



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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For Immediate Release

August 2, 2010

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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council seeks public input on a possible recreational red snapper season reopening

This spring, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council increased the overall red snapper quota from 5.0 million pounds to 6.945 million pounds, yet the 2010 recreational red snapper season was open for only 53 days. This shortened season was due, in part, to an increase in catch rates and the average size of red snapper. This increase, coupled with past effort, led to projections that the quota would be filled sooner than in 2009. But the BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and subsequent [federal fishing area closure](#) may have resulted in reduced effort, possibly leaving the recreational red snapper quota unfilled.

While the federal fishery closure owing to the BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill remains in effect for some portions of the Gulf, NOAA Fisheries Service is following [established protocols](#) in efforts to open closed areas as quickly as possible. Sampling to detect contaminated fish in nearshore areas along the Florida panhandle is complete, and sampling along western Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama coasts is underway. These areas will be reopened if they remain oil free, and if sensory and chemical tests of samples taken from the areas show no oil contamination. Sampling will continue throughout the closed area.

In light of this information, the Gulf Council requested that NOAA Fisheries Service institute rulemaking to reopen the recreational red snapper season later this year – after September 30 – if it is determined that the 2010 quota was not filled before the fishery closed on July 24. NOAA Fisheries Service is in the process of calculating the landings data to make that determination. If the recreational quota was not filled, the season may reopen for a period of time to allow the harvest of the remaining red snapper quota.

During the Council's August 16- 20 meeting in Pensacola, Florida, NOAA Fisheries Service will provide the Gulf Council with updated information on areas cleared for reopening, along with the amount of remaining recreational red snapper quota, and the projected length of any supplemental season. The length of the supplemental season would depend on the amount of quota remaining, the time of year the season reopens, and the amount of federal waters that are open at that time. In anticipation of a possible reopening, the Gulf Council is seeking input from the public on when - between September 30 and December 31 - the season should reopen.

Comments will be accepted by e-mail to: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org, Please include "RED SNAPPER SEASON" in the subject line. Comments will also be accepted by U.S. mail to: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607. Finally, comments may be submitted during the public testimony portion of the August meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in Pensacola, Florida. The [agenda](#) for that meeting is available at www.gulfcouncil.org.

For information on the BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill federal fishing area closure visit http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/deepwater_horizon_oil_spill.htm. A summary of the protocol for reopening the closed area can be downloaded from <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ucm217598.htm>.

[Frequently Asked Questions about the 2010 Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Season](http://www.gulfcouncil.org/education_faqs/index.php) can be downloaded from http://www.gulfcouncil.org/education_faqs/index.php.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans designed to manage fishery resources in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

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This is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Award No. NA10NMF4410011.

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