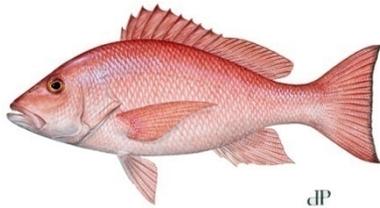


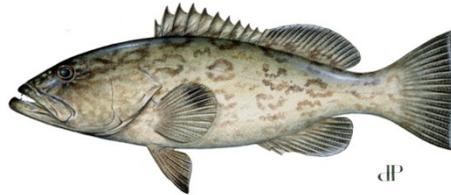


# 2014-2015 Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions

January 2014



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## **BACKGROUND**

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE PILOT PROGRAM?**

- The current system of recreational management measures, such as bag limits, size limits, and seasonal closures, has resulted in very short fishing seasons.
- The purpose of the Headboat Collaborative pilot program is to evaluate the viability of an allocation-based management strategy that could potentially improve the conservation of the resources and economic stability and performance of the headboat sector.
- Headboats participating in the pilot program are allowed to harvest red snapper and gag based on quota allocation issued to them by the Headboat Collaborative outside the normal recreational fishing seasons (e.g., red snapper begins June 1 and gag begins July 1).

### **HOW DID THE PILOT PROGRAM COME ABOUT?**

- The Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative submitted an application for an exempted fishing permit to NOAA Fisheries. The application proposed evaluating the efficacy of an allocation-based management system using a limited number of headboats in a 2-year pilot study.
- On April 2, 2012, NOAA Fisheries published a notice of receipt of the exempted fishing permit application in the Federal Register and requested public comments.
- The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reviewed the Collaborative's application at its April 2012 meeting, and recommended that NOAA Fisheries approve the application.
- On August 26, 2013, NOAA Fisheries announced approval and issuance of Exempted Fishing Permit to the Gulf Headboat Collaborative.

### **WAS A REFERENDUM CONDUCTED BEFORE THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE PILOT PROGRAM WAS APPROVED?**

- No, a referendum was not conducted for the Headboat Collaborative pilot program.
- The Magnuson-Stevens Act states the Gulf Council may not submit, and NOAA Fisheries may not approve or implement a fishery management plan or amendment that creates an individual fishing quota program unless such a system has been approved through a referendum.
- Since an exempted fishing permit is neither a fishery management plan nor a plan amendment, and is based on legal authority independent from the fishery management plan, NOAA Fisheries determined that it was not subject to the referendum requirement.

### **WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE PILOT PROGRAM?**

- Assess whether a collaborative program can achieve conservation and economic goals more effectively than the existing management system
- Evaluate new electronic data collection methods and evaluate their effectiveness in providing accurate, next to real-time catch and effort data
- Conduct a comparative socio-economic study between the existing headboat industry, and the headboat Collaborative before, during, and after the pilot project, to determine the potential economic impacts on an alternative management method on the headboat industry

## **EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS**

### **WHAT IS AN EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT?**

- An exempted fishing permit is an authorization by NOAA Fisheries for the target or incidental harvest of species managed under a fishery management plan or fishing regulations that would otherwise be prohibited.
- Exempted fishing permits may be authorized for limited testing, public display, data collection, exploratory, health and safety, environmental cleanup, and/or hazard removal purposes.

### **HOW LONG IS THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE'S EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT EFFECTIVE?**

- The exempted fishing permit is effective from January 1, 2014, through December 31, 2015.
- Each headboat must prominently display a copy of the exempted fishing permit on board their vessel and make it available to law enforcement upon request.

### **UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES CAN THE EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT BE REVOKED, SUSPENDED, OR MODIFIED?**

- NOAA Fisheries can revoke, suspend, or modify the exempted fishing permit with respect to all persons and vessels conducting activities under the exempted fishing permit for failure to comply with any of the permit's terms and conditions (see 50 CFR 600.745(b)(9)).

## **PARTICIPANTS**

### **WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HEADBOAT PILOT PROGRAM?**

- The pilot program is voluntary.
- Any vessel with a federal charter/headboat reef fish permit that participates in the Southeast Headboat Survey is eligible to participate.
- Participants submitted applications to the Headboat Collaborative. Headboat Collaborative members selected participating vessels based on applications received.

### **HOW MANY VESSELS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE HEADBOAT PILOT PROGRAM?**

- 17 vessels are participating in the pilot program
  - 4 from Clearwater, FL
  - 1 from Tarpon Springs, FL
  - 1 from Pt. St. Joe, FL
  - 3 from Destin, FL
  - 3 from Orange Beach, AL
  - 1 from Dauphin Island, AL
  - 1 from Galveston, TX
  - 3 from Port Aransas, TX
- A maximum of 20 vessels may participate in the pilot study.

### **CAN VESSELS JOIN OR LEAVE THE PROGRAM?**

- Participants agree to fish for the entire year and cannot leave the program mid-year, otherwise they forego any privileges to harvest or retain red snapper or gag for the remainder of the fishing year, even if the regular recreational fishing season is open.
- Participants may withdraw from the program at the end of 2014 and new participants may be added (up to a maximum of 20 vessels) to the program for the 2015 fishing year.

## **HEADBOAT SPECIES**

### **WHAT SPECIES ARE INCLUDED IN THE HEADBOAT PILOT PROGRAM?**

- There are two species included in the pilot program: red snapper and gag.

## **FISHING SEASON**

### **WHEN CAN PILOT PROGRAM VESSELS HARVEST RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER AND GAG?**

- Headboat Collaborative participants can begin fishing for red snapper and gag on January 1, 2014.
- The exempted fishing permit exempts vessels from the recreational season closures for red snapper and gag, and closure of the recreational sector when the gag catch target is reached.
- Harvest will be prohibited during the February-March shallow-water grouper closure offshore of 20 fathoms.
- If NOAA Fisheries determines the Gulf of Mexico red snapper recreational quota has been met, harvest will be prohibited for the remainder of the fishing year. This will apply even if the Collaborative and its participating members have allocation remaining.

## **HEADBOAT QUOTA ALLOCATION**

### **HOW MUCH QUOTA DID THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE RECEIVE?**

- The Collaborative received 5.3146% of the 5.39 million pound red snapper quota equal to 55,527 fish weighing 286,457 pounds whole weight.
- The Collaborative received 2.8343% of the 1.51 million pound gag target catch level equal to 6,017 fish weighing 43,053 pounds gutted weight.

### **HOW WAS THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE'S QUOTA DETERMINED?**

- The Collaborative's quota proportions were determined by taking aggregate 2011 Collaborative vessel landings relative to all recreational landings reported in 2011.
- The resulting percentage was then multiplied against the 2014 red snapper and gag quotas to determine the Collaborative's quotas in pounds.
- Quotas in pounds were then converted to quotas in numbers of fish using average regional and species-specific average weights from the Southeast Headboat Survey.

### **DID HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS RECEIVE QUOTA SHARES SIMILAR TO THE COMMERCIAL IFQ PROGRAM?**

- No. Quota shares were not issued to individual permit holders.
- The Headboat Collaborative did receive a percentage share of the red snapper and gag quotas as discussed above, but this share is non-transferable.

### **IS QUOTA ALLOCATION TRANSFERABLE?**

- Yes, quota allocation may be transferred from the Headboat Collaborative manager to participating vessels.
- Quota allocation may also be transferred between vessels participating in the program.
- All transfers are completed using the Southeast Regional Office's online Web site at [portal.sero.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://portal.sero.fisheries.noaa.gov) or <https://ifq.sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ifqgt>

## **EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT CONDITIONS**

### **WHAT PERMIT CONDITIONS MUST PARTICIPATING VESSELS ABIDE BY?**

- The Collaborative must hold a portion of its allotted quota in reserve to guard against excessive harvest by one or more participating vessels.
- The Collaborative must ensure each participant abides by all federal fishing regulations and specific fishing requirements imposed by NOAA Fisheries through the exempted fishing permit's terms and conditions.

- The Collaborative agrees that all harvest of red snapper and gag will count against the harvest authorized by the exempted fishing permit. No recreational fishing may occur for red snapper or gag outside the exempted fishing permit.
- Vessels are expected to retain all legal-sized fish (16” total length for red snapper and 22” total length for gag) that appear to be mortally injured as long as the vessel has not reached the bag limit for all fishers onboard the vessel and the vessel has not exceeded its assigned quota allocation.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

### **WHAT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE VESSELS?**

- All participating vessels must have a vessel monitoring system that allows NOAA Fisheries to track the vessel while at sea.
- Participants are required to submit a VMS declaration prior to departing on every trip, regardless of whether or not red snapper or gag will be caught.
- Participants are required to submit a landing notification at least one hour prior to returning to port regardless of whether or not red snapper or gag will be landed.
- All landings must be reported to the Southeast Headboat Survey’s e-Log online reporting system by the end of each day.
- Each participant will have an online account for tracking quota. Accounts will be accessible at: [portal.sero.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://portal.sero.fisheries.noaa.gov). The online system will allow participants to view their landings and quota usage, transfer quota, and submit landing notifications.

## **LANDING AND OFFLOADING**

### **WHAT ARE THE LANDING AND OFFLOADING TIME REQUIREMENTS?**

- A vessel can land red snapper or gag anytime during the day and night, provided that a landing notification has been given one hour prior to landing. Landing means to arrive at a dock, berth, beach, seawall, or ramp.

### **WHY MUST PRE-APPROVED LANDING LOCATIONS BE USED?**

- Approving landing locations in advance ensures the sites actually exist and law enforcement agents and officers can access these sites. Landing locations must be publicly accessible by land and water.

### **HOW AND WHY IS A LANDING NOTIFICATION REPORTED?**

- The landing notification requirement is intended to provide law enforcement agents and officers and port agents the opportunity to be present at the point of landing so they can monitor and enforce Headboat Collaborative exempted fishing permit requirements dockside.
- Landing notifications can be made by using the form on the vessel monitoring system screen.

## **LANDING TRANSACTIONS**

### **HOW ARE LANDINGS ENTERED?**

- Landings are entered through the Southeast Headboat Survey’s electronic logbook (e-Log) system. Contact Ken Brennan or Kelly Fitzpatrick at the Southeast Science Center if you have any questions about the e-Log system by calling 252-728-3595 or e-mailing [kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov](mailto:kenneth.brennan@noaa.gov) or [kelly.fitzpatrick@noaa.gov](mailto:kelly.fitzpatrick@noaa.gov).

## **MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS**

### **HOW DO I GET ANSWERS TO GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE PILOT PROGRAM?**

- If you have a customer service inquiry, please call 866-425-7627. Customer service calls will be answered from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Any message left after hours, on weekends, or holidays will be returned during normal working hours. *Please do not leave a landing notification on the voice mail.*
- You may also search for answers in the [Headboat Collaborative Pilot Program Troubleshooting Guide](#) which is located on the Headboat Collaborative Web site. The Troubleshooting Guide has screen shots and step-by-step instructions for many of the online functions.

\*Illustrations courtesy of Diane Peebles