

Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper

Frequently Asked Questions

May 2012



Final Rule - Quotas and Season

What will the regulatory amendment do?

- Set the 2012 and 2013 quotas for commercial and recreational harvest.
 - The red snapper quota increased from **7.185** million pounds whole weight in 2011 to the following:

	2012	2013
Acceptable Biological Catch	8.080	8.690
Commercial Allocation (51%)	4.121	4.432
Recreational Allocation (49%)	3.959	4.258

- If the 2012 acceptable biological catch is exceeded, the 2013 quota increase would require further scientific review and potential modification by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.
- Eliminate the fixed recreational red snapper closed season of October 1 – December 31.
 - By eliminating the October 1 closure date, NOAA Fisheries Service may re-open the recreational season for red snapper if any remaining quota is available without the delay of additional rulemaking.

How would the regulatory amendment affect the recreational red snapper season in 2012?

- The recreational season will be 40 days, opening on June 1, 2012, and closing on July 11, 2012, at 12:01 am.

How would the regulatory amendment affect the commercial red snapper sector?

- Because the commercial sector is managed under an individual fishing quota (IFQ) program, and has maintained landings within their quota in recent years, the increase in quota would be reflected in the allocation of pounds of red snapper for the fishing year.

What is the status of current action?

- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council submitted the regulatory amendment to NOAA Fisheries Service on March 20, 2012, for review by the Secretary of Commerce.
- The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on April 12, 2012, and was subject to a 15-day public comment period until April 27, 2012.
- The final rule published in the *Federal Register* (77 FR 31734) on May 30, 2012.

How is the red snapper fishery currently managed?

- Recreational red snapper harvest:
 - 49 % of the quota.
 - Minimum size limit of 16 inches total length (TL).
 - Daily bag limit of two fish with a zero bag limit for the captain and crew of for-hire vessels.
 - Seasonal closure: Opens June 1, and closure date is announced each year.
- Commercial red snapper harvest:
 - 51 % of the quota.
 - Minimum size limit of 13 inches TL.
 - IFQ program, which allocates the commercial quota among individual fishers and corporations (see link at end of this document).

Why is the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery such a hot topic?

- The red snapper stock had been overfished and undergoing overfishing since the late 1980s.
 - Overfished: The fish population is too small.
 - Overfishing: Too many fish are being harvested.
- A recent population assessment indicates that the red snapper stock is no longer undergoing overfishing.
- All fisheries that harvest red snapper as catch and/or bycatch contribute to total fishing death, including both the commercial and recreational red snapper harvest.

Links to additional information on red snapper management and rulemaking

- Red snapper assessment process and reports (http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar_Workshops.jsp?WorkshopNum=07)
- Regulations implemented in 2008 through Amendment 27/14 for Gulf of Mexico red snapper and shrimp fisheries (http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapper/Amendment_27_14.htm)
- Commercial red snapper IFQ program (<https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqrs/index.cfm>)
- Red snapper recreational quota closure (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/RedSnapperClosure.htm>)