

# Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagic For-Hire Limited Access Permit Review



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## 1. Introduction

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) established federal for-hire coastal migratory pelagic (CMP) and reef fish permits in 1987 and 1996, respectively. The Council placed temporary limits on the number of federal for-hire CMP and reef fish permits in 2003. In 2005, the Council approved joint Amendment 25 to the Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (Reef Fish FMP)/Amendment 17 to the Fishery Management Plan for CMP Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Region (CMP FMP) (Amendment 25/17; GMFMC 2005) and established an indefinite limited access program, effectively setting permanent caps on the number of available federal for-hire permits. Amendment 25/17 also required that the Council review the effectiveness of the limited access system at least every 10 years. The objectives were stated in Amendment 25/17:

*The purpose of this amendment is to provide for biological, social, and economic stability in the reef fish and CMP for-hire fishery. This would be accomplished by continuing to cap participation in the fishery at current levels. The cap on permits should maintain the current social and economic structure of the for-hire industry while providing some room for change as allowed by open-market permit transferability. The biological status of species in the reef fish and CMP fisheries is expected to be better under a moratorium that prevents new vessels from entering these fisheries and increasing fishing pressure than what would occur under an open access management regime (GMFMC 2005; page 5).*

This review of the effectiveness of the moratorium summarizes the history of for-hire management in these fisheries and discusses changes in the number of permits, the passenger capacity of for-hire vessels, and the geographical distribution of permits. The review also discusses changes to the biological status and trends in fishing effort and landings of the main reef fish and CMP species. In response to a Council request to have staff review federal for-hire permits transferred for the purposes of fishing outside the federal red snapper season, this review places a particular emphasis on the evaluation of reef fish permit transfers.

## 2. History of Management

### **Joint Amendment 20 to the Reef Fish FMP/Amendment 14 to the CMP FMP (Amendment 20/14)**

The final rule implementing Amendment 20/14 was effective July 29, 2002. The rule established a 3-year moratorium on the issuance of new charter vessel or headboat (for-hire) permits for the reef fish, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin/wahoo fisheries in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) (GMFMC 2003). Existing permits expired on December 26, 2002, and the final rule allowed status quo operation under a “moratorium permit” by current participants in the fishery who:

- Possessed or had applied for reef fish and/or coastal migratory pelagic for-hire permits on or before the control date of March 29, 2001, and who possess such permit(s) as of the effective date of the rule (July 29, 2002);

- Had new for-hire vessels contracted for or under construction prior to March 29, 2001, and that the associated expenditures were at least \$5000 as of that date; or
- Had a historical captains license<sup>1,2</sup>

### **Emergency Rule to Extend Permit-Related Deadlines**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), in response to a request, reviewed the administrative record to determine if the initial eligibility requirements establishing the moratorium were consistent with the actions approved by the Council. NMFS determined the amendment contained an error and the Council, at its November 2002 meeting, provided clarification on the initial eligibility criterion, relaying that the intent of the Council was to cap the effort and passenger capacity of vessels as of March 29, 2001 (GMFMC 2003). This clarification by the Council eliminated one eligibility criterion in the final rule; that an applicant had to have a valid Gulf for-hire permit on the effective date of the final rule (July 29, 2002) (GMFMC 2003).

The emergency rule allowed those persons ineligible under the original rule to receive their open access for-hire permits until they could obtain a new permit under the revised moratorium eligibility criteria, and NMFS continued to issue limited access permits to those who qualified under the existing final rule (67 FR 77193). The emergency rule:

- Deferred the original date (December 26, 2002<sup>3</sup>) for requiring a moratorium permit aboard vessels operating in these fisheries until June 16, 2003;
- Extended the expiration date of valid or renewable open access permits for these fisheries from December 26, 2002, to June 16, 2003; and
- Extended the deadline for issuance of moratorium permits to no later than June 6, 2003.

### **Corrected Amendment 20/14**

In May 2003, the final rule implemented a correction to the permit moratorium established in the Amendment 20/14. Specifically it revised and implemented the following:

- Removed the need to have an active permit on the effective date of the original rule (July 29, 2002) in order to qualify for a moratorium permit and
- Reopened the application process and extended applicable deadlines for obtaining Gulf for-hire moratorium permits, which included:

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<sup>1</sup> Historical captains license required that a person provide to NMFS documentation verifying that prior to March 28, 2001 he/she was issued either a USCG Operator of Uninspected Passenger Vessel license (commonly referred to as a 6-pack license) or a USCG Masters license and operated, as a captain, a federally permitted charter vessel or headboat in the Gulf RF and/or CMP fishery that was not permitted in his/her name or the name of a corporation in which he/she was a shareholder; and at least 25% of his/her earned income was derived from charter vessel or headboat fishing in one of the years from 1997-2000.

<sup>2</sup> The final rule also stated that applications would be accepted at any time, but if received after the October 28, 2002 deadline, the permit may not be issued prior to the date that the permit is first required (i.e., December 26, 2002)

<sup>3</sup> The emergency rule incorrectly stated in the summary that December 16, 2002 was the deadline for having a moratorium permit aboard vessels operating in these fisheries; but in the supplementary and classification portion, correctly stated that the open access permits were required as of December 26, 2002.

- extending the original expiration dates (December 26, 2002) of valid or renewable open access permits for these fisheries to November 13, 2003;
- clarifying constraint on issuance of historical captain permits under the moratorium;
- extending the original expiration date (July 29, 2005) of the moratorium to account for the delay in implementation to June 16, 2006.

This opened access to approximately 935 vessels, which represented approximately 30% of the historic fleet. The rule also clarified language regarding issuing historical captain's license under the moratorium to specify that the letter of eligibility is valid for the duration of the moratorium; is valid only for a vessel of the same or lesser authorized passenger capacity as the vessel used to document earned income; and is valid only for the fisheries certified on the application.

### **Emergency Rule to Provide a Limited Reopening of the Application Process**

In 2004, NMFS and the Council became aware of historical participants who met the original eligibility requirements but failed to submit a timely completed application and, therefore, never obtained a permit or letter of eligibility. As a result, the moratorium was more restrictive than intended and an estimated 34-810 qualifying participants potentially suffered economic harm.

In April 2005, an emergency rule provided a limited reopening of the application process. This reopening allowed those that qualified to provide documentation of economic harm and apply for a moratorium permit or letter of eligibility, which may be redeemed for the appropriate permit. However, a letter of eligibility based on historical captain criterion was valid only for a vessel of the same or lesser authorized passenger capacity as the vessel used to document their earned income.

### **Amendment 25 to the Reef Fish FMP/Amendment 17 to the CMP FMP (Amendment 25/17)**

In 2006, as the expiration of the moratorium approached, the Council considered whether to let the moratorium expire, extend the moratorium for a finite time period (5 or 10 years), or establish an indefinite limited access program. Based on a review of the fishing effort, economic impacts, and fish stock biological information, the Council selected to establish an indefinite limited access program. Additionally, the Council presumed that in the future they could be faced with the same choices, i.e., either let the moratorium expire, continue it for some period, or replace it with some other form of limited access. The Council decided to review the effectiveness of the limited access program at least every 10 years as part of that determination.

In June 2006, the final rule for Amendment 25/17 was effective. The rule established a limited access system for for-hire permits for the reef fish and CMP in federal waters of the Gulf in which a permit that was not renewed would not be reissued. This limited access system would be of indefinite duration.

### **Amendment 30B to the Reef Fish FMP (Amendment 30B)**

In 2008, Amendment 30B required that federally permitted reef fish vessels comply with the more restrictive of federal or state reef fish regulations when fishing in state waters. Prior to implementation of this amendment, federally permitted commercial and recreational for-hire reef fish vessels could fish in either state or federal waters given the appropriate permits for each; while this is still true they must now abide by whichever management measures are stricter (e.g. when federal waters are closed, federally permitted vessels can't fish in state waters)

### **Amendment 34 to the Reef Fish FMP (Amendment 34)**

This amendment removed the income qualification requirements for renewal of Gulf commercial reef fish permits and increased the maximum crew size to four for dual-permitted vessels (i.e. vessels that possess both a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish and a commercial vessel permit for Gulf reef fish) that are fishing commercially.

### **Abbreviated Framework Action to the Reef Fish and CMP FMPs**

In 2013, through an abbreviated framework action to the Reef Fish FMP, the requirement to submit a current certificate of inspection (COI) provided by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) with the application to renew or transfer a CMP or reef fish for-hire permit was eliminated. In the event no COI is obtained, the permit defaults to a vessel passenger capacity of six. The rule eliminated the restriction on transferring for-hire permits to a vessel of greater authorized passenger capacity than specified on the permit. This allowed greater flexibility for for-hire permit holders to carry additional passengers for alternate purposes such as eco-cruises and sight-seeing in order to supplement their income. However, when fishing, the permit still restricts the number of fishing passengers to that of the original moratorium permit. Despite no longer requiring the COI or restricting transfers, a fishing vessel is limited when for-hire fishing to the lesser of the two passenger capacities: the permit baseline capacity or the vessels passenger capacity. Therefore, if a vessel has a permit baseline passenger capacity of 25 but the vessel passenger capacity is 6, the vessel can only take out 6 passengers.

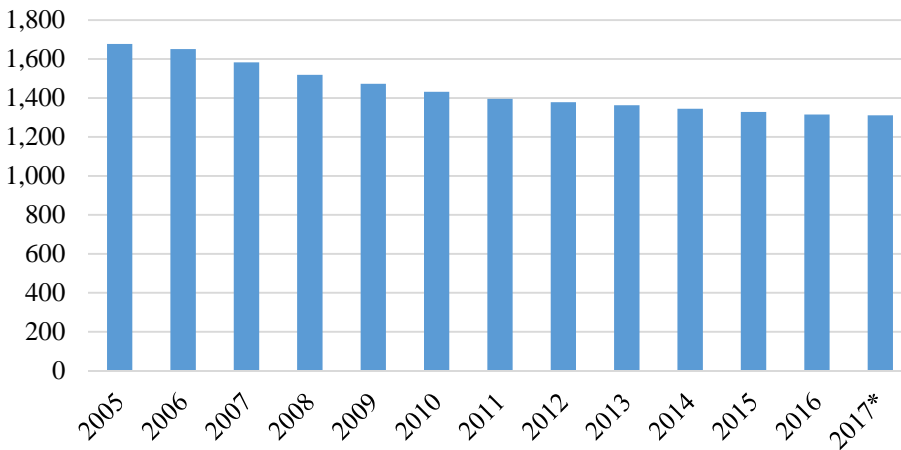
At the time the baseline passenger capacity was added to the permits, there was confusion based the COI. If there was more than one more passenger capacity on the COI, the permit office used the federal waters passenger capacity. This was challenged by the industry and therefore, the highest COI was used for the permit baseline passenger capacity. For example, if the state waters passenger capacity was greater than the federal water passenger capacity, then this number was assigned as the baseline passenger capacity. Do to this confusion, the baseline permit passenger capacity placed on the permit may not be the total value as intended by the Council, and may be higher than the amount of passengers that were actually fishing at the time.

### **Amendment 20A to the CMP FMP (Amendment 20A)**

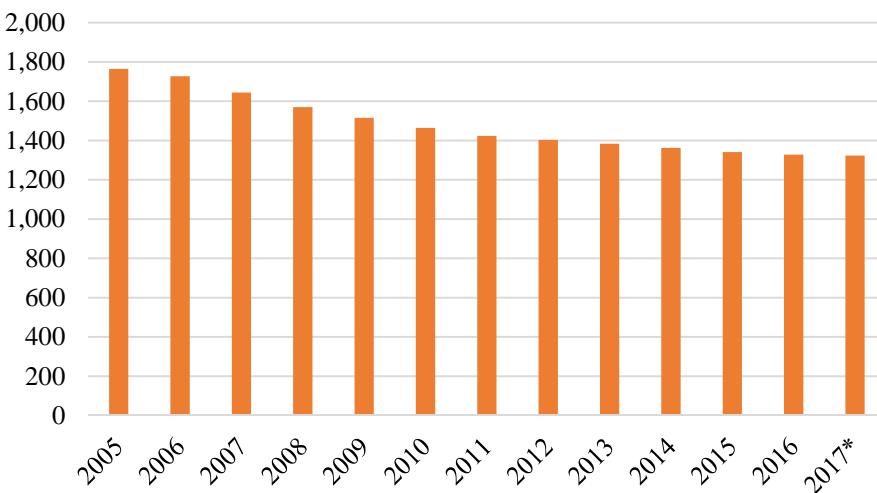
In 2014, Amendment 20A removed the income qualification requirements for king and Spanish mackerel commercial vessel permits. This did not affect the number of king mackerel permits issued, which are limited access, but allowed an increased in the number of Spanish mackerel permits issued, which are open access (GMFMC and SAFMC 2013).

### 3. Number and Distribution of Permits

Between 2005 and 2017, the number of valid or renewable federal reef fish charter/headboat (for-hire) vessel permits decreased from 1,677 to 1,311 (as of May 26, 2017). During the same time interval, the number of valid or renewable federal CMP for-hire permits decreased from 1,765 to 1,323. Permits may decrease due to either termination or surrender. The majority of the decrease in permits is due to termination. After a permit has expired, the permit holder has one year to renew the expired permit. At the end of that time period, the permit will terminate. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide the numbers of reef fish and CMP permits per year, respectively. An evaluation of the numbers of permits terminated per year indicates that annual decreases in for-hire CMP and reef fish permits followed similar patterns during the 2006-2017 time interval. Figure 3.3 provides the annual numbers of terminated for-hire CMP and reef fish permits between 2016 and 2017.

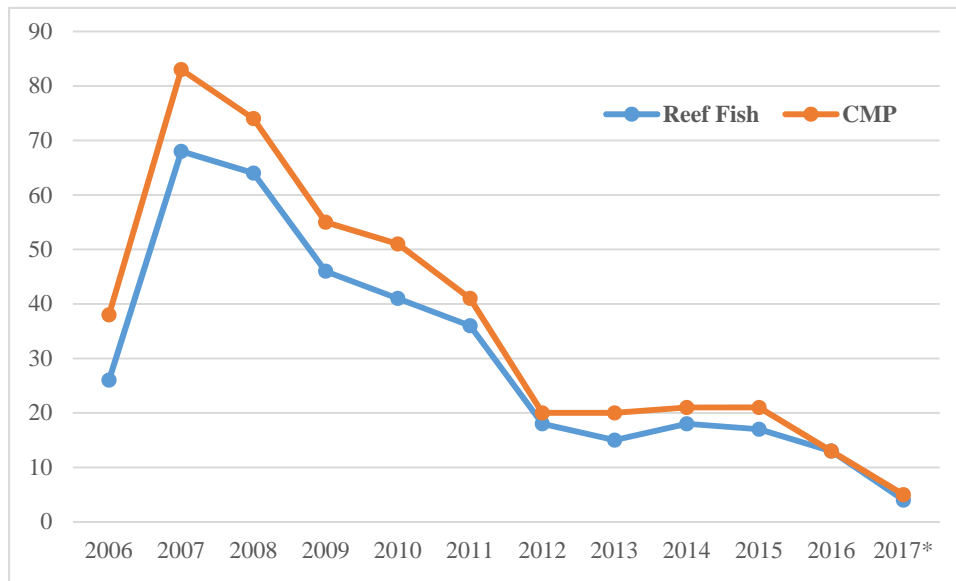


**Figure 3.1.** Number of valid or renewable federal reef fish permits in the Gulf of Mexico, 2005-2017(as of 5/26/2017). Source: NMFS-SERO



**Figure 3.2.** Number of valid or renewable federal CMP permits in the Gulf of Mexico, 2005-2017 (as of 5/26/2017) Source: NMFS-SERO.





**Figure 3.3.** Number of terminated federal for-hire CMP and reef fish permits in the Gulf of Mexico (2006-2017) (as of 5/26/2017) Source: NMFS-SERO.

The geographical distribution of federal for-hire permits (reef fish and CMP) by hailing port state has not substantially changed since 2004 (Table 3.1). As in 2004, in 2017 most permits continue to be associated with vessels currently hailing from Florida. Florida accounted for 61.4% of federal CMP and reef fish for-hire permits in 2004 and currently accounts for 59.3% and 60.3% of federal CMP and reef fish for-hire permits, respectively. Texas and Alabama continue to account for the second and third largest percentages of permits in the Gulf, respectively. The number of vessels with hailing ports outside of the Gulf has decreased over time from 4.6% in 2004 to 2.4% in 2017 for reef and 1.2% in 2017 for CMP. This may be due in part to a change in how hailing ports were collected by NMFS. In later years, NMFS used the hailing port supplied by the applicant rather than the USCG documentation. Hailing ports outside the Gulf of Mexico include Delaware, Indiana, North and South Carolina.

**Table 3.1.** Distribution of valid or renewable federal for-hire by hailing port state (2004 and 2017\*)

State	For-Hire 2004	CMP 2017*		Reef Fish 2017*	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	8.59%	135	10.20%	138	10.50%
Florida	61.39%	785	59.30%	790	60.30%
Louisiana	7.42%	116	8.80%	116	8.80%
Mississippi	4.36%	33	2.50%	33	2.50%
Texas	13.60%	222	16.80%	218	16.60%
Other	4.65%	32	2.40%	16	1.20%

Source: NMFS-SERO. \*as of 5/26/2017

For both federal for-hire CMP and reef fish, the majority of permitted vessels are six-pack vessels, i.e., with a passenger capacity of six (Table 3.2; based on the lesser capacity between the COI of the vessel and the permit capacity). Vessels without USCG documentation cannot have a vessel passenger capacity greater than six. Six-pack vessels represent 84.6% and 84.4% of the federally permitted for-hire CMP and reef fish-permitted vessels permits, respectively. The remaining passenger capacities are between 7 and 150. While most of the higher passenger capacities belong to headboat vessels, not all of these vessels are considered headboats or participate in the NMFS Southeast Regional Headboat Survey.

**Table 3.2.** Distribution of federal for-hire CMP and reef fish permits by passenger capacity\*.

Passenger Capacity	CMP		Reef Fish	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6	1,118	84.6%	1,106	84.4%
7 to 20	73	5.5%	73	5.6%
21 to 50	83	6.3%	87	6.6%
51 to 100	35	2.6%	32	2.4%
101 to 150	13	1.0%	13	1.0%

(\*: as of 5/26/2017) Source: NMFS-SERO.

#### 4. Permit Transfers

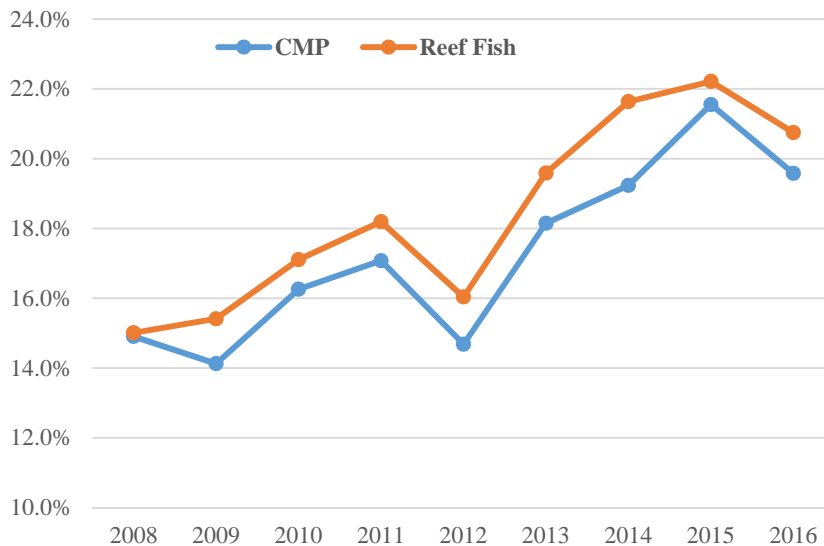
A permit transfer must occur anytime there is a change in the vessel and permit holder relationship. Examples are change in ownership of a vessel, change in permit holders, or change in vessel associated with the permit. Since 2013, there are no vessel size limits/ passenger capacity limits on transfers for the charter/headboat (for-hire) permits. In order to transfer a permit, a permit application must be completed and mailed to NMFS. Permits are processed on a first-come/first-serve basis, and therefore a permit transfer may take multiple weeks before being finalized. Although there are no limits on transfer frequency, it currently takes approximately three weeks to process a transfer after all applicable paperwork has been received by NMFS. Table 4.1 provides the numbers of CMP and reef fish permits and the annual permit transfers between 2008 and 2016.

Between 2008 and 2016, an average of 244 federal CMP for-hire permits were transferred every year. An annual average of 256 federal reef for-hire permits were transferred during the same time interval. In percentage points, about 17.2% of the CMP permits and 18.3% of the reef fish permits were transferred annually. As presented in Table 4.1, comparable annual transfer rates (percentages) were observed for CMP and reef fish for-hire permits between 2008 and 2016. In addition, annual CMP and reef fish permit transfers follow very similar patterns, suggesting that factors driving the transfer of permits may not be specific to a fishery. Figure 4.1 illustrates the annual CMP and reef fish permit transfers between 2008 and 2016.

**Table 4.1.** Number of federal CMP and reef fish permits and transfers (2008-2016)

Year	CMP Permits			Reef Fish permits		
	Total	Transferred	% Transferred	Total	Transferred	% Transferred
2008	1,570	234	14.9%	1,519	228	15.0%
2009	1,515	214	14.1%	1,473	227	15.4%
2010	1,464	238	16.3%	1,432	245	17.1%
2011	1,423	243	17.1%	1,396	254	18.2%
2012	1,403	206	14.7%	1,378	221	16.0%
2013	1,383	251	18.1%	1,363	267	19.6%
2014	1,362	262	19.2%	1,345	291	21.6%
2015	1,341	289	21.6%	1,328	295	22.2%
2016	1,323	259	19.6%	1,311	272	20.7%

Source: NMFS-SERO.



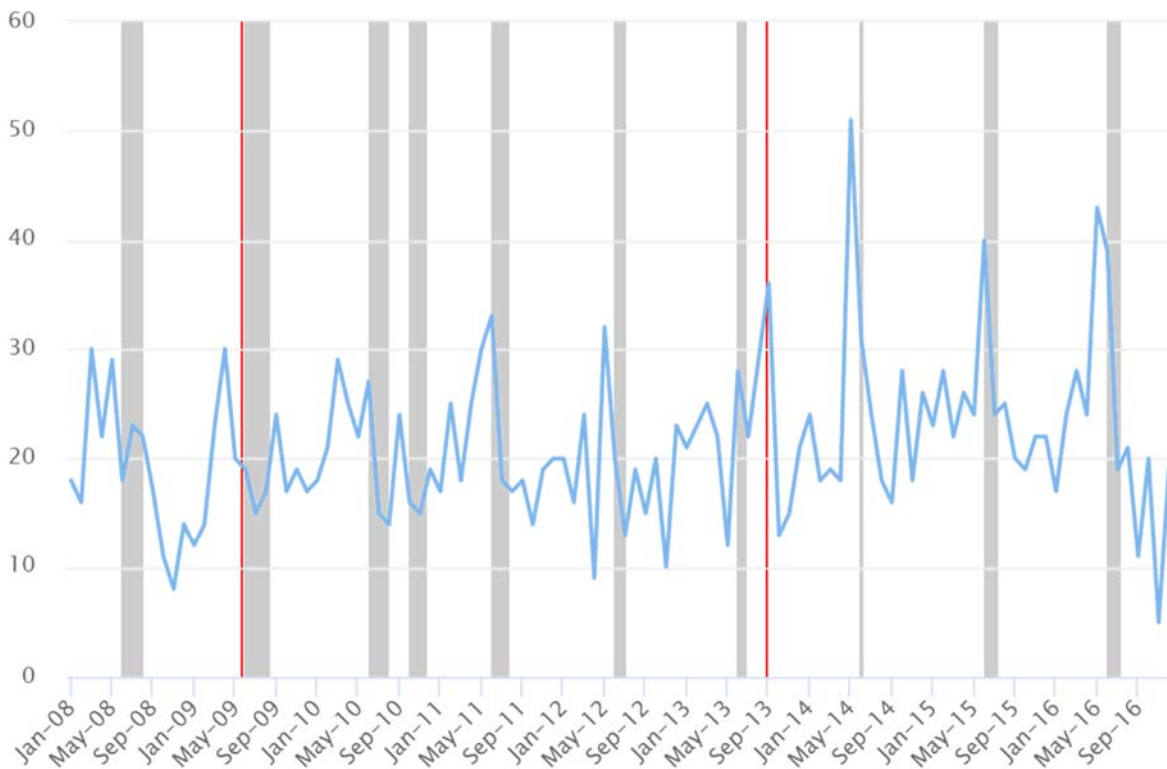
**Fig 4.1.** Annual federal CMP and reef fish for-hire permit transfers (2008-2016)

### *Reef Fish Permit Transfers*

Reef fish permit transfers are further examined in response to a January 2017 Council motion to have staff review federal for-hire permits transferred for the purposes of fishing outside the federal red snapper season. There is concern that changes in regulations may have created a loophole that allows fishermen with for-hire reef fish permits to transfer those permits on and off of various vessels (regardless of vessel size or passenger capacity), to take advantage of both the federal and state red snapper seasons. Each permit relationship contains three main elements: the limited access permit number, the permit holder(s), and the vessel. A change in any of these elements results in a permit transfer. For-hire reef fish permit transfers are evaluated from two alternative perspectives:

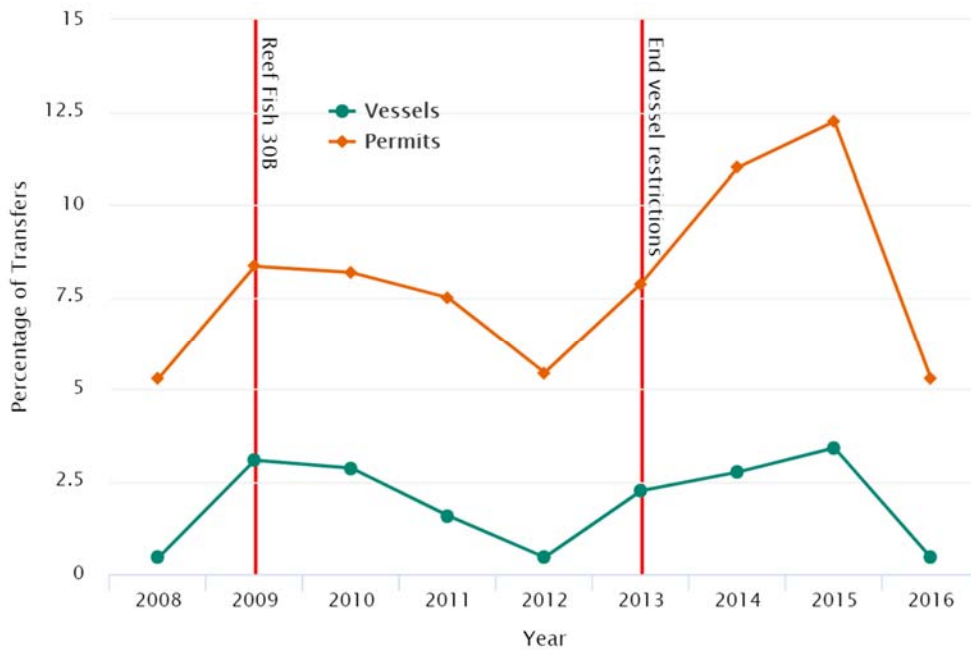
- Transfer counts by permit: the number of times any one permit has been transferred, regardless of the vessel or entity;
- Transfer counts by vessel: the number of times any permit has been transferred on and off of a given vessel, regardless of the permit number or entity doing the transfer.

Examining transfers by month by year (Figure 4.2) suggests that there has been an increase in permit transfers before red snapper season begins (April-May) but the trend has been fairly stable over time. Similar to transfers by year, transfer frequency does not seem to be due to Reef Fish 30B regulations that restrict federally permitted vessels from fishing in state waters when federal waters are closed.



**Figure 4.2.** Number of for-hire reef fish permits transferred by month (2008-2016). Red lines indicate the implementation of Reef Fish Amendment 30B (left) and the final rule eliminating passenger capacity restrictions on permit transfers (right). Gray bands indicate approximate duration of federal red snapper season. Data source: NMFS-SERO

The percentages of vessels and permits with more than one transfer in a given year have remained generally stable over time (Figure 4.3). With the exception of 2016, an increase is noticeable for transfers by permit in years following the repeal of passenger capacity restrictions.



**Figure 4.3.** Percentage of vessels and permits with more than one permit transfer in a given year. Red lines indicate the implementation of Reef Fish Amendment 30B and the abbreviated framework action eliminating passenger capacity restrictions on permit transfers. Data source: NMFS-SERO.

*Reef Fish Permit Transfers by Permit*

From 2008 to 2016, there were 982 unique permit numbers that were transferred at least once across all these years. Of those, 82% were transferred less than four times (Table 4.2). Outliers in the data set include one permit transferred 10 times, one transferred 16 times, and one transferred 17 times.

**Table 4.2.** Number and percent frequency of permit transfers from 2008-2016

Number of Transfers	Percent	
	Transfer Frequency	Cumulative
1	36%	36%
2	28%	64%
3	18%	82%
4	10%	92%
5	5%	97%
6+	3%	100%

Data source: SERO-NMFS

*Reef Fish Permit Transfers by Vessel*

From 2008 to 2016, 96% (1,790 of 1,863) of permits have been transferred less than three times by vessel across all years (Table 4.3). There was a single vessel with nine permit transfers, this was the greatest number of times a permit was transferred by vessel across the time series of data.

**Table 4.3.** Number and percent frequency of permit transfers by vessel from 2008-2016.

Number of Transfers	Percent	
	Transfer Frequency	Cumulative
1	83%	83%
2	13%	96%
3	3%	99%
4+	1%	100%

Data source: SERO-NMFS

## 5. Change in the biological status of the stocks

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires that NMFS report annually to Congress and the Councils on the status of fisheries. The information in those reports is generated by the NMFS Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center based on the most recent stock assessments. Status determinations are generally made during a formal review of a scientific stock assessment using the best available scientific information and status determination criteria specified in a fishery management plan. Stocks discussed in those reports are characterized under two categories: subject to overfishing and overfished. A stock that is subject to overfishing has a fishing mortality (harvest) rate that is too high. A stock that is overfished has a population abundance that is lower than the threshold specified in its fishery management plan.

NMFS measures the performance of federal fisheries through the Fish Stock Sustainability Index (FSSI). First implemented in 2005, the FSSI is a quarterly index that measures the performance of fish stocks and is included here to help in the review of the change of reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic stock status changes.

### *Reef Fish Species*

In 2006 the Council reviewed stock statuses, and at that time the Reef Fish FMP included 42 species.<sup>4</sup> Of those, 10 species had stock assessments performed by either NMFS (red grouper, gag, goliath grouper, yellowedge grouper, red snapper, vermilion snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish) or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (yellowtail snapper and hogfish). Of the 10 reef fish species for which stock assessments had been completed and reviewed, four were classified as overfished (red snapper, greater amberjack, vermilion snapper, and goliath grouper) and three were classified as undergoing overfishing (red snapper, red grouper, and vermilion snapper) (GMFMC 2005) (Table 5.1). As of the first quarter of 2017, no reef fish species are classified as experiencing overfishing and only three species have been assessed as overfished (gray triggerfish, greater amberjack, and red snapper) (NMFS 2017).

**Table 5.1.** Summary of stock status for FSSI stocks first quarter 2006 and first quarter 2017. A hyphen indicates that either an assessment didn't exist for that species, or in the case of fish complexes, species were originally individually assessed in 2006, but currently a single assessment may cover the entire complex (NMFS 2006, NMFS 2017).

Reef Fish	2006		2017	
	Overfishing	Overfished	Overfishing	Overfished
anchor tilefish	-	Unknown	removed	removed
blackline tilefish	-	Unknown	removed	removed
cubera snapper	-	Unknown	No	Unknown
dog snapper	-	Unknown	removed	removed

<sup>4</sup> The Reef Fish FMP currently encompasses 31 species. Eleven species were removed from the original FMP in 2012 through the Generic ACL/AM Amendment (GMFMC 2011a).

dwarf sand perch	-	Unknown	removed	removed
gag grouper	No	Undefined	No	No
Goliath grouper	Unknown	Undefined	No	Unknown
gray snapper	-	Unknown	No	Unknown
gray triggerfish	Unknown	Undefined	No	Yes
greater amberjack	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
hogfish	Unknown	Undefined	No	No
lane snapper	-	Unknown	No	Unknown
mahogany snapper	-	Unknown	removed	removed
misty grouper	-	Unknown	removed	removed
mutton snapper	-	Unknown	No	No
Nassau grouper	No	Undefined	removed	removed
red drum	No	Undefined	No	Unknown
red grouper	Yes	No-rebuilding	No	No
red hind	-	Unknown	removed	removed
red snapper	Yes	Yes	No	yes
rock hind	-	Unknown	removed	removed
sand perch	-	Unknown	removed	removed
schoolmaster	-	Unknown	removed	removed
tilefish	-	Unknown	No	No
vermilion snapper	Yes	Yes	No	No
yellowtail snapper	No	No	No	No
<b>Deep Water Grouper Complex</b>	-	-	No	Unknown
Warsaw grouper	-	Unknown	-	-
speckled hind	-	Unknown	-	-
snowy grouper	Unknown	Undefined	-	-
yellowedge grouper	Unknown	Undefined	No	No
<b>Mid-Water Snapper Complex</b>	-	-	No	Unknown
silk snapper	-	Unknown	-	-
wenchman	-	Unknown	-	-
queen snapper	-	Unknown	-	-
blackfin snapper	-	Unknown	-	-
<b>Shallow Water Grouper Complex</b>	-	-	Unknown	Unknown
black grouper	Unknown	Undefined	No	No
scamp	-	Unknown	-	-
yellowmouth grouper	-	Unknown	-	-
yellowfin grouper	-	Unknown	-	-
<b>Jacks Complex</b>	-	-	No	Unknown
almaco jack	-	Unknown	-	-



banded rudderfish	-	Unknown	-	-
lesser amberjack	-	Unknown	-	-
<b>Tilefishes Complex</b>	-	-	No	Unknown
tilefish (golden)	-	-	-	-
goldface tilefish	-	Unknown	-	-
blueline tilefish	-	Unknown	-	-

### *CMP Species*

In 2006 the Council reviewed stock statuses, and at that time the CMP FMP applied to seven species.<sup>5</sup> Of those, five had stock assessments or preliminary information available to reasonably determine the status of the stock (cobia, dolphin, king mackerel, little tunny, and Spanish mackerel). Of those, only one, king mackerel, was in a rebuilding plan (Table 5.2) (GMFMC 2005). As of the first quarter of 2017, no CMP species are classified as experiencing overfishing or are overfished (NOAA NMFS 2017).

**Table 5.2.** Summary of stock status for FSSI stocks first quarter 2006 and first quarter 2017. A hyphen indicates that an assessment didn't exist for that species (NMFS 2006, NMFS 2017).

Coastal Migratory Pelagic	2006		2017	
	Overfishing	Overfished	Overfishing	Overfished
bluefish	-	Unknown	removed	removed
cero mackerel	-	Unknown	removed	removed
cobia	No	No	No	No
dolphin	No	No	removed	removed
king mackerel - Gulf Group	No	No-rebuilding	No	No
little tunny	no	Undefined	removed	removed
Spanish mackerel - Gulf Group	No	No	No	No

## 6. For-hire fishing effort and landings

### *For-hire effort*

Table 6.1 provides total annual angler days for headboats from 2006-2016. Approximately 70 vessels are considered headboats and report to the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey. Headboat data are not collected at the angler level. Estimates of effort in the headboat sector are provided in terms of angler days, or the number of standardized 12-hour fishing days that account for the different half-, three-quarter-, and full-day fishing trips by headboats. Over the past 11 years, only 3 years have seen a decrease in angler days; and the large decrease in 2010 can be attributed to the *Deepwater Horizon* MC252 oil spill which impacted at least one-third of

<sup>5</sup> The CMP FMP currently encompasses three species in the Gulf. Four species were removed through Amendment 18 to the CMP FMP (GMFMC and SAFMC 2011b).

the Gulf area from western Louisiana east to the Florida Panhandle and south to the Campeche Bank in Mexico. Since 2011 the headboat sector has seen a steady increase in angler days.

**Table 6.1.** Estimated annual number of headboat angler days from 2006-2016.

Year	Headboat Estimated Angler Days	Change in number of days compared to 2006
2006	199,843	-----
2007	203,166	3,323
2008	174,309	-25,534
2009	196,443	-3,400
2010	158,887	-40,956
2011	207,966	8,123
2012	217,431	17,588
2013	233,886	34,043
2014	245,853	46,010
2015	253,105	53,262
2016	257,016	57,173

Source: SEFSC Headboat survey.

Table 6.2 provides total annual angler trips for the charter vessels from 2006-2016. This is the number of individual angler trips, regardless of trip duration. While it has varied greatly over the years, of the 11 years, 5 years had less angler trips compared to 2006, and 5 years had an increase in angler trips. However, the large decreases seen in 2010 can be attributed to the *Deepwater Horizon* MC252 oil spill.

**Table 6.2.** Estimated annual number of charter boat angler trips from 2006-2016.

Year	Charter Boat Angler Trips	Change in number of trips compared to 2006
2006	836,049	-----
2007	851,757	15,708
2008	819,045	-17,004
2009	822,266	-13,783
2010	580,190	-255,859
2011	734,606	-101,443
2012	883,919	47,870
2013	906,928	70,879
2014	796,718	-39,331
2015	926,105	90,056
2016	935,429	99,380

Source: MRIP database, SERO, NMFS accessed July 10, 2017.  
Does not include data from Texas, or from Louisiana after 2013.

### *For-hire landings*

Annual landings, in pounds whole weight (ww) or gutted weight (gw), of the main reef fish and CMP species are provided in Table 6.3. Headboat landings, other than red snapper, have remained relatively consistent from 2006-2016, whereas charter vessel landings varied more widely over the past 11 years. Table 6.4 provides the total annual catch for the entire for-hire component (headboat and charter vessel) as well as for the entire recreational sector (for-hire, private, and shore). The percent landings of the for-hire component of the recreational sector are also provided.

**Table 6.3.** Charter vessels and headboat annual landings for select species in the Gulf of Mexico (2006-2016); landings in pounds whole weight (ww) or gutted weight (gw).

Species	Sector	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Red Snapper (ww)</b>	Charter	1,639,754	1,742,594	1,224,240	1,330,178	453,008	991,418	1,281,662	1,273,819	351,990	1,615,253	1,417,668
	Headboat	576,238	487,004	407,952	805,893	429,527	630,563	724,077	445,276	382,290	580,226	489,714
<b>Gray Triggerfish (ww)</b>	Charter	164,034	147,138	178,832	85,770	86,149	190,138	56,101	90,606	36,049	5,234	175,885
	Headboat	58,178	62,685	48,584	34,615	25,756	50,449	18,706	27,119	8,693	4,112	29,643
<b>Gag Grouper (gw)</b>	Charter	667,013	358,266	757,296	369,869	427,430	99,029	384,912	165,197	92,702	141,960	120,477
	Headboat	47,862	72,155	72,718	65,378	70,718	48,834	44,249	34,117	40,728	35,546	18,130
<b>Red Grouper (gw)</b>	Charter	273,767	161,280	292,064	194,796	290,772	234,257	511,193	797,330	505,484	882,219	328,938
	Headboat	25,479	24,674	37,604	29,583	26,064	36,697	83,324	77,542	45,107	50,621	50,914
<b>Greater Amberjack (ww)</b>	Charter	1,030,943	516,253	478,614	653,160	460,740	583,813	546,086	605,860	316,519	759,017	490,915
	Headboat	79,892	59,436	54,544	103,191	53,203	62,835	99,680	73,246	46,435	58,513	20,063
<b>King Mackerel (ww)</b>	Charter	1,081,511	894,806	668,059	1,180,274	500,884	588,857	1,003,522	857,612	1,065,160	1,081,511	1,130,254
	Headboat	214,118	209,194	103,933	228,285	166,375	171,183	173,283	116,937	134,342	92,992	109,231
<b>Spanish Mackerel (ww)</b>	Charter	256,686	299,618	307,200	218,111	269,967	392,855	454,545	122,651	155,227	347,899	362,539
	Headboat	953	1,817	1,596	1,298	1,642	10,046	21,361	4,223	3,693	5,215	4,871

Source: MRFSS and MRIP database, SERO, NMFS accessed July 10, 2017

**Table 6.4.** For-hire and total recreational annual landings for select species in the Gulf of Mexico (2006 – 2016); landings in pounds whole weight (ww) or gutted weight (gw).

Species	Sector	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Red Snapper (ww)</b>	Total For-Hire	2,215,992	2,229,598	1,632,192	2,136,071	882,535	1,621,981	2,005,739	1,719,095	734,280	2,195,479	1,907,382
	Total Recreational	4,068,381	4,793,413	3,637,730	4,793,328	2,290,766	4,326,030	5,175,986	9,702,901	3,835,437	5,666,439	6,240,132
	% For-Hire	54%	47%	45%	45%	39%	37%	39%	18%	19%	39%	31%
<b>Gray Triggerfish (ww)</b>	Total For-Hire	222,212	209,823	227,416	120,385	111,905	240,587	74,807	117,725	44,742	9,346	205,528
	Total Recreational	451,936	427,824	419,276	401,026	296,358	461,548	279,874	456,642	213,248	93,867	425,002
	% For-Hire	49%	49%	54%	30%	38%	52%	27%	26%	21%	10%	48%
<b>Gag Grouper (gw)</b>	Total For-Hire	714,875	430,421	830,014	435,247	498,148	147,863	429,161	199,314	133,430	177,506	138,607
	Total Recreational	2,548,785	2,222,968	3,227,473	1,499,894	1,689,874	756,708	1,024,231	1,527,125	905,787	826,069	523,836
	% For-Hire	28%	19%	26%	29%	29%	20%	42%	13%	15%	21%	26%
<b>Red Grouper (gw)</b>	Total For-Hire	299,246	185,954	329,668	224,379	316,836	270,954	594,517	874,872	550,591	932,840	379,852
	Total Recreational	1,151,934	1,036,830	862,303	828,737	793,096	601,651	1,612,444	2,569,518	1,662,601	1,924,626	1,243,468
	% For-Hire	26%	18%	38%	27%	40%	45%	37%	34%	33%	48%	31%
<b>Greater Amberjack (ww)</b>	Total For-Hire	1,110,835	575,689	533,158	756,351	513,943	646,648	645,766	679,106	362,954	817,530	510,978
	Total Recreational	1,700,186	867,485	1,318,662	1,480,315	1,225,224	949,999	1,238,719	1,620,761	1,034,006	1,409,241	1,745,961
	% For-Hire	65%	66%	40%	51%	42%	68%	52%	42%	35%	58%	29%
<b>King Mackerel (ww)</b>	Total For-Hire	1,295,629	1,104,000	771,992	1,408,559	667,259	760,040	1,176,805	974,549	1,199,502	1,174,503	1,239,485
	Total Recreational	3,924,619	2,927,462	2,076,571	3,635,248	2,216,527	2,295,641	3,398,098	3,026,102	3,458,019	3,411,423	2,810,621
	% For-Hire	33%	38%	37%	39%	30%	33%	35%	32%	35%	34%	44%
<b>Spanish Mackerel (ww)</b>	Total For-Hire	257,639	301,435	308,796	219,409	271,609	402,901	475,906	126,874	158,920	353,114	367,410
	Total Recreational	2,679,720	2,560,672	2,795,765	1,975,529	2,635,993	2,399,251	3,645,736	5,191,264	2,218,081	2,444,509	2,658,313
	% For-Hire	10%	12%	11%	11%	10%	17%	13%	2%	7%	14%	14%

Source: MRFSS and MRIP database, SERO, NMFS accessed July 10, 2017

## 7. Conclusions

Based on the changes in the number, distribution, and transfers of federal reef fish and CMP for-hire permits and on for-hire effort and landings, the limited access program appears to have met its objectives. Following very similar patterns, the numbers of active or renewable CMP and reef fish permits declined gradually between 2006 and 2017. The distributions of CMP and reef fish permits by hailing port and passenger capacity have been relatively stable since the establishment of the moratorium, suggesting that the moratorium has contributed to social and economic stability. The active permit transfer markets indicate that the moratorium has also provided enough room for change and accommodated permit transferability.

Between 2008 and 2016, comparable annual transfer rates were observed for CMP and reef fish for-hire permits. Furthermore, annual CMP and reef fish permit transfers follow very similar patterns, suggesting that factors driving the transfer of permits may not be specific to a fishery. Although the current regulatory framework in the Gulf may provide incentives to transfer federal for-hire reef fish permits on and off vessels to participate in state as well as federal red snapper seasons, in-depth analyses of reef fish permit transfers included in this review do not indicate the prevalence of such a behavior. As a result, this review suggests that regulatory actions to curtail for-hire permit transfers are not warranted at this time.

Because the reef fish and CMP fisheries are mixed-use fisheries with commercial and recreational components, the improvements recorded in the biological status of certain stocks cannot be exclusively attributed to the moratorium. However, the limited and gradual growth in effort as well as the relatively stable (and in most cases declining) proportion of the recreational allowable catch harvested by anglers fishing from for-hire vessels suggest that the moratorium has had a positive impact on the status of several stocks.

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