

# Gulf Council



History of State Management, Sector Separation, and Lessons  
Learned for Red Snapper

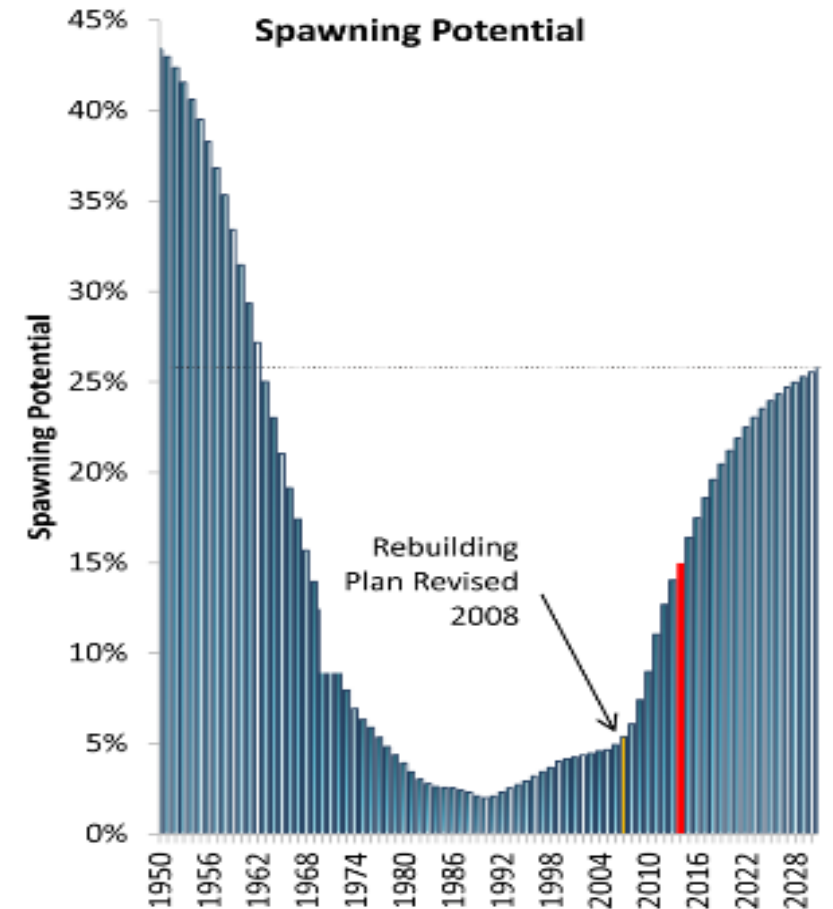
September 16, 2025



# Gulf Red Snapper Management: Fast Facts



- Historically overfished
- Rebuilding plan started 2005; target rebuild by 2032
- Multiple revisions to the rebuilding program since 2005
- Last completed assessment: 2016 (SEDAR 52)
  - SEDAR 74: research track (rejected by CIE)
  - SEDAR 99: benchmark (in progress)
  - Stock status: not overfished but still under rebuilding program

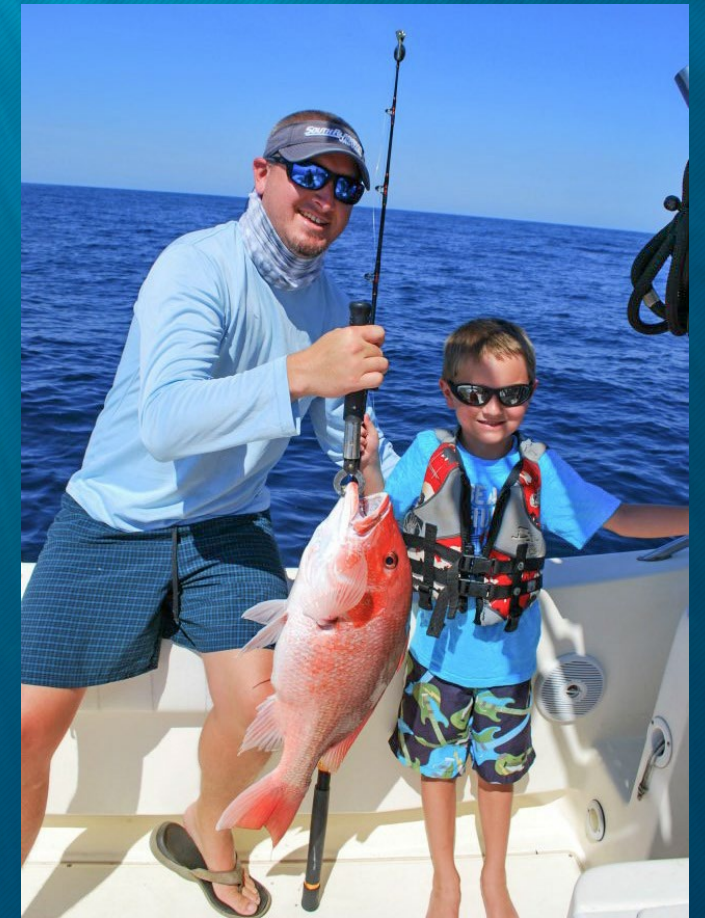




# Gulf Red Snapper Rebuilding Plan



- Rapid increases after implementation of rebuilding plan
  - Stock size
  - Catch rates and access
  - Average size of landed fish
- Private angler recreational seasons and federal water access collapsed (194 to just 3 days in 2017)
- Federal for-hire fleet wanted separation
- More complex management and race to fish





# Explanation of a Good Thing... Gone Bad



- Despite regular increases in the recreational annual catch limit since 2010, federal season length declined annually:
  - Fish landed were larger in size contributing to ACL being caught more quickly
  - Inconsistent (longer) state water seasons forced NMFS to shorten federal season
- Secretary of Commerce intervened in 2017 and added 39 additional days to the private recreational season

Year	Federal season Private anglers	Federal for-hire
2012	46	
2013	42	
2014	9	
2015*	10	44
2016	11	46
2017	3 + 39	49

\* Sector Separation became effective in 2015



# Council initiated Regional Management In 2012



- **August 2012:** Council directed staff to develop a scoping document for a regional management system in the Gulf for recreational red snapper for discussion at the October 2012 meeting. Became Amendment 39.
- **April 2013:** Council wrote letters to each of the 5-Gulf states asking if they were willing to accept delegation and suggested there were specific management measures under consideration
- **April 2014:** Gulf Council developed Regional Management Document, held a series of public hearings after Oct 2014
- **October 2014:** Council took final action on Amendment 40: Sector Separation that apportioned the recreational ACL between the federal for-hire and private angling components of the recreational sector for a period of three years (2015-2017)
- **Jan 2016:** After reviewing Reef Fish Amendment 39 and public hearing summaries, the Council postponed further discussion of the Amendment as other options for recreational red snapper management are explored (Amendments 41 & 42 Red Snapper Management For-hire and Headboats)
- **Dec 2016:** Congress passed a law to move the reef fish boundary to 9 nm for LA, MS, and AL – making them consistent with TX and FL



# State Management of Gulf Red Snapper Today



- **August 2017**: Fishermen from different areas of the Gulf requested more flexibility in recreational red snapper management. Became State Management Amendment 50.
  - Wanted greater socioeconomic benefits to their particular area
- **2018-2019**: EFP Pilot tested state management of private anglers fishing for red snapper
  - Private anglers fished under state season (exempt from federal closures)
  - States allocated portion of ACL and monitored landings
  - Each state used a separate data collection program
- **June 2019**: Final Action on Reef Fish Amendment 50A (Programmatic EIS) and each state (EA Amendment 50B-F). Make sector separation permanent. Final rule effective Feb 2020.





# State Management of Gulf Red Snapper Today



Table of state season lengths 2020-2025

Year	Federal Season	Private Angling Component State Season				
		FL	AL	MS	LA	TX (State/Fed)
2020	***	45	35	45	41	366/64 ^
2021	***	55	124	119	146	365/318 ^
2022	***	57	126	215	61	365/94 ^
2023	***	87	72	75	220	365/92 ^
2024	***	120	128	45	151	366/98 ^

## Recreational Initiative – Working Group

- State management for red snapper allows for tailored management measures for each state and it could be applied to other species
- Relative satisfaction with fishing opportunities; some concerns with state allocations and localized depletion
- Balance between access and trophy fish or even legal fish



# Council Support and Next Steps



- Numerous meetings to identify state specific catch limits including close coordination with Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
- Numerous meetings discussing various recreational data collection improvements  
Example: LA Creel in 2015
- Continued Council support on landings updates during April and November meetings
- Sector separation for gag, red grouper, and gray triggerfish
- Regional/state management for greater amberjack
- Delegate federal for-hire red snapper management to Gulf states





# Lessons Learned



## Benefits:

- Flexibility in management (season, bag limits, size limits) across Gulf
- Greater access to the resource
- Improved recreational data collection that has reduced uncertainty
- Improved angler satisfaction and buy-in to process

## Challenges:

- Old stock assessment for red snapper (reconciling common currency)
- Improvements in data collection also caused confusion in monitoring landings, necessitate calibration, and this sometimes leads to dissatisfaction
- Common currency for recreational data collection across the states is very important from the start