



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

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Fishery Managers and Fishermen Team Up to Report Red Snapper Catch

New recreational reporting pilot project underway for red snapper mini-season

Weather played a role for 42% of the fishermen that chose not to fish for red snapper during this past weekend's mini-season. That's according to fishermen that reported using the new pilot project MyFishCount.com, a voluntary recreational reporting program being developed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in collaboration with the Snook and Gamefish Foundation and Elemental Methods. The pilot uses an online web portal that allows recreational fishermen to report about their red snapper fishing activities, including the length of the fish kept and of those released, catch location, depth fished, hook type, hooking location, release treatment, and reason for release. Fishermen may also report trips that are scheduled and not taken for various reasons, including weather. This pilot will only be available during the red snapper mini-season. Afterward, the site will be revamped based on suggestions from participating fishermen.

As of Wednesday, a total of 82 fishermen have signed up for the pilot program and 80 trips have been reported. To join, fishermen simply create an account and then log their fishing activities. Input from fishermen that use the MyFishCount.com reporting platform as part of the pilot project will be crucial to how the platform can be improved. The input may also help in the development of future electronic reporting tools and what fishermen want to see in the design and use of these tools. Recreational fishermen, including private anglers, charter fishermen, and headboat fishermen may report. The pilot project will be modified into a mobile app to improve ease of reporting and may be expanded to include other species, with a goal to be available in 2018.

"Fishermen from across the region have shown interest in using new platforms for reporting their catch in an effort to supplement existing recreational data collection programs," explained Dr. Chip Collier, the Council staff member supervising the pilot program. "The limited 2017 season offers an opportunity for us to test the pilot project and allow anglers targeting red snapper to share their experience," said Collier. "The information we've received thus far is preliminary but we are encouraged by the participation in the early stages of the pilot project." Collier noted the numbers of fishermen reporting that they chose not to fish due to the weather during the first weekend of the mini-season. "This kind of information has not been readily available to the Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service."

"We don't know at this time exactly how data from this pilot project may be used," said Dr. Collier. "Right now we are learning from fishermen using the program, and with their help we hope to make this type of reporting platform a potential data stream for future use in fisheries management." Dr. Collier acknowledged the impacts of weather in determining fishing effort. Fishermen are encouraged to create an account on MyFishCount.com, create a trip and then log it as an abandoned trip due to weather when applicable. "Access to fishing days is important data for managers to consider and it strengthens the robustness of the platform," explained Collier.

The red snapper recreational mini-season continues in federal waters in the South Atlantic this coming weekend, November 10th through 12th, with a one fish per person per day bag limit and no minimum size limit. Fishermen can report trips that are scheduled and not taken for various reasons, including weather. While the Council does not have the authority to set or change fishing dates - those decisions are made by NOAA Fisheries and the Secretary of Commerce - information about abandoned trips could be helpful when proposing future management decisions. Information reported at MyFishCount.com will be provided to NOAA Fisheries by Wednesday following the second weekend of the mini-season.

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Fishery Managers and Fishermen Team Up *(continued)*

State marine resource agencies will continue to collect biological samples and other data from fishermen as they return from their fishing trips this coming weekend. “We want to thank our state partners for all of their hard work during the red snapper season and the support of the recreational fishing community thus far,” said Dr. Collier. “We encourage anglers to cooperate with the state agencies this weekend and to also do their part by participating in the MyFishCount.com pilot reporting program and encouraging others to do so.”