

Summary of Public Engagement for the Recreational Initiative



Gulf Fishery Management Council

Overview of Public Engagement Process



Three Public Input Sessions

- November 18, 2024 - 14 commenters, 25-30 on webinar
- January 16, 2025 - 10 commenters, 25-30 on webinar
- March 6, 2025 - 6 commenters, 15-20 on webinar

The following slides summarize the feedback heard during the third public input session (March 6th) which had a focus on exploring innovative management strategies for Gulf reef fish species

Season Overlap Preferences



- A commenter supported overlapping seasons for red snapper and red grouper, as they are often caught together.
- Another favored a peak season from May to August to maximize fishing opportunities.
- Some support for spreading out seasons for focal species to allow year-round fishing.
- Regional differences in fish availability make a single Gulf-wide approach difficult.
- Concerns about gray triggerfish overabundance in Panhandle.
- Several participants preferred longer seasons with stricter bag limits over short high-limit seasons.

Alternative Management Strategies



- Skepticism about harvest tags and days-at-sea programs, with concerns about fairness and implementation challenges.
- Interest in permits/endorsements for offshore reef fish targeting, particularly at the state level, to quantify angler participation.
- Support for carryover provisions to allow unused quota to roll over into the next year.
- Interest in release mortality reduction strategies, including education on best practices for handling and releasing fish.

Priority Regulatory Changes



- Desire for more regional flexibility in management due to varying fishing pressures.
- Suggestion to increase red snapper minimum size from 16 inches to 18-20 inches.
- Multiple concerns about shark depredation, citing increased interactions impacting catch rates.
- Suggestion to increase reliance on state-collected data for federal decision-making.
- Call for simplified management measures to improve compliance and enforcement.

Questions?

