



Red Snapper Management

Do red snapper stock assessments include data collected on red snapper populations at oil and gas platforms and artificial reefs located off Louisiana? Yes, federal stock assessments include both fisheries dependent (harvest by fishermen) and independent data (biological information gathered by scientists) collected from these structures.

- Through LA Creel, LDWF closely monitors recreational landings of red snapper. The majority of red snapper landed in Louisiana are caught at platforms and other artificial structures. LDWF provides these landings data to NOAA Fisheries. Similarly, a portion of commercial landings come from oil and gas platforms as well as artificial reefs. Commercial landings are monitored through LDWF trip tickets and reporting to NOAA Fisheries. These landings data (fisheries dependent data) are a critical part of their stock assessments.
- LDWF participates in annual Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) surveys. Under this program, researchers across the Gulf sample different types of habitat with four types of fishing gear to capture fish samples at various life stages. Researchers use vertical long lines to sample reef fish like red snapper at oil and gas platforms, artificial reefs, and natural hard bottom areas in the Gulf, including Louisiana waters. From 2013 to 2016, 622 vertical longline drops have caught almost 3,200 red snappers. Population and other biological data collected from these surveys (fisheries independent data) are supplied to NOAA Fisheries to help them estimate populations of red snapper and other reef fish (through stock assessments).

As the red snapper population in the Gulf is growing, why are the private recreational red snapper seasons in federal waters getting shorter? Several factors affect the length of the federal season:

- 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 average size in 2007, increasing from 3.3 pounds (2007) to 7.25 pounds (2016). Catching larger fish means that fishermen will harvest their annual quota (measured in pounds) more quickly.
- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries established a 20% buffer on the recreational quota. This means that the annual recreational catch quota is decreased by 20%. The buffer is in place to decrease the chance of overfishing as it is not possible for NOAA Fisheries to predict what the actual harvest will be in advance of the season, and most other states do not have the ability to track their recreational landings during the season in near real-time like Louisiana can through LA Creel.
- If recreational harvests exceed the annual quota, any excess is deducted from the quota for the following fishing season. This is called a "payback provision."
- State recreational red snapper seasons have gotten much longer since 2012, so a large fraction of the total harvest comes from state waters. When NOAA Fisheries set the 2017 recreational red snapper season, they estimated that 81% of the annual catch target would be caught during state seasons, leaving less than 600,000 pounds for the private recreational federal season.

Licenses and Boat Registration
225-765-2887 or 225-765-2898
www.la.wildlifelicense.com

Recreational Offshore Landing Permits
rolp.wlf.la.gov

Enforcement
225-765-2987

