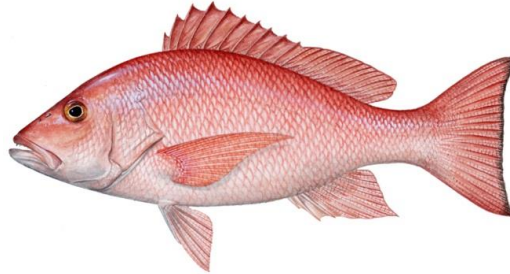


Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Accountability Measures Final Rule Frequently Asked Questions March 2015



What does this rule do?

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

Why was this rule developed?

- 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 enacted by April 1, 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 different 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.

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

Does this 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.

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
- Recreational Red Snapper Management
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html
- Commercial red snapper IFQ program
<https://portal.southeast.fisheries.noaa.gov/cs/main.html>