

State Management of Recreational Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permit – Alabama Summary



Kevin Anson

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources /
Marine Resources Division

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Background

Under a NOAA Fisheries Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP), each Gulf of Mexico state was provided limited management authority to manage Red Snapper within their respective jurisdiction during 2018 and 2019.

Each state was allowed to manage the private angling component (anglers on privately-owned vessels and state-licensed charter vessels) based on an annual state-specific catch limit.

Alabama utilized a mandatory reporting program (Snapper Check) to estimate Red Snapper landings during the season.

Snapper Check landings estimates were available to management each week to monitor landings.

Decisions related to fishing season closures or extensions were made using the in-season landings information.



Snapper Check program - a brief summary

Since 2014, mandatory reporting of Red Snapper by owner/operators of all recreational vessels is required prior to landing in Alabama.

It was anticipated that every trip would not be reported.

A capture-recapture survey methodology was utilized to estimate the rate of non-reporting:

- “Captures” are the mandatory landing reports submitted by the owner/operator of recreational vessels landing Red Snapper in Alabama
- “Recaptures” are vessels with Red Snapper sampled at docks and marinas by agency staff during assignments determined by a probability proportional to size selection process.
- Unique identifying information (vessel registration, date, time of sample and landing report within 3.5hrs, number of anglers and landed Red Snapper) from sampled vessels are compared to angler-supplied landings reports. To determine the total number of landed fish the total number of fish provided on landings reports are multiplied by the inverse of the proportion of the total of fish from matched landings reports and sampled vessels to the total fish from sampled vessels.

Mean weight of landed Red Snapper is determined from weights of fish obtained by staff during sampling assignments.



Landing reports summary

| | Trip Type | 2018 | 2019 | TOTALS |
|------------------|------------|--------|--------|---------|
| Landing Reports* | Charter-St | 355 | 494 | 849 |
| | Private | 5,604 | 8,649 | 14,253 |
| | TOTALS | 5,959 | 9,143 | 15,102 |
| Anglers | Charter-St | 1,569 | 2,078 | 3,647 |
| | Private | 25,240 | 38,222 | 63,462 |
| | TOTALS | 26,809 | 40,300 | 67,109 |
| Red Snapper | Charter-St | 2,790 | 3,676 | 6,466 |
| | Private | 42,489 | 63,489 | 105,978 |
| | TOTALS | 45,279 | 67,165 | 112,444 |



Dockside sampling summary

| | Vessel Type | 2018 | 2019 | TOTALS |
|------------------|-------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Vessels Surveyed | Charter-St | 15 | 25 | 40 |
| | Private | 268 | 501 | 769 |
| | TOTALS | 2,301 | 526 | 2,827 |
| Fish Weighed | Charter-St | 42 | 101 | 143 |
| | Private | 799 | 1,245 | 2,044 |
| | TOTALS | 841 | 1,346 | 2,187 |
| Mean Weight | Charter-St | 7.22 | 6.82 | -- |
| | Private | 7.40 | 7.22 | -- |

There were 48 and 77 dockside sampling assignments in 2018 and 2019.



Landings estimates

| Year | Vessel Type | Total Reported Red Snapper | Fish Non-Reporting Adjustment Factor | Estimated Landed Red Snapper | Mean Weight (LBS) | Estimated Harvest (LBS) | Harvest Proportional Standard Error (PSE) |
|------|---------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 2018 | Charter-St | 2,790 | 1.84 | 5,146 | 7.22 | 37,147 | 45.7 |
| | Private | 47,489 | 2.47 | 117,238 | 8.10 | 949,151 | 18.8 |
| | TOTALS | 50,279 | 2.43 | 122,384 | 8.06 | 986,298 | 19.8 |
| 2019 | Charter-St | 3,676 | 3.81 | 13,989 | 6.83 | 95,532 | 59.7 |
| | Private | 63,489 | 2.06 | 130,667 | 7.40 | 966,749 | 20.7 |
| | TOTALS | 67,165 | 2.15 | 144,656 | 7.34 | 1,062,281 | 24.2 |



Data concerns

Non-reporting of trips is a concern for managers.

The capture-recapture survey method attempts to measure the rate of non-reporting to adjust the angler provided data.

An assumption that the rate of non-reporting is the same among vessels using public access sites and private access sites.

Specialized surveys can be used to estimate non-reporting among vessels using private access sites.

Cursory analysis of available data may help to answer some questions about the data.

Estimated vessel reporting rates by vessel type

| | Vessel Type | 2018 | 2019 |
|--------------------|-------------|------|------|
| Reporting Rate (%) | Charter-St | 68.5 | 29.3 |
| | Private | 38.5 | 51.4 |

Proportion of landing reports by reported access type

| | Access Type | 2018 | 2019 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Landing Reports (No.)* | Private | 2,084 | 3,159 |
| | Public | 3,386 | 5,228 |
| | TOTALS | 5,470 | 8,387 |
| Landing Reports (%) | Private | 38.1 | 37.7 |
| | Public | 61.9 | 62.3 |
| | TOTALS | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* - Access type not provided on all landing reports.



Data concerns

Mean landing reports for reporting vessels and mean landing reports for surveyed vessels by access type

| Year | Landing Access Type | Landing Reports | Mean Reports / Vessel ID | Landing Reports Submitted by Surveyed Vessels | Mean Landing Reports / Surveyed Vessel ID |
|------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| 2018 | Private | 2,081 | 2.14 | -- | -- |
| | Public | 3,275 | 2.10 | 677 | 2.79 |
| 2019 | Private | 3,152 | 2.52 | -- | -- |
| | Public | 5,114 | 2.58 | 1,630 | 3.70 |

Mean landing reports for vessels accessing both access types were similar within years. Mean landing reports for surveyed vessels was higher in both years. This could be attributed to several factors, including the presence of samplers could increase reporting or that vessels taking more trips have a higher chance of being surveyed.



2018 Season length projections

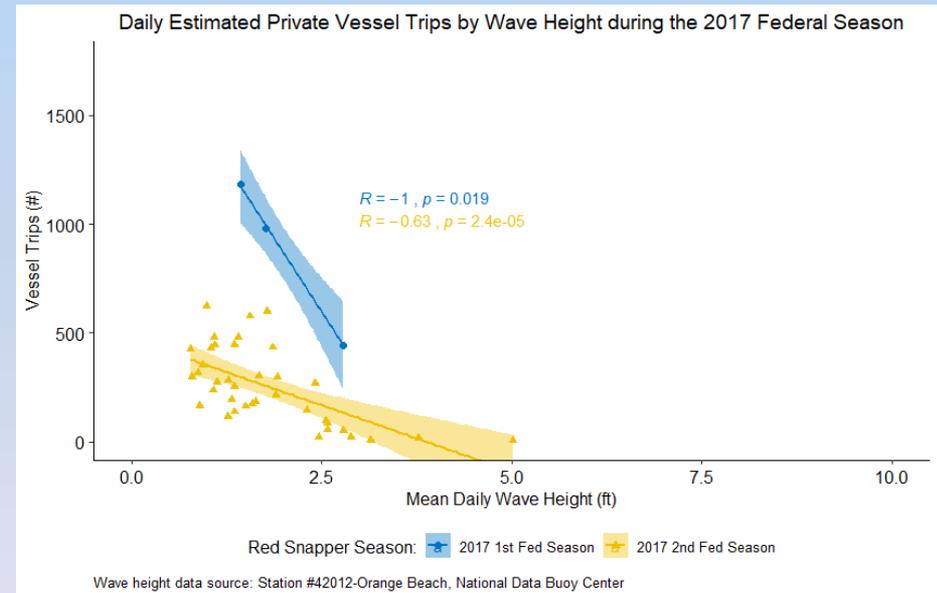
Alabama EFP seasons are determined by dividing the catch limit (less a buffer) by the Snapper Check mean daily federal season landings.

For the 2018 season, 2017 Snapper Check data for days when federal waters were open were used for the calculation.

- There were two federal seasons in 2017
- First season was June 1-3
- Second season of 39 additional days was announced June 15th (June 16-Sept. 3, Fridays-Sundays including July 4th and Sept. 3rd).

An assumption was made that the 2017 second season daily landings reflected fishing effort under a protracted fishing season.

Mean daily landings from the second 2017 federal season were 18,474 lbs/d (private and state charter landings combined).



2018 Season

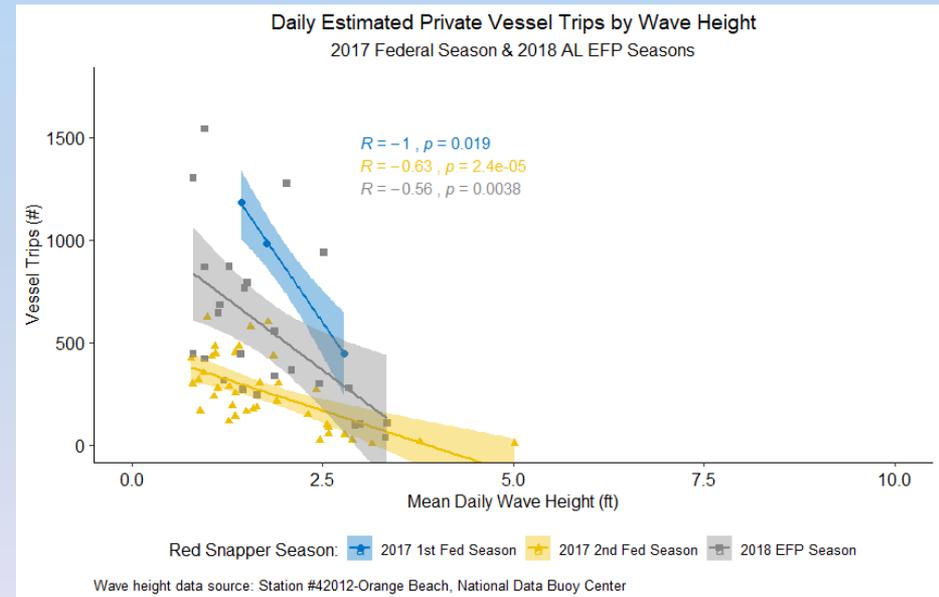
After applying the 10% buffer to the 984,291 lb state catch limit, and dividing the result by the 2017 daily harvest rate a 47-day season was announced for 2018 (June 1-Sept. 3rd, Fridays-Sundays including the week of July 4th and Labor Day).

The assumption that the rate of harvest during the “lengthy” 2018 season would be the same as the 2017 second federal season was incorrect.

- Mean daily landings in 2018 were nearly two times higher than 2017.

Sea conditions were ideal during the first half of the 2018 season which provided opportunities for smaller-sized vessels to participate in the fishery.

Monitoring of landings indicated the catch limit would be exceeded. Therefore, the 2018 season was closed after 28 days - 19 days less than the announced season.



2019 Season

Although the 2019 state catch limit was increased by 93,000 lbs over Alabama's 2018 catch limit the association between weather and fishery capacity were still unknowns.

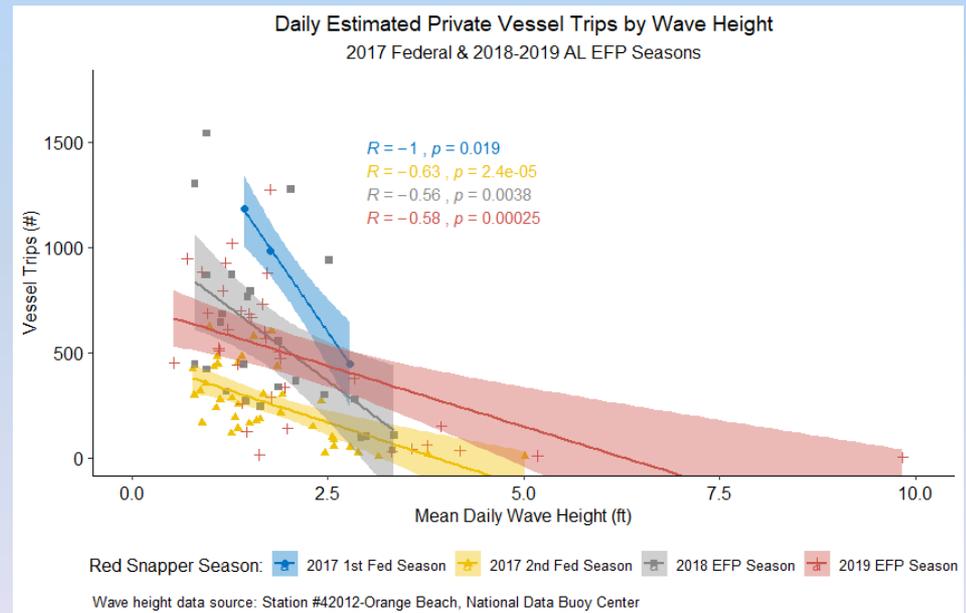
After applying a buffer to the 2018 mean daily landings and dividing the result by the 2018 mean daily landings the 2019 EFP season was announced for 26 days (June 1-July 28, Fridays and Sundays and July 4th).

Snapper Check landings estimates for the 26-day season were well below anticipated landings.

Sea conditions during the 2019 announced season were higher than 2018 (mean of 1.76'/d in 2018 and 2.77'/d in 2019).

- Mean daily landings were 5,067 lbs (14.4%) lower than the mean 2018 second season daily landings .

Three additional mini-seasons (10 days total) were added after the initial season.



2019 landings were 17,232 lbs below the catch limit.



Looking ahead

Beginning in 2020, Alabama and the remaining Gulf states will maintain limited management of Red Snapper for the private recreational sector.

Alabama will receive an increase in the 2020 catch limit of approximately 41,000 pounds.

Alabama will manage the 2020 season using the same size and bag limits as during the EFP, 16" total length and 2 fish per person per day.

Season length for 2020 has not been determined but the addition of Mondays to the three-day weekend format used during the EFP is being considered. An analysis using prior year harvest by day of the week is being evaluated for calculating season length. A final decision on season length will be made in mid-February.

As of Sept. 1, 2019, a Reef Fish Endorsement for all recreational anglers in Alabama 16 years old and older is required if they are in possession of or attempt to take a Gulf reef fish species. A vessel endorsement is required for all charter vessels and commercial vessels if the vessel has a Gulf reef fish species on board or anglers on the vessel are attempting to take a Gulf reef fish species.



QUESTIONS?

