

FWC's Gulf Red Snapper State Management Perspective



**SAFMC Meeting
September 2025**



Why are we here?

- Provide FWC's perspective on progression from federal to state management of Gulf red snapper, including:
 - Detailed timeline of key events: 2014-2020
 - EFPs → Amendment 50
 - Allocation discussions
 - State management in action



Photo courtesy of Isaac Fowler

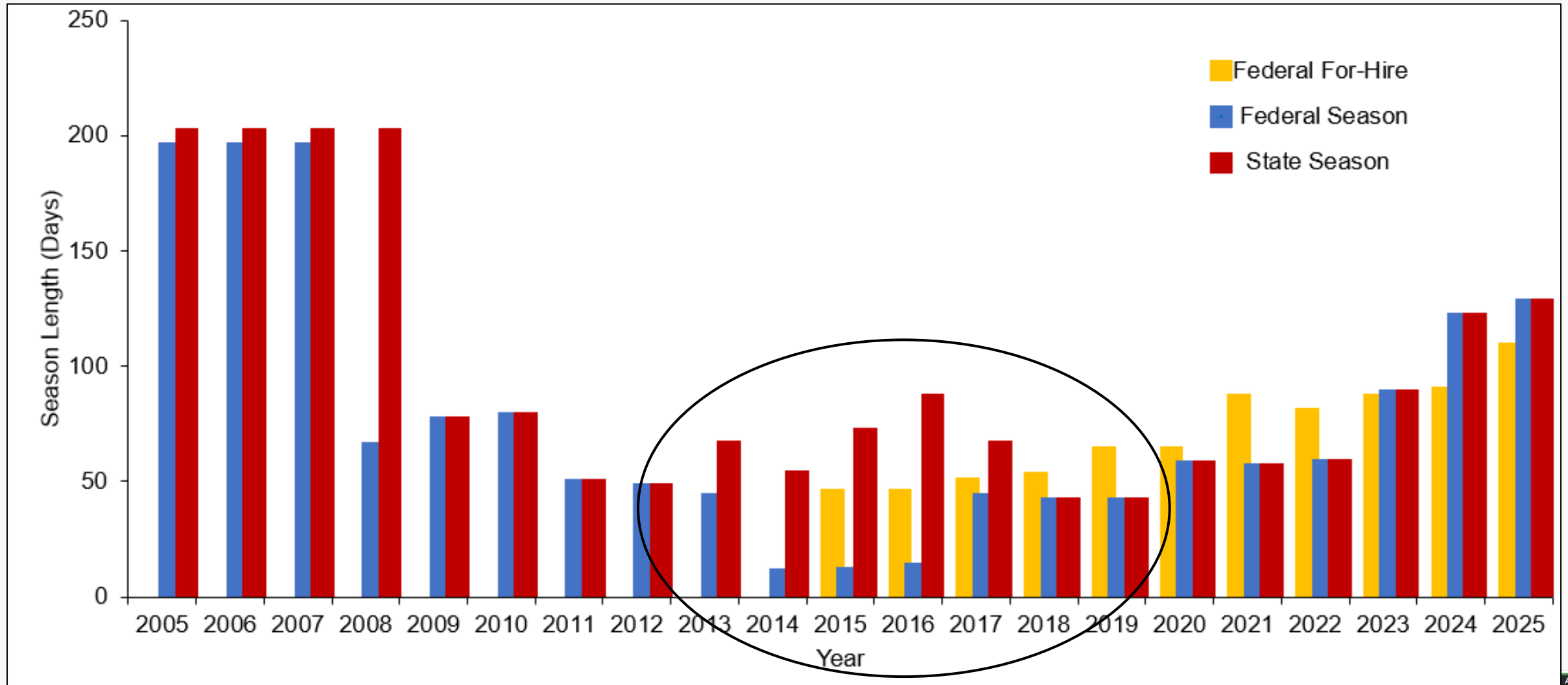


Gulf Red Snapper: Prior to State Management

- Caught in both state and federal waters off each Gulf state
 - Prior to state management, LA, MS, and AL boundary: 3 miles, TX and FL: 9 miles
- Each state had their own data collection system
- Recreational sector separation (eff. 2015)
 - Separate federal for-hire and private recreational quotas
- Each state set their recreational season (private and state for-hire) in state waters
- NOAA Fisheries set federal recreational season (private and federal for-hire)
- Different seasons resulted in progressively shorter federal seasons



FL Gulf Recreational Red Snapper Season Lengths



Idea of State Management

- Extreme frustration among stakeholders and state managers
- Support from Governors, anglers, state agencies, state legislatures, and Congressional leaders to change from federal management
- Early discussions on state management started in 2013
- **BUT** there was significant activity – amendments, lawsuits, Congressional directives, and behind the scenes discussions – before this became a reality in 2018-2019 (EFP), 2020 (Amd. 50)



2014 - 2015 - 2016 - 2017 - 2018 - 2019

- Council **voted to remove Amd. 30B** (federal for-hire vessels must follow federal rules in state waters)
 - Later rescinded due to lawsuit
- **Lawsuit** over recreational quota
- **Morris-Deal Report** produced, calling for nationwide changes in private recreational fisheries
- States like Florida held **public workshops** on how to manage red snapper fishery
- **Gulf states met** to discuss state-by-state allocation %
- Gulf Council passed **sector separation** (Amd. 40)
- Congress **required NOAA** to account for fish on artificial reefs in assessment



2014 - **2015** - 2016 - 2017 - 2018 - 2019

- **Assessment completed** – stock improving but still overfished
- Gulf Council **increased quota**
- States **developed a framework for state management** (outside Gulf Council)
 - Formed Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority (GSRMA)
 - Would be new independent body to manage RS
 - Concept supported by recreational industry
- Cong. Graves **introduced HR 3094**: Gulf State Red Snapper Management Act
- Gulf Council drafted **Amd. 39** for regional management



2014 - **2015** - 2016 - 2017 - 2018 - 2019

- Dec. 2015 Public Law 114-113, funded government for **FY 2016**
 - 1) \$5 million for an **independent stock assessment** for Gulf RS
 - 2) Instructions for NOAA to **count fish on artificial reefs** and oil and gas platforms, and to incorporate into future assessments and management decisions
 - 3) **Increased allocation** of Gulf RS to private recreational sector if the quota of RS should increase
 - 4) **Expanded state waters** for AL, MS, and LA from 3 miles to 9 miles



2014 - 2015 - **2016** - 2017 - 2018 - 2019

- **Multiple lawsuits**
 - Against sector separation - judge upheld sector separation
 - Red snapper allocation reversal - reverted to 51% comm., 49% rec.
- **Sunset on sector separation extended** by Gulf Council to Dec. 31, 2022
- **Increased Congressional Activity**
 - House approved HR 3094: Many people supported the concept of state management, but not how it was drafted in this bill



2014 - 2015 - 2016 - **2017** - 2018 - 2019

- Private anglers **exceeded quota** in 2016
- States set lengthy seasons for RS in state waters
- NOAA announced **3-day recreational season** in federal waters
- States **met with U.S. Commerce Department**
 - Solution: lengthen federal season to 39 days, if states match seasons
- NOAA announced **\$9.5 million grant** for an independent study on Gulf RS
- Gulf Council **considered state management** for LA, AL, and MS
 - Adds TX and FL later in the year
- States met to **discuss state-by-state allocation %**



2014 - 2015 - 2016 - **2017** - 2018 - 2019

- **“Red Snapper Act” introduced** in House and Senate
- Cong Appropriations bill for FY 2018
 - **\$10 million** for independent data collection
 - Directed NOAA to **develop pilot program** to allow states to be in lead for fisheries management over reef zones in the Gulf
 - NOAA **asked states to submit EFPs** for state management
- LA submits EFP for state management, but eventually withdraws it



2014 - 2015 - 2016 - 2017 - **2018** - 2019

- **Relative abundance** of Gulf RS released
 - Info used to calculate state % of RS quota
- All Gulf states **submit EFPs** for testing state management of Gulf RS off of their state
 - These were approved by the Gulf Council and NOAA Fisheries for 2 years
- Gulf Council continued **work on Amd. 50** for state management



Exempted Fishing Permits: 2018- 2019

- NOAA issued 5 EFPs to allow state management of recreational RS for each Gulf state
- Details:
 - State and federal waters
 - Applied to private anglers (state and federal waters) and state-licensed charter vessels (state waters only)
 - State-by-state allocation % determined by states, then approved by NOAA
 - Each state set season based on available quota
 - Each state monitored harvest through a state data collection system
 - Includes payback provisions



2014 - 2015 - 2016 - 2017 - 2018 - **2019**

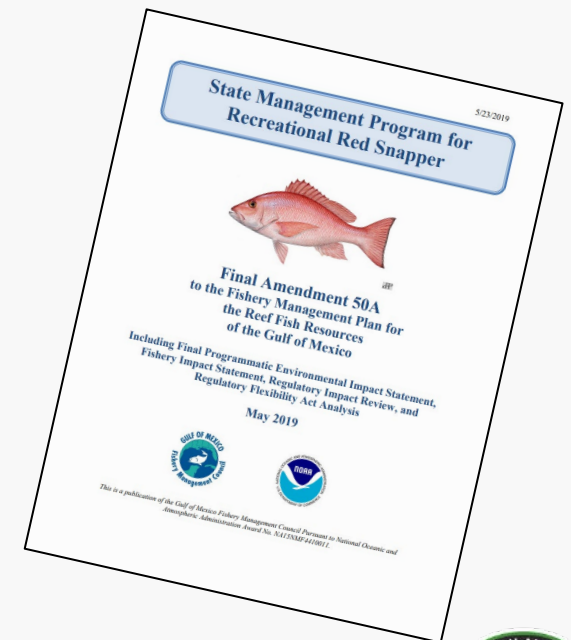
- Some states **exceeded 2018 quotas**, like Florida
 - **Overage paid back** in 2019 for 2nd year of EFPs
- **Sector reallocation discussed** by Gulf Council
- Spring 2019 Gulf Council **approved Amd. 50: RS State Management**
- **FL's Gulf Reef Fish Survey certified** by NOAA for use in federal management



Amendments 50A-F

- Applies only to red snapper
- Applies to private anglers and state-licensed vessels
- Full delegation for each state to manage RS season, bag, and size limits in state and federal waters
- Ability to implement area or depth-specific regulations
- Annual quotas could be adjusted based on Gulf-wide stock underage/overage
- Allocation by state slightly different from EFP %

*Approved by Council in April 2019 and
implemented by NOAA in February 2020*



Quota Allocation Discussions

- Multiple meetings between states over the years
- Slightly different allocations between EFPs and Amd. 50
- Considered allocations based on:
 - Recreational landings over a suite of time series (excluding 2010)
 - Spatial abundance/biomass + proportion of rec. trips across various time series
- Amd. 50: Ultimately decided based on EFP allocations + dividing 3.78% among AL and FL

State	Final Allocation
Texas	6.21%
Louisiana	19.12%
Mississippi	3.55%
Alabama	26.298%
Florida	44.822%



How Does State Management Work?

- Each state:
 - Sets recreational season in state and federal waters
 - Responsible for tracking quota
 - Reports to Gulf Council each year on landings vs. quota
 - Accountable for payback if overage occurs
- Sector separation remains in place
 - NOAA annually sets for-hire federal seasons
- Commercial remains under IFQ system

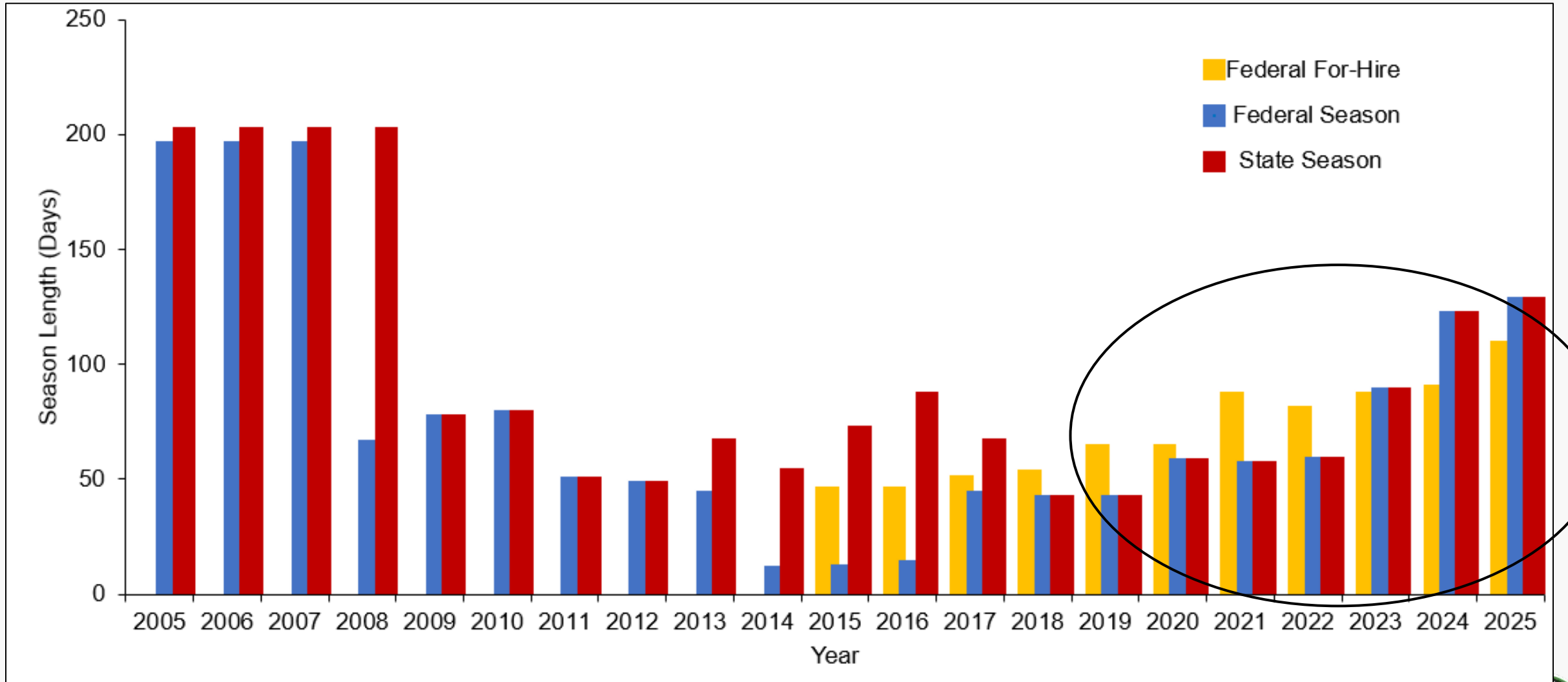


Photo courtesy of Jesse Bowling

*State Governors, Legislatures, Congressional leaders, and anglers
continue to strongly support state management*



FL Recreational Gulf Red Snapper Season Lengths



Today: FWC & State Management

- DMFM/FWRI analyzes season options based on:
 - Available quota, historical catch and effort, and stakeholder preferences
- State Reef Fish Survey (SRFS)
 - Used for in-season monitoring and prediction
 - Composed of a mail survey of fishing effort and an angler intercept survey for CPUE
 - Produces year-round, monthly estimates of effort, harvest, and discards
- Quota tracking presented at Council meetings
- Final landings reported to NOAA Fisheries



Questions?

