



LDWF Red Snapper Management Fact Sheet



Purpose: *To provide factual information on management of the Red Snapper to Louisiana's recreational fishing community.*

1. Are data from Red Snapper populations at oil and gas platforms and artificial reefs located off the Louisiana coast included in the stock assessments?
 - Catch data is a critical part of stock assessments and the majority of Red Snapper caught off of Louisiana are from platforms and other artificial structures. Under LA Creel, the recreational catch of snappers is monitored closely and these data are subsequently provided to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for inclusion in the stock assessments.
 - The Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) also performs annual vertical line (commercial bandit reel) surveys at oil and gas platforms, artificial reefs, and natural hard bottom areas in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM), including in Louisiana waters. From 2013 to 2016, 622 vertical line drops have caught almost 3,200 Red Snappers. These data are also supplied to NMFS for use in future stock assessments.
2. As the Red Snapper populations in the GOM increase, why are the private recreational Red Snapper seasons in the EEZ getting shorter?
 - Catch rates have more than doubled since 2007 due to an increase in numbers of both fishermen and fish.
 - The average Red Snapper is more than twice the size it was in 2007, increasing from 3.3 pounds (2007) to 7.25 pounds (2016). Catching larger fish means that the annual quota (measured in pounds) will be met more quickly.
 - To decrease the chance of overfishing, a 20% quota buffer was established by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). This means that the annual recreational catch quota has decreased by 20%.
 - If the annual quota is exceeded, any excess is deducted from the quota for the following fishing season. This is called a "payback provision."
 - The lengths of state seasons for Red Snappers have increased drastically since 2012, so a large fraction of the recreational harvest comes from state waters. NMFS estimates that 81% of the annual recreational harvest in 2017 will occur during state waters seasons, leaving less than 600,000 pounds for the recreational federal waters season.
3. The first Fishery Management Plan (FMP) applied to Red Snapper in the GOM was implemented in 1984; the species is currently managed as a single population (stock) and all regulations are enforced uniformly across the entire United States waters of the GOM.

4. In 1990 FMP Amendment 1 set the Red Snapper recreational/commercial catch allocation at 49%/51% based on 1979-1987 landings data. The Gulf Council changed this allocation to 51.5% recreational and 48.5% commercial for the 2016 season, but that reallocation was overturned recently by the courts. The original 49% recreational and 51% commercial allocation is currently how the Red Snapper harvest is apportioned between sectors.
5. The Red Snapper recreational fishery in the GOM off Louisiana is regulated by the LDWF in state waters (out to 3 marine leagues = 9 nautical miles (nm) = 10.35 miles) and by the Gulf Council and the NMFS in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from 9 to 200 nm.
6. The Gulf Council has 17 voting members; three from each Gulf state, one at-large member (currently held by a Florida resident), and one member from the NMFS. Each variously represents the recreational fishing sector, the commercial fishing sector, a state marine fishery management agency, or the NMFS.
7. The Red Snapper population throughout the GOM currently has too few older (greater than 20 years) individuals; a healthy population requires an appropriate mix of fish of different ages. Red Snappers have a potentially long lifespan (almost 60 years) and older Red Snapper females produce more, better eggs. Continued restrictions on Red Snapper harvests are designed not only to increase Red Snapper abundance, but also to allow more Red Snappers to reach older ages and larger sizes.
8. Overfishing a population of fish means there is too much fishing mortality (excess harvest) and an overfished population has too few individuals (insufficient biomass). Red Snapper in the GOM is currently overfished, but not undergoing overfishing.
9. LDWF, as part of its commitment to best manage our marine resources, tracks the harvest of all marine and estuarine fishes and gathers biological information on the fishes harvested with LA Creel. These catch and biological data are provided to the NMFS to use in GOM-wide harvest estimates and in stock assessments.

For more information on the history and future of Red Snapper fishing, please visit:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/overview/index.html