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# Wahoo Management Options and Current Management in Atlantic and U.S. Caribbean

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting

June 2024

# Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*)

## Family Scombridae

- Found in tropical and subtropical waters world-wide
- Probably one genetic stock in Atlantic, Gulf, and Caribbean
- Stock unassessed, assessment likely difficult
- Fast growing, up to 8 ft and 158 lbs
- Short lived, up to 5 or 6 years
- Spawn at age 1, males at 2.8 ft and females at 3.3 ft
- Summer spawning season
- Mostly solitary, but will aggregate in productive feeding areas
- Physical structure, water temperature, bait serve as aggregator



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# Wahoo Landings (lbs ww) in Gulf of Mexico

## Recreational Landings\*

Year	AL	FLW	LA	TX	Grand Total
2018	36,353	19,445	45,878	4,175	105,694
2019	60,289	16,819	56,667	14,488	148,264
2020	123,114	175,916	27,506	3,646	330,181
2021	3,929	32,655	21,780	5,162	63,525
2022	13,817	215,192	5,095	4,209	238,314
2023	10,432	81,875	19,748	5,045	117,011

\*MS has a small amount of headboat landings. Monroe County assigned to east Florida.

## Commercial Landings

Year	AL	FLW	LA	TX
2018	<500	15,943	25,641	<500
2019	<500	10,933	9,630	<500
2020	<500	12,297	2,491	<500
2021	<500	9,784	1,891	<500
2022	<500	10,562	<3,000	<500
2023	<500	11,484	4,606	<500

\*Confidential landings are highlighted in yellow; there are no landings from MS.

# Wahoo Management Measures Atlantic – East Florida to New York

## Fishery Management Plan for the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery of the Atlantic

Management Measure	
Wahoo ACLs	Commercial ACL—70,690 lbs ww; Recreational ACL—2,814,613 lbs ww
Wahoo minimum size limit	None
Wahoo recreational bag limit	In the Atlantic EEZ—2 wahoo/person/day
Wahoo trip limit	In the Atlantic EEZ—500 lbs ww

Florida is the only Gulf state with a 2 fish bag limit for wahoo; likely because of Atlantic regulations.



# Wahoo Management Measures U.S. Caribbean

## Fishery Management Plans for the EEZ Around Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John

Management Measure	Puerto Rico	St. Croix	St. Thomas/St. John
Wahoo ACLs/ACTs	Commercial ACL—25,911 lbs ww; Commercial ACT—23,320 lbs ww; Recreational ACL—210,737 lbs ww; Recreational ACT—189,663 lbs ww	ACL—27,260 lbs ww; ACT—24,534 lbs ww	ACL—6,879 lbs ww; ACT—6,191 lbs ww
Wahoo minimum size limit	32" fork length minimum size limit for the commercial and recreational harvest of wahoo in federal waters		
Wahoo recreational bag / vessel limits	Bag limit in federal waters of 5 wahoo/person/day, not to exceed 10 wahoo/vessel/day, whichever is less	Bag limit in federal waters of 2 wahoo/person/day, not to exceed 10 wahoo/vessel/day, whichever is less	

Bag/vessel limits proposed for Puerto Rico in federal waters match regulations in territorial waters.

# Options for Management of Wahoo in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

- A new FMP\* is created for a Gulf stock of wahoo by the Gulf Council
- A Gulf stock of wahoo is added to an existing Gulf FMP\*
- SA Council amends its Dolphin Wahoo FMP\* to redefine the geographic scope of the wahoo management unit to include the Gulf (if one genetic stock in South Atlantic and Gulf)
- NOAA pursues regulations under the NMSA for take within FGBNMS
- FMP\* for wahoo and pursue regulations in FGBNMS
- States put in regulations

\*Need to determine if wahoo is in need of conservation and management based on 50 CFR 600.305(c). Two years to develop or add wahoo to FMP with management measures and 9-11 months for rulemaking.

# Conservation and Management 50 CFR 600.305(c)

## Non-exhaustive list of factors

- (i) The stock is an important component of the marine environment.
- (ii) The stock is caught by the fishery.
- (iii) Whether an FMP can improve or maintain the condition of the stock.
- (iv) The stock is a target of a fishery.
- (v) The stock is important to commercial, recreational, or subsistence users.
- (vi) The fishery is important to the Nation or to the regional economy.
- (vii) The need to resolve competing interests and conflicts among user groups and whether an FMP can further that resolution.
- (viii) The economic condition of a fishery and whether an FMP can produce more efficient utilization.
- (ix) The needs of a developing fishery, and whether an FMP can foster orderly growth.
- (x) The extent to which the fishery is already adequately managed by states, by state/Federal programs, or by Federal regulations pursuant to other FMPs or international commissions, or by industry self-regulation, consistent with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law.



# Council Options for Next Steps

- Direct staff to gather other information and report back to the Council
- Direct Council staff to consider if there is a Gulf stock of wahoo in need of conservation and management
- Write a letter to the South Atlantic Council to consider redefining the wahoo management unit to include the Gulf
- Write a letter requesting NOAA pursue regulations under the NMSA for take within FGBNMS
- Request NOAA pursue regulations under NMSA and consider Council management of a Gulf stock of wahoo
- Write a letter to the Gulf states requesting they put regulations in place for wahoo
- Write a letter to FGBNMS thanking them for the presentation and indicating the Council does not wish to take action at this time

