



Reef Fish Amendment 40 Sector Separation Guide

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Photos courtesy of: Mike Jennings, James Whitaker, and Jeff Berman.

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Scope of Actions	4
1. Definition of a for-hire component	
2. Allocation between recreational components	
3. Voluntary Participation in the Federal For-hire Component	
4. Red Snapper Recreational Quota Closures	

How do your comments affect fishery management?

Your comments are reported to the Council and NOAA Fisheries Service, and will be considered as the amendment goes through the development process. Once a public hearing draft and draft environmental impact statement are developed, you will have another opportunity to comment on the management alternatives under consideration. Your input will be considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures.

Introduction

The recreational sector in the Gulf of Mexico is made up of a private recreational component and a for-hire component. The for-hire component includes headboats and charter vessels.

Reef Fish Amendment 40 will consider the partition of the recreational sector into two or three distinct components. A two-way partition would result in a private recreational component and a for-hire component. A three-way split would further divide the for hire component into separate charterboat and headboat components. Red snapper resources would then be allocated between these components. The intended result is to:

- increase the stability of the for-hire component
- provide a basis for increased flexibility in future management of the recreational sector
- minimize the chance for any recreational quota overruns which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock

Current recreational management measures such as season length, daily bag limits and size limits are typically applied to the recreational sector as a whole, without making a distinction between the private recreational and for-hire components.

The for-hire component includes both vessels with federal reef fish permits that fish in federal waters and those that do not have federal reef fish permits and fish in state waters. A moratorium on the issuance of new federal reef fish for-hire permits has been in place since 2004, therefore, no new federal reef fish for-hire permits are available.

As a result, access is limited to the number of recreational anglers that can fit on the permitted vessels. On the other hand, there is no limit to the number of private recreational vessels that can fish for reef fish. There is also no limit to the number of state-permitted for-hire vessels. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of federal for-hire vessels and an increase in the number of private recreational vessels. In other words, private vessel landings represent a greater proportion of the recreational quota as a whole.

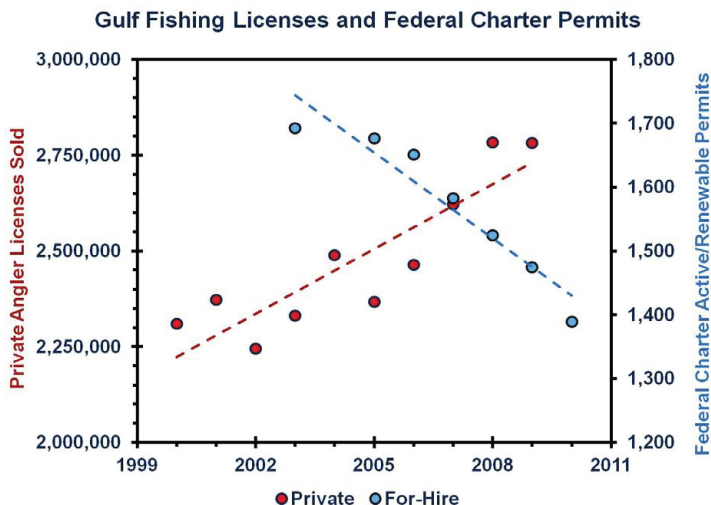


Figure 1. Relationship between the number of state saltwater licenses and federal charter for hire permits for all Gulf of Mexico states.

Annual recreational red snapper quotas and landings in the Gulf of Mexico between 1991 and 2011 are shown in Figure 2. A comparison of the recreational landings to annual quotas indicates that, in the last 20 years, the quota has been exceeded more than ten times.

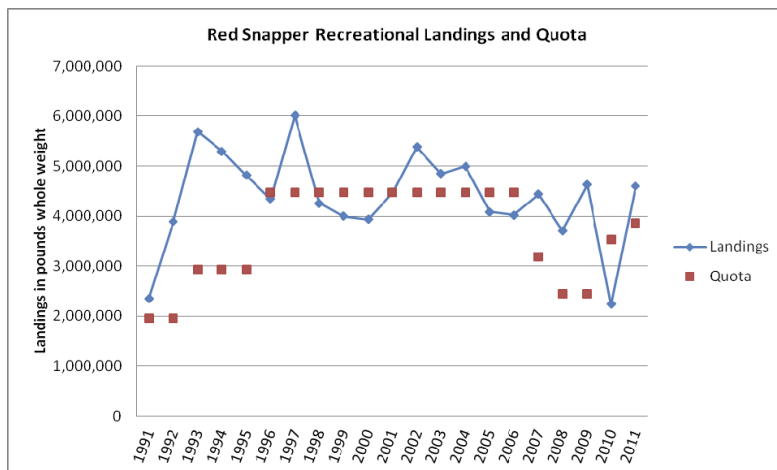


Figure 2. Differences between annual red snapper landings and quotas by sector, 1990 through 2012. Positive values indicate landings are greater than the quota; negative values indicate landings are less than the quota.

Scope of Actions

The Council is looking at four actions in Reef Fish Amendment 40. While only four actions have been identified to date, additional actions may be added during the amendment process.

Action 1. Define the different components of the recreational sector

Should the recreational component of the red snapper fishery be further divided into two components:

1. a federally permitted for-hire component that includes for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish for-hire permit
2. a private angling component that includes all other for-hire operators and private recreational anglers

Or, should the recreational component of the red snapper fishery be further divided into two components:

1. a for-hire component that includes all for-hire operators in the Gulf
2. a private angling component that includes only private recreational anglers

Action 2. Allocation between the components of the recreational sector

How much of the recreational quota should be allocated to each component?

Should allocation be based on average landings during some specified time frame?

What time frames should be considered?

Should there be just one overall recreational accountability measure?

Should there be separate accountability measures for each defined component?

Action 3. Voluntary Participation in the Federal For-hire Component

Should all for-hire operators with federal reef fish permits be included in the for-hire component?

Should federally permitted for-hire operators be allowed to opt-out of the new federal for-hire component and remain in the private angling component?

Action 4. Red Snapper Recreational Quota Closures

Should separate accountability measures be established for each defined component, or should there be just one overall recreational accountability measure?

[Other Issues](#)

Should additional reporting requirements be considered?

To comment, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ndzbvny>, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page at www.gulfcouncil.org.





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