

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER AD HOC PANEL
WORKSHOP REPORT

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council recreational red snapper special panel together with representatives from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission conducted a workshop on April 21-22, 1999 to explore management options for optimizing the recreational red snapper fishery. As a result of the deliberations conducted at the workshop, the Panel makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations for the 1999 fishing season. The Panel recommends that:

1. The Council request NMFS to implement an emergency rule allowing an additional 30 days of fishing under a 1-fish bag limit, to occur immediately following the projected closure date (yet to be identified),
2. The Council withdraw the request for a 0-fish captain and crew limit, and
3. The Council withdraw the request for a January-February closure (subsequent review by panel participants indicated a possible need for additional discussion on this recommendation).

Recommendations for the 2000 fishing season (and subsequent years until otherwise changed).

The Panel recommends that the Council consider the following two management options:

1. 18 inch minimum size, a 1-fish bag limit in January-April and November-December, and a 4-fish bag limit in May-October, or
2. 17 inch minimum size, closure in November-December, a 1-fish bag limit in January-April and October, and a 4-fish bag limit May-September.

General recommendations for current and future management. The Panel recommends that:

1. The Council begin consideration of limited access for the recreational red snapper fishery, to include both the number of for-hire vessels and the number of anglers allowed to harvest red snapper (subsequent review by a panel participant indicated the potential extension of limited access to all managed species; however, panel discussion focused on the for-hire sector in terms of general limited access and specifically within the context of red snapper or selected species and not necessarily all managed species),
2. The Council request that NMFS analyze the impacts of elimination of the red snapper minimum size limit to determine the impacts on expected harvest, recovery path, SPR, etc., as part of the next stock assessment,
3. The Council consider creating a special red snapper management zone south of Panhandle Florida, at an appropriate location, with more restrictive harvest limits than those in place in more traditionally red snapper dependent areas, and
4. The Council consider an east-west division of the Gulf, at an appropriate location, for red snapper allocation considerations, to result in areal quota allocations with accompanying potentially differential bag, size and closure restrictions (subsequent review by panel participants indicated a possible need for further discussion on this recommendation; however, the current recommendation is only that such division be

considered for future management and no specific division proposals are offered at this time).

Panel Members,

After receipt of comments from three participants and discussion with Andy Kemmerer, I have completed the attached report of Gulf of Mexico red snapper workshop. The suggested revisions have generally been accommodated through parenthetical comment. The report will be provided to the Council and formal presentation will hopefully be provided by a panel member in attendance at the upcoming Council meeting. Additionally, a statement representing the views of the Port Aransas, Texas group was received and will be provided to the Council for inclusion in the briefing book. As before, you will receive either an electronic or FAX version. Thanks again for your efforts. Stephen Holiman

It should be noted that these recommendations represent general findings by the Panel and that consensus was not reached for all issues. Further, while these findings represent the opinions of the Panel, the Panel recognizes that it is probable that other industry participants may not be in full agreement with all recommendations.

RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER POSITION PAPER

The Port Aransas, Texas group, which is made up of individuals and groups from the charter-head boat industry, marinas, merchants and local government have made the following recommendations in regard to the recreational red snapper fishery.

It is deemed necessary for the economic survival of the recreational red snapper fishery in Texas, and for that matter, the entire EEZ, that there be a 12 month year round fishery based on a bag limit of 4 fish and a minimum length of 15 inches. This scenario was chosen with regard to release mortality and spawning size as well as the bare bones minimum needed for the fishers to survive. For this bag and length to come into effect a TAC of 12 million pounds would be required and the commercial catch would need to remain status quo.

We also encourage, for management purposes, that the gulf EEZ. be divided at the Sabine River. This could result in areal quota allocations with potentially different bag, size, and closure restrictions.

This group also feels It is improper to further restrict the recreational catch without addressing problems such as bycatch mortality.

We also ask that a study be initiated to analyze the impacts of a no minimum size bag limit recreational red snapper fishery in regards to harvest, bycatch mortality recovery path and effects on the SPR.

RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER PANEL
PORT ARANSAS, TEXAS
April 30,1999