

Gulf Hogfish (*Lachnolaimus maximus*)

Description:

Hogfish, or sometimes “hog snapper,” are actually a member of the wrasse family (Labridae). They boast bright orange, yellow, and blueish-purple colorations. Hogfish get their name from their elongated snout, which they use to root for crustaceans buried in the sediment. Their tail is moon-shaped. Males have a characteristic black spot behind their pectoral fins. Three stocks of hogfish are found in the southeastern US: the Gulf of Mexico stock, the Florida Keys/East Florida stock, and the Georgia to North Carolina stock. The Gulf stock occupies the west Florida continental shelf south to about Cape Sable.



Gulf Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 37 2014)

Natural mortality rate (M): 0.179/year (based on assumed max age of 25 years)
 50% are sexually mature: Females: ~172 mm (6.8 in) fork length (FL); 1.25 years
Males: ~426 mm (16.8 in) FL; 6.5 years
 Maximum observed age: 23 years
 Maximum weight: ~11 kg (24.3 lbs) whole weight
 Maximum length: ~91 cm (35.8 in) FL
 Discard mortality: 10% hook-and-line; 100% spear

Life History and Distribution: (SEDAR 37 2014)

Hogfish occur in tropical, subtropical and warm temperate waters from Brazil north to Bermuda, and throughout the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. Hogfish are protogynous hermaphrodites, beginning life as females and begin changing sex to male at ~14 inches FL. All fish older than 10 years are thought to be male and sex changes are socially mediated. After a planktonic larval phase (~35 days), juveniles settle nearshore in estuaries, seagrass beds or shallow reefs, and gradually move offshore with growth. Adults are often reef-associated.

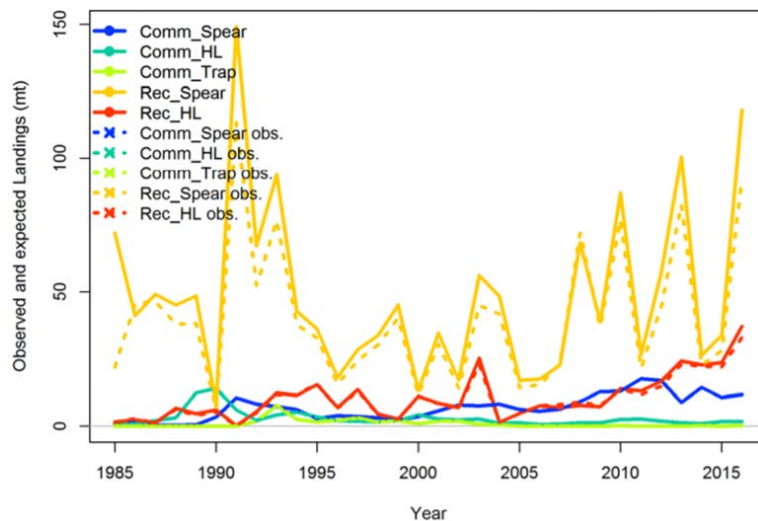


Figure: Observed and predicted landings of Gulf hogfish by fleet and gear.

Current Gulf Council Regulations:

Five per person, within the 20 fish per person reef fish aggregate bag limit. The minimum size limit is 14 inches FL. Size-limit hogfish weigh about 1 kg (~2.2 lbs), and are about four years old. The fishing season is year-round, and there are no sector allocations for Gulf hogfish. Hogfish are primarily harvested by spear.