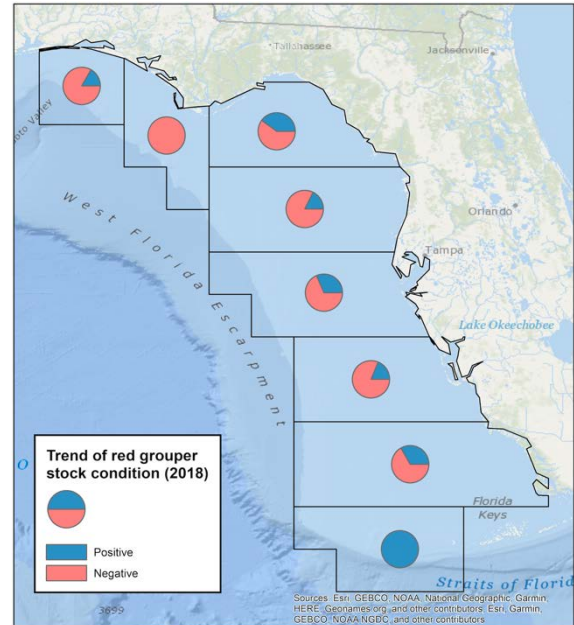


Greetings,

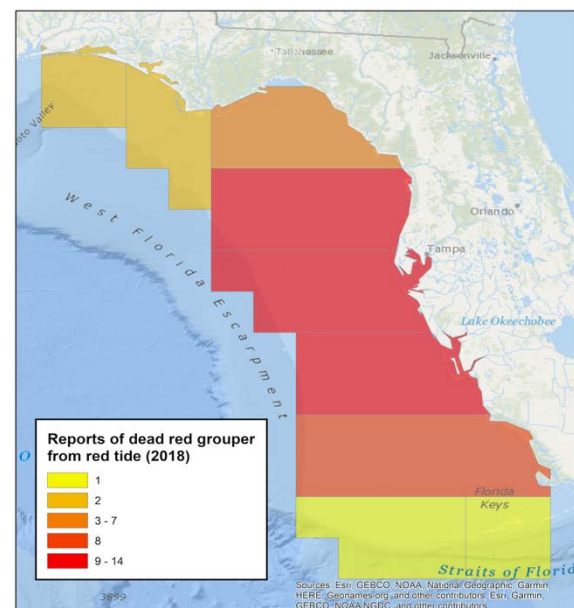
Last year, you submitted a response to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's "Something's Fishy with Red Grouper" tool. Thanks again for taking the time and making the effort to share your expertise! The tool was designed to gather information from anglers and divers about trends or strange things that scientists and managers may need to know about red grouper as they assessed the health of the stock. The red grouper stock assessment has been completed and the information you provided was very useful.

Ninety-seven responses were gathered and presented at the data workshop of the red grouper stock assessment and to the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. A majority of responses came from private anglers targeting red grouper from central Florida, who indicated a negative trend in abundance. Specifically, the comments indicated that there are fewer keeper-sized red grouper and they are found deeper than they have been historically. Some anglers speculated that they've been displaced by red snapper, or may have shifted locations due to major storms. It was also noted that the population may have never recovered following the 2014 red tide event. It was also said that there are more, small red grouper than there have been in recent years.



Each assessment includes yield projections for future years which serve to guide catch levels. The last year of data included in the assessment was 2017, and the major red tide event in 2018 was estimated to be as bad as the red tide event in 2005. You may remember that the 'Something's Fishy' tool specifically asked how many dead red grouper you encountered during the red tide event of 2018. The information you provided on the intensity and spatial extent of that red tide was especially helpful. Assessment scientists relied on the data you provided to understand how much that red tide impacted the red grouper stock.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has initiated work on an amendment to modify catch levels based on the projections in the assessment. Again, the information you provided was incredibly helpful and we're thankful for your contribution to our understanding of the stock.



We hope you'll consider participating in future "Something's Fishy" efforts. Having your on-the-water perspective is incredibly valuable because it grounds the science and enhances our ability to make accurate management recommendations. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or feedback.