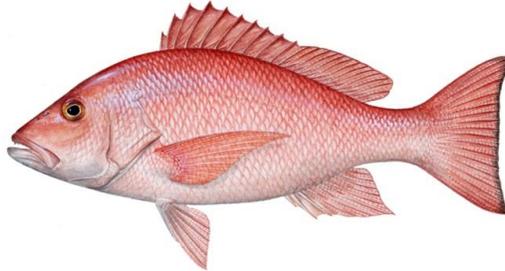


# Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Accountability Measures Proposed Rule Frequently Asked Questions November 2014



## What is being proposed in this rule?

- A long-term recreational annual catch target would be established that is 20 percent less than the recreational quota.
- The red snapper recreational season would be projected from the annual catch target rather than the quota.
- If the recreational quota is exceeded, the quota and annual catch target would be adjusted downward in response to the overage.

## Why is this rule being proposed?

- Because of several recreational quota overages in past years, NOAA Fisheries was sued.
- The Court found (*Guindon v. Pritzker*, 2014 WL 1274076; D.D.C. Mar. 26, 2014) in part that NOAA Fisheries had failed to require adequate accountability measures to prohibit the retention of fish after the recreational quota was caught.
- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) requested NOAA Fisheries implement short-term accountability measures for 2014, including an annual catch target, through an emergency rule.
- Adequate long-term accountability measures need to be in place by April 15, 2015, to satisfy the Court's ruling.

### *Annual Catch Limits*

The amount of fish that can be harvested from the stock each year. Note: For red snapper, quotas are considered the same as annual catch limits

### *Annual Catch Targets*

A harvest level set lower than the Annual Catch Limit to create a buffer so that overharvest does not occur.

### *Accountability Measures*

Measures taken to prevent harvest from exceeding the Annual Catch Limit and if exceeded can mitigate or correct the overage.

**Why did the Council select a 20 percent buffer between the quota and annual catch target as an accountability measure?**

- The Council’s annual catch limit/annual catch target control rule applies buffers to create target catch levels that account for management uncertainty in maintaining catches at or below the acceptable biological catch.
- For the red snapper recreational quota, the recommended buffer from the control rule was 20 percent primarily because of quota overages in three of the past four years.
- Compared to the quota, the probability of exceeding the quota by setting the season based on this annual catch target rather than the quota is reduced from 50 to 15 percent.

**If the recreational red snapper quota is exceeded, how would the overage adjustment work?**

- The overage adjustment only applies if red snapper are considered overfished.
- If the recreational quota is exceeded, the quota for the next year would be reduced.
- The amount of the reduction would be equal to the overage amount unless the best scientific information available determines that a greater, lesser, or no overage adjustment is necessary.
- The annual catch target would be 20 percent less than the newly adjusted quota.
- Table 1 shows an example where the quotas for years 1 and 2 are both 5 million pounds and what the year 2 quotas and annual catch target are if the quota is not exceeded (no overage) or is exceeded by 500,000 lbs (overage).

**Table 1. An example of how a quota and annual catch target would be set for the year following an overage (year 2) and how they compare if no overage had occurred.**

	<b>No overage</b>	<b>Overage</b>
<b>Year 1 quota</b>	<b>5,000,000 lbs</b>	<b>5,000,000 lbs</b>
<b>Overage amount</b>	<b>0 lbs</b>	<b>500,000 lbs</b>
<b>Adjusted Year 2 quota (year 2 quota - overage)</b>	<b>5,000,000 lbs</b>	<b>4,500,000 lbs</b>
<b>20% of Year 2 quota</b>	<b>1,000,000 lbs</b>	<b>900,000 lbs</b>
<b>Year 2 annual catch target (quota – [0.2 x quota])</b>	<b>4,000,000 lbs</b>	<b>3,600,000 lbs</b>

**Does the proposed rule affect the commercial sector of the reef fish fishery?**

- No, the commercial harvest of red snapper in the reef fish fishery is managed under an individual fishing quota program, which is considered an accountability measure.
- Since the individual fishing quota program has been in existence, the commercial quota has not been exceeded.

### **How can I submit comments on the proposed rule?**

- NOAA Fisheries will be taking public comments on the proposed rule for the framework action from November 21, 2014, through December 22, 2014.
  - Instructions on how to submit comments on the proposed rule for the framework action can be found [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2014/rs\\_a\\_m\\_framework/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2014/rs_a_m_framework/index.html).

### **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=31](http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/Sedar_Workshops.jsp?WorkshopNum=31)
- Recreational Red Snapper Management [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/red\\_snapper/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html)
- Commercial red snapper IFQ program <https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqrs/index.cfm>