



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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December 23, 2013
FB13-107

Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative Pilot Program Begins January 1, 2014

Background and Purpose

The Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative Pilot program will begin on January 1, 2014. NOAA Fisheries authorized the 2-year pilot program through issuance of an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP). The purpose of the pilot program is to assess the viability of an allocation-based management strategy for achieving conservation and economic goals more effectively than current management. The Headboat Collaborative was allocated a portion of the red snapper and gag recreational quotas based on historical landings data. Participating headboats may use the allotted quota to harvest red snapper and gag outside the normal recreational fishing seasons.

Participants

A total of 17 vessels are participating in the first year of the pilot program. These vessels are located in Texas, Alabama, and Florida. Participating vessels may not leave the program after the fishing year has begun or they will forego any further privilege to harvest or retain red snapper or gag for the remainder of the fishing year, even if the regular recreational fishing seasons are open. New vessels, up to 20, may be added to the pilot program prior to the 2015 fishing year.

System Requirements

The pilot program will use both an online data collection system for tracking and transferring quota, as well as the existing Southeast Headboat Survey's electronic logbook (e-Log) system for tracking landings. All vessels in the program are required to have a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).

Calculation of Quota

The Headboat Collaborative received a percentage of the red snapper and gag quotas. The Headboat Collaborative's quota percentage was determined using 2011 landings of all participating Headboat Collaborative vessels relative to total 2011 recreational landings. This equated to 5.4363% of the 5.39 million pound red snapper quota and 2.8359% of the 1.519

million pound quota for gag. The Headboat Collaborative received 286,457 lb whole weight of red snapper and 43,053 lb gutted weight of gag. For reporting purposes, pounds were converted to numbers of fish based on regional average weights for each species.

Fishing Seasons

Participating vessels are exempted from the red snapper and gag seasonal closures and can begin fishing for red snapper and gag on January 1, 2014. Participating vessels must still follow all existing bag and size limits and abide by the February through March shallow-water grouper harvest prohibition offshore of 20 fathoms. If NOAA Fisheries determines the Gulf of Mexico red snapper recreational quota has been met, harvest must be prohibited for the remainder of the fishing year, even if the Collaborative has allocation remaining. Participating vessels must retain all legal-sized fish that appear to be mortally injured and must cease targeting red snapper and gag when they have no remaining quota for their vessel.

Reporting Requirements

All vessels must submit a VMS trip declaration before leaving on a trip. When returning to port, Headboat Collaborative vessels are required to submit a pre-landing notification 1 hour in advance of landing at a pre-approved site. Landing notifications will include the vessel name and identification number, landing location, arrival time, and number of fish being landed. Once a trip is completed, landings must be reported via the Southeast Headboat Survey's e-Log system by the end of the day.

Additional Information

Further information about the pilot program, including a list of participating vessels, frequently asked questions, and a copy of the exempted fishing permit are provided at: portal.sero.fisheries.noaa.gov. If you have additional questions about the program please call NOAA Fisheries Customer Service at 866-425-7627 (select option 2).