



# Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

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

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## Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council April 2013 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Gulfport, Mississippi, April 15 - 18, 2013, to discuss a number of fishery issues, including several related to the management of red snapper. Here are some of the actions taken by the Council last week.

### **Regional Management of Red Snapper**

The Council continued its discussions regarding Reef Fish Amendment 39 - Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper and selected preferred alternatives. The revised document, including preferred alternatives, will be presented to the public for review and comment before the Council takes final action.

The Council selected the following alternatives as preferred:

#### **Action 1 - Regional Management**

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Establish a regional management program that delegates authority to a state or states to set management measures for the harvest of an assigned portion of the recreational red snapper quota.

#### **Action 2 - Establish regions for regional management**

**Preferred Alternative 5:** Establish five regions representing each Gulf state.

#### **Action 3 - Apportioning the recreational red snapper quota among regions**

**Preferred Alternative 5:** To allocate the following percentages to the various states: Florida 38%, Alabama 30%, Mississippi 3%, Louisiana 14%, Texas 15%.

#### **Action 4 - Regional Management Guidelines**

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Allow individual regions to set recreational red snapper season start and end dates and season structure in the Gulf.

**Preferred Alternative 3:** Allow individual regions to set recreational bag limits from 0 to 4 red snapper per angler per day in the Gulf.

**Preferred Alternative 4:** Allow individual regions to establish recreational red snapper minimum size limits from 14 inches to 18 inches TL in the Gulf.

**Preferred Alternative 6:** Allow individual regions to establish closed areas within the EEZ adjacent to their region that applies only to vessels registered within their region.

### Action 5 - For-hire vessel federal permit restrictions

**Preferred Alternative 2:** Exclude requirement for vessels with federal charter/headboat permits to comply with more restrictive red snapper regulations when fishing in state waters.

### Action 6 - Post-Season Accountability Measures Adjusting for Regional Overages

**Preferred Alternative 3:** If a region exceeds the apportioned regional quota, then NMFS will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to reduce the regional quota in the following year by the amount of the regional quota overage in the prior fishing year. If the total landings from all regions do not exceed the Gulf-wide recreational quota in that year, the region's quota would not need to be reduced to account for the region's overage.

### Action 7 - In-Season Accountability Measures Establishing Regional Closures in the EEZ

Move the entire action to considered but rejected.

Regional management considers dividing the federal red snapper quota among states or regions potentially giving them authority to set their own management measures, including bag limits and seasons. States/regions would have more flexibility in choosing season and bag limits, but this would not necessarily result in more fishing days.

Under a regional management system red snapper would remain a federally managed species subject to federal conservation goals, and the Council would continue to oversee management of the stock.

### **Request for Emergency Rules**

Two requests for emergency rules were approved by the Council. The first request was for an emergency rule that would remove the requirement that vessels with a Gulf of Mexico Charter Headboat Reef Fish Permit adhere the stricter of federal or state regulations (Section 2.13, Action 13 of Reef Fish Amendment 30B). This would allow federally permitted charter boats to fish under federal reef fish regulations when fishing in the EEZ, and state reef fish regulations when fishing in state waters.

The second request was for an emergency rule to rescind the recreational closure authority specific to federal waters off individual states for the red snapper component of the reef fish fishery.

### **Days-at-Sea Program**

The Council heard public comment summaries from the eight scoping workshops held around the Gulf of Mexico regarding a potential For-Hire Days-at-Sea Pilot Program. No further action was taken regarding this issue.

### **Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Inter-Sector Trading**

The Council moved forward with plans to develop a scoping document that examines inter-sector trading of red snapper IFQ shares/allocation between fishing sectors.

### **Red Snapper IFQ Program Five-Year Review**

The Council accepted the Red Snapper IFQ Five-Year Review document and will begin discussions regarding Reef Fish Amendment 36 to address potential modifications to the IFQ Program.

### **Data Collection**

In an effort to improve recreational data collections, the Council directed staff to develop a scoping document that looks at enhancements, revisions, and/or new options for estimating or quantifying private recreational landings.

### **Red Drum**

Per Council direction, staff will request NMFS and the five Gulf States develop a research plan for red drum.

The Council also requested:

- The Southeast Fishery Science Center update the red drum sampling protocols found in the 2008 draft document *Recommended Age Composition and Mark-Recapture Study Sample Sizes for Gulf of Mexico Red Drum*
- Work with the five Gulf States to identify relevant data that may be useful for a red drum stock assessment.
- Red drum be included in the 2016 SEDAR schedule

### **Petroleum Platform Removal**

The Council also directed staff to develop a letter to the Secretary of the Interior objecting to the removal of petroleum platforms with the use of explosives. Before sending the letter to the Secretary, a draft will be presented to the Council for review and approval during its June meeting.

### **Shrimp**

The Council agreed to convene its Shrimp Advisory Panel and include staff from the Southeast Fishery Science Center, Dr. Benny Gallaway, and other appropriate NMFS staff to discuss and provide input on shrimp effort data collection.

### **Mackerel**

The Council selected preferred alternatives for Amendments 19 and 20 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plan. Public hearings will be held later this summer. Amendment 19 addresses sale and permit provisions for Gulf of Mexico Spanish and king mackerel. Amendment 20 addresses season length, transit provisions, allocation, and framework procedures for coastal migratory pelagics.

### **About Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.