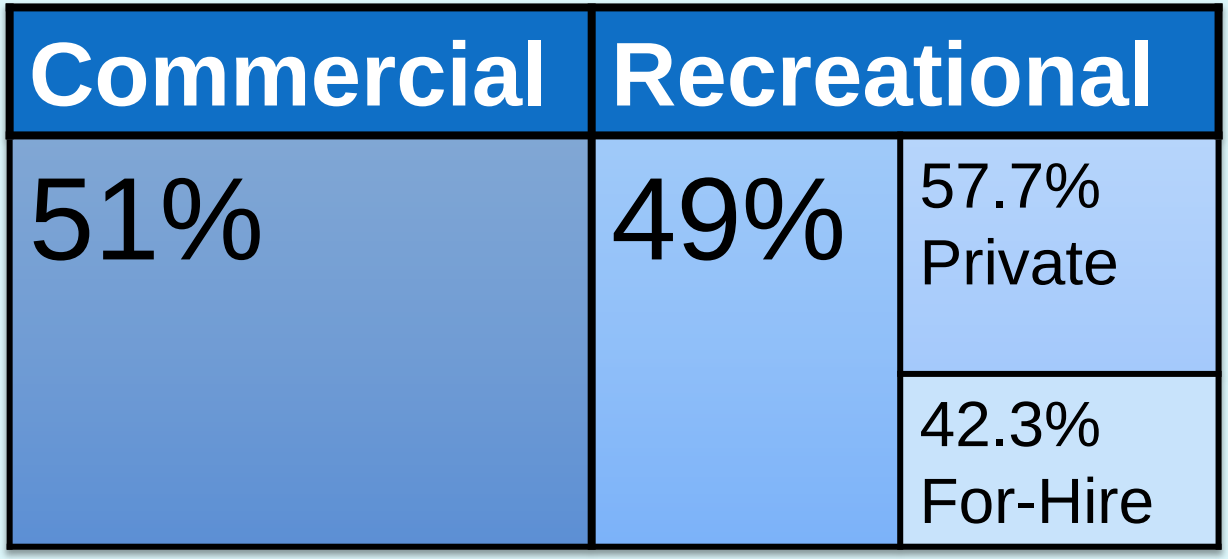
- Although the recreational ACL has progressively increased in recent years, the fishing season in federal waters continued to shorten.

Year	Season dates in federal waters	# of days open	Recreational Landings
1996	January 1 – December 31	365	5.286 mp
1997	January 1 – November 27	330	6.690 mp
1998	January 1 – September 30	272	4.827 mp
1999	January 1 – August 29	240	4.905 mp
2000	April 21 – October 31	194	4.710 mp
2001	April 21 – October 31	194	5.245 mp
2002	April 21 – October 31	194	6.522 mp
2003	April 21 – October 31	194	6.094 mp
2004	April 21 – October 31	194	6.460 mp
2005	April 21 – October 31	194	4.676 mp
2006	April 21 – October 31	194	4.131 mp
2007	April 21 – October 31	194	5.809 mp
2008	June 1 – August 4	65	4.056 mp
2009	June 1 – August 14	75	5.597 mp
2010	June 1 – July 23; Oct 1 – Nov. 21 (Fri, Sat., & Sun.)	77	2.647 mp
2011	June 1 – July 18	48	6.734 mp
2012	June 1 – July 16	46	7.524 mp
2013	June 1 – June 28; Oct 1 – Oct 14	42	9.703 mp
2014	June 1 – June 9	9	3.835 mp
2015	June 1 – June 10 (private angling)	10	3.806 mp
	June 1 – July 14 (federal for-hire)	44	2.153 mp
2016	June 1 – June 11 (private angling)	11	5.294 mp
	June 1 – July 16 (federal for-hire)	46	2.143 mp
2017	June 1-3; June 16 – Sept 4* (private angling)	3 + 39	6.593 mp
	June 1 – July 19 (federal for-hire)	49	2.270 mp

Background

In 2015 the recreational sector was split:

- Federally permitted for-hire
- Private angler (includes non-federal for-hire)



Red Snapper Allocation

Separate management of the components of the recreational sector expires after 2022.

Current Federal Regulations

- 2-fish bag limit
- 16-inch TL minimum size limit
- Season opens June 1 until ACT is projected to be caught

2018-2019 – Private angling fishing seasons are set by each Gulf state through EFPs.

Federal for-hire season is set by NMFS.

Why Are We Here?

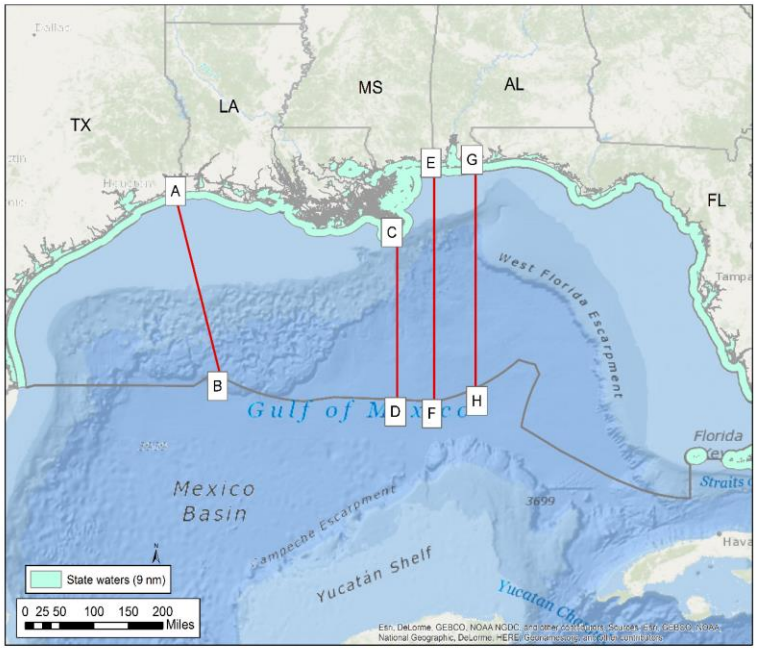
Anglers have asked for more flexibility in red snapper recreational management.

- Improved flexibility would provide greater social and economic benefits to each area.

What is State Management?

Allowing states to set some recreational regulations in federal waters.

- Federal ACLs and allocations still apply
- State management programs would have to be approved by NMFS



In the event that not all 5 states have approved plans, federal waters would not remain open continuously off all states.

- Some red snapper fishing would still be managed with default federal regulations.
- In this case, lines would be used to define federal waters adjacent to each state.
- Within federal waters adjacent to each state, either federal default regulations or state management regulations would apply.

What's Being Considered?

Program Specific Actions

- **Action 1.1:** Which components to include in state management programs
- **Action 1.2:** How to implement optional management of federal for-hire component (if selected in Action 1.1)
- **Action 2:** How to divide the recreational ACL
- **Action 3:** Procedure for closing specific areas in federal waters

State-Specific Actions

- **Action 1:** Delegation or conservation equivalency approach for state authority
- **Action 2:** Post-season quota adjustments

Program Action 1: Components of the Recreational Sector to Include

This action determines whether state management programs would include the private angling component only, or both private angling and federal for-hire components.

- For Alternatives 2 or 4: the sunset on the separate management of private angling and federal for-hire components would be removed. For Alternative 3: state management would end at the same time as sector separation ends (end of 2022).
- Under state management, landings must be constrained to the state's component ACLs.
- Under all circumstances federal reef fish for-hire permit is required to fish in federal waters.

Program Action 1: Components of the Recreational Sector to Include

Alternative 1: No Action – Retain federal management of private angling and for-hire components.

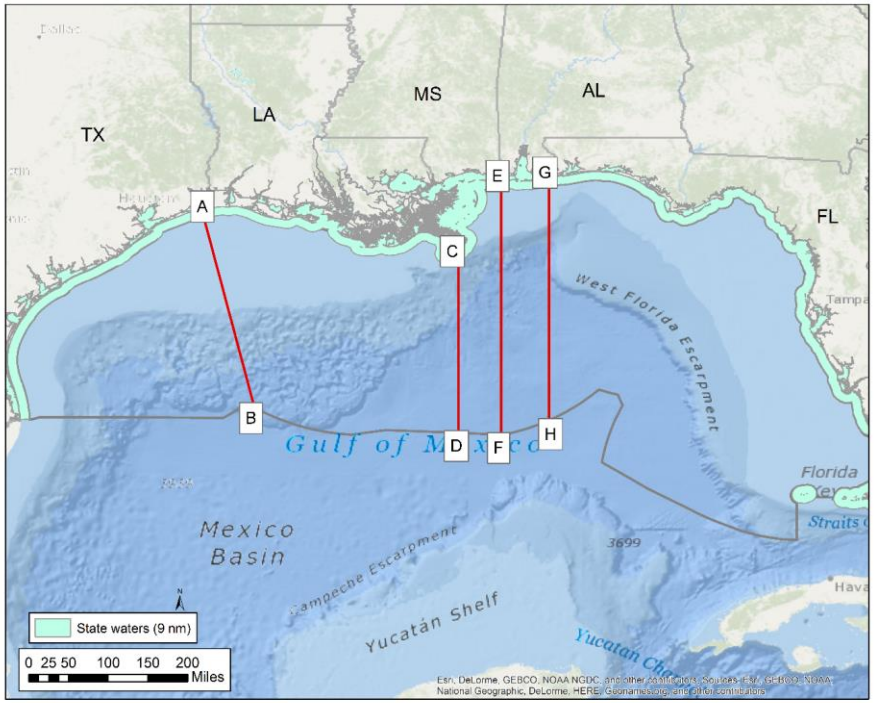
Preferred Alternative 2: A state with an approved state management plan will manage only its private angling component.

Alternative 3: A state with an approved management plan will manage its private angling and federal for-hire components.

Alternative 4: A state with an approved management plan will choose whether to manage its private angling component only, or to manage both its private angling and federal for-hire components.

Program Action 1.2: Mechanism to Implement Optional For-Hire Management

This action only applies if **Alternative 4** is selected in the previous action.



- State management areas are defined by the boundaries that extend outward from each state into federal waters.
- If a state is not managing its federal for-hire component, those vessels possessing red snapper must follow federal default regulations.
- State-specific red snapper endorsements could be established to allow federal for-hire vessels managed by states with approved management plans to possess red snapper in federal waters.

Program Action 1.2: Mechanism to Implement Optional For-Hire Management

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: Establish a state-specific red snapper endorsement to allow federally permitted vessels to possess red snapper in federal waters. Vessels in states with approved management plans for the federal for-hire component must follow the state program's regulations. Vessels in states without a management plan for federal for-hire vessels must follow federal default regulations.

Federal for-hire vessels with a state endorsement may land red snapper in one state per fishing year. In the case of a permit transfer:

- **Option a:** An endorsement for another state will not be issued until the following year.
- **Option b:** An endorsement for another state may be issued upon request.

Program Action 2: Apportioning the Recreational ACL

To implement a red snapper state management program, a portion of the recreational sector ACL would need to be allocated to that state.

- Based on the alternative selected in Action 1, only the private angling component ACL or both the private and federal for-hire component ACLs would be allocated to the states.
- A federal default season would be established for states that don't participate in state management, based on the remaining portions of the private angling and federal for-hire ACLs (if applicable).

Program Action 2: Apportioning the Recreational ACL

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: Establish allocation based on the average historical landings for the years (excluding 2010):

Option 2a: 1986-2015.

Option 2b: 1996-2015.

Option 2c: 2006-2015.

Option 2d: 50% of average historical landings for the years 1986-2015 and 50% of average historical landings for the years 2006-2015.

Alternative 3: In calculating state apportionments under **Alternative 2**, exclude from the selected time series:

Option 3a: 2006 landings.

Option 3b: 2014 landings.

Option 3c: 2015 landings.

Program Action 2: Apportioning the Recreational ACL

Alternative 4: Establish allocation based on each state's average of the best ten years of historical landings during the years 1986-2015, excluding 2010.

Alternative 5: Establish allocation based on spatial abundance of red snapper biomass and proportion of recreational trips from the time series in **Options 5a-5c**, excluding 2010, and using one of the weightings from **Options 5d-5f**:

	Option	Time Series for Recreational Trips	
Select one from 5a-5c:	5a	1986 – 2015	
	5b	2006 – 2015	
	5c	50% of the average number of recreational trips for the years 1986-2015 (5a) and 50% of the average number of recreational trips for the years 2006-2015 (5b).	
Select one from 5d-5f:	Option	Biomass	Recreational Trips
	5d	25%	75%
	5e	50%	50%
	5f	75%	25%

Program Action 2: Apportioning the Recreational ACL

- **Preferred Alternative 6:** Establish an allocation by apportioning the private angling ACL among the states based on the allocations set in the EFPs approved for the states to manage the recreational harvest of red snapper in 2018 and 2019.

- **Alternative 7:** Establish an allocation by apportioning the private angling ACL among the states based on the allocations requested by each state in its EFP application, which totaled 96.22%. Apportion the remaining 3.78% among the five states proportionally based on their requested allocation.

Program Action 2: Apportioning the Recreational ACL

Comparison of Allocations by State for the Private Angling Component

Alternative	AL	FL	LA	MS	TX
2a	35.96%	28.07%	20.98%	7.93%	7.06%
2b	38.48%	33.67%	16.67%	4.52%	6.66%
2c	33.63%	41.57%	17.22%	2.13%	5.45%
2d	34.80%	34.82%	19.10%	5.03%	6.26%
4	38.44%	31.68%	16.73%	8.47%	4.68%
5a + 5d	27.76%	29.06%	19.42%	5.52%	18.24%
5a + 5e	20.61%	29.36%	19.70%	4.12%	26.20%
5a + 5f	13.45%	29.65%	19.99%	2.73%	34.17%
5b + 5d	23.77%	40.12%	19.24%	3.03%	13.84%
5b + 5e	17.95%	36.72%	19.59%	2.47%	23.27%
5b + 5f	12.12%	33.33%	19.93%	1.90%	32.70%
5c + 5d	25.76%	34.59%	19.33%	4.28%	16.04%
5c + 5e	19.28%	33.04%	19.65%	3.30%	24.73%
5c + 5f	12.79%	31.49%	19.96%	2.32%	33.43%
Pref. 6	25.34%	45.78%	19.12%	3.55%	6.21%
7	26.298%	43.730%	19.843%	3.684%	6.445%

Program Action 3: Procedure for Closing Specific Areas in Federal Waters

NMFS has the authority to open and close federal waters. Under state management the federal fixed close season would be removed to allow anglers to harvest red snapper from federal waters according to a state management plan.

- When a state closes its season, possession of red snapper would be prohibited, but federal waters would remain open for anglers from other states.
- The Council is considering to establish a procedure through which a state could request NMFS to close areas of federal waters adjacent to state waters.

Program Action 3: Procedure for Closing Specific Areas in Federal Waters

Alternative 1: No Action.

Alternative 2: Establish a procedure to allow a state to request NMFS close areas of federal waters adjacent to state waters to red snapper recreational fishing. The state would request the closure by letter, providing dates and geographic coordinates for the closure. The closure would apply to the recreational sector component(s) included in that state's approved management program.

State Action 1: Authority Structure for State Management

To implement state management, the current regulations would be waived or suspended for those anglers and vessels subject to a state management plan.

State Management could be achieved by:

- Delegation of management authority.
- Conservation equivalency plan that include the season structure and bag limit and would be submitted for the management of a state's portion of the ACL.

Default federal regulations would be applied in the federal waters adjacent to a state if a state does not have an approved state management plan.

State Action 1: Authority Structure for State Management

Alternative 1: No Action

Preferred Alternative 2: Delegate management authority. The state must establish the season structure for harvest of its portion of the ACL. Authority for managing harvest of red snapper may include:

- **Option 2a**: bag limit
- **Option 2b**: prohibition of for-hire vessel captains and crew from retaining a bag limit
- **Option 2c**: minimum size limit within the range of 14-18 inches
- **Option 2d**: maximum size limit

State Action 1: Authority Structure for State Management

Alternative 3: Establish management through conservation equivalency plans which may be submitted annually or biannually. The plan must specify season structure and bag limit for the state's harvest of its ACL.

- **Option 3a:** the plan will be submitted directly to NMFS.
- **Option 3b:** the plan would first be submitted to a technical review committee and then forwarded to NMFS.

State Action 2: Post-Season Quota Adjustment

Currently, when the total recreational ACL is reached, the possession of red snapper is prohibited for the remainder of the fishing year. If red snapper is overfished and the combined recreational landings exceed the sector ACL, then the entire recreational sector ACL will be reduced in the following year by the amount of the overage.

- In the event that a state's ACL is exceeded, the following year's state ACL could be reduced.
- In the event that a state's ACL is not reached, the remaining quota could be added to the state's ACL for the following year.

State Action 2: Post-Season Quota Adjustment

Alternative 1: No Action.

Preferred Alternative 2: Add a state-specific overage and underage adjustment to the existing post-season accountability measure for recreational red snapper. If a state's recreational landings exceed or are less than the state's recreational ACL, then reduce or increase the following year's total recreational quota and the state's component ACL(s) (applied to each component, if applicable) by the amount of the overage or underage.

State-Specific Preferred Alternatives

Action	Louisiana	Mississippi	Alabama	Florida	Texas
1. Delegation/ CEP	Alternative 2 Options 2a-2d	Alternative 2 Options 2a-2d	Alternative 2 Options 2a-2d	Alternative 2 Options 2a, 2c, 2d	Alternative 2 Options 2a-2d
2. Quota Adjustment	Alternative 2	Alternative 2	Alternative 2	Alternative 2	Alternative 2

Send us your comments

- Submit your comments online:

  https://tinyurl.com/yc8nvrd9

- Email your comments:

  gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org