

Recreational Initiative Workgroup

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The Vision

Rec Initiative Motion (Feb 2, 2023)

Motion: Initiate development of a recreational fisheries management initiative for reef fish in 2023. The goal of this initiative is to evaluate the efficacy of current Federal recreational reef fish management in the Gulf of Mexico and develop future management approaches and guidance intended to prevent overfishing, address discards and/or discard mortality, account for uncertainty in recreational data, and provide for innovative new management approaches to regulate Federally managed recreational fisheries.

Challenges to Angler Satisfaction

Ecological Changes

- Climate driven changes (species shift, water temps, increased storm damage)
- Habitat loss/degradation
- Water quality (low dissolved oxygen)
- Invasive Species

Human influences

Increasing pressure from:

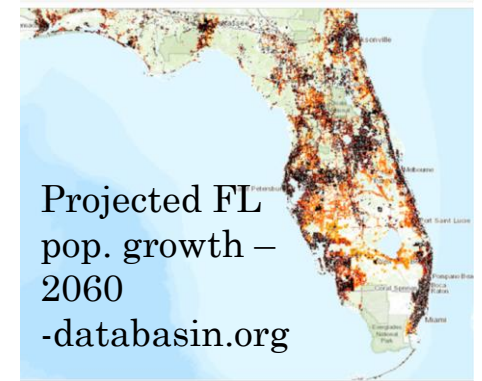
- Population growth and fishery participation - more anglers every year
- Efficiency = tech - Better maps and better GPS, etc.
- Increased tourism / crowding & demand for marine recreation

Regulatory

- Short seasons
- Low limits
- Regulatory discards
- In-season closures
- Allocation

Data

- Limited data
- Inaccurate Estimates



The time is now for a ...



Federal Goals and Objectives

Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

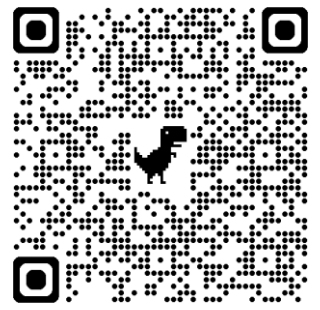
“...to promote domestic commercial and recreational fishing under sound conservation and management principles. (§2(b)(2))”

National Standards (§301(a))

- Prevent overfishing
- Rebuild overfished stocks
- Increase long term economic and social benefits
- Minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality

10 National standards lay out principles for federal managers to follow when developing sustainable and responsible fishery management plans for federal fisheries

Federal Goals and Objectives



National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy

Foster, support, and enhance a broadly accessible and diverse array of sustainable recreational and non-commercial fisheries for the benefit of the nation

Goals (paraphrased)

- Support and maintain the resources on which recreational fisheries depend, including habitats
- Promote sustainable recreational fisheries for the benefit of the nation
- Apply science based decision making to ensure the future of recreational fisheries
- Prepare for and respond to climate impacts to recreational fisheries
- Pursue involvement of traditionally underrepresented communities in fisheries and stewardship

Goals and Objectives

What should be the goals and objectives for Federally managed recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico?

Here is what the Mid-Atlantic Council developed:

- (1) Provide **stability** in the recreational bag, size, and season limits
- (2) Develop strategies to increase **management flexibility**, and
- (3) Achieve **accessibility** aligned with availability/stock status for all four species.

Objectives Vary Greatly by Angler



More Days



More Fish



Better Catch Rates



Larger Fish



Resource Conservation



All of the Above

How Can We Shift the Paradigm?

- Rec Initiative is a great start. Thank you!!!
- Remain open-minded - listen to all sides.
- Recognize there are no quick fixes - long-term solutions needed
- Be willing to try new ideas and be creative
- Take risks.
- Act upon your recommendations!

Questions?



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