

Summary of Written Public Comment
Recreational Initiative

April 2025

10 comments received

- Support for re-evaluating sector allocations.
 - Allocation should be based on objective metrics like angler participation and economic contribution.
 - Recreational sector provides substantial local economic benefit through gear, fuel, boats, and travel.
 - Current recreational quota is not reflective of this value.
- Call to prioritize recreational fishing over commercial harvest.
 - Suggested banning the commercial sale of pelagic and reef species, citing low community return and environmental pressure.
 - Comparisons drawn to banning the sale of terrestrial wildlife.
- Support for banning mechanized spear guns.
 - Mechanized spearfishing is too effective and contributes to depletion.
 - Suggested designating some species (e.g., hogfish, red grouper) as pole spear or hook-and-line only.
- Recommendation to allow winter or extended seasons.
 - Shark depredation lower in winter, reducing release mortality.
 - Overlapping seasons would minimize bycatch on long offshore trips.
- Support for shifting to year-round, weekend-based seasons.
 - Reduces crowding, improves safety, and allows consistent access.
 - Specific proposal: 100-day season spread across Sundays and Mondays.
 - Support for holiday extensions and consideration of spawning closures.
- Concern over weather-driven inequity.
 - Anglers often lose trips due to weather despite holding permits and maintaining boats.
 - Support for individual seasonal tags (e.g., 2 AJ, 2 cobia) to allow longer, more flexible seasons.
- Frustration over declining recreational returns.
 - Rising costs for boats, fuel, gear vs. declining catch success.
 - Raised questions: What defines success for recreational fishing? Should there be expectations for keeper fish per trip?
- Perceived unfair treatment in comparison to commercial/charter sectors.
 - Recreational effort and investment not reflected in management decisions.
 - Calls for metrics like angler days and satisfaction data.
- Mixed views on charter captain behavior.

- Some praised for stewardship; others accused of illegal discard practices and poaching.
 - Support for anonymous reporting system (like hunting tip lines).
- Criticism of current survey design and data quality.
 - Surveys don't separate kept, released, and targeted species.
 - Lack of granularity undermines stock assessment and trust.
 - Quote: "Garbage in, garbage out."
- Support for better-designed data collection rather than simply more data.
 - Suggested drawing from political polling and survey science.
 - Argued that smart survey design would yield better insight with fewer responses.
- Management should be long-term and adaptive, not reactive.
 - Comparison to business planning: balance quarterly performance with long-range strategy.
 - Current year-to-year shifts are disruptive and unsatisfying.
- Concern that fishing is becoming financially unsustainable.
 - Boats, insurance, storage, and gear cost thousands year-round.
 - If opportunities are too limited, anglers may leave the sport entirely.
- Support for expanded artificial reefs.
 - Seen as key to increasing access and supporting habitat lost to storms or development.
- Interest in voluntary reporting systems (not tags).
 - Modeled after game species like deer and turkey.
 - Aim to improve harvest data and inform management without burdening anglers.
- Suggestion to end free reef fish permits.
 - Free permits inflate angler counts and distort harvest estimates.
 - Modest fees would ensure more accurate participation numbers.
- Proposal to restructure reef fish harvest using an aggregate bag limit across species (red snapper, grouper, amberjack).
 - Suggested one-fish-per-day limit over an 8-month season (May–Dec), with two angler-selected months allowing a two-fish-per-day limit.
 - Intended to simplify regulations, increase perceived angler success, and dramatically reduce overall harvest (estimated 69% decrease compared to current structure).
 - Argues this would reduce bycatch mortality, derby-style risk, regional inequities, and enforcement burden.
- Support for implementing a species-specific "reef fish stamp" with a small fee per targeted species.
 - Anglers would select species they intend to harvest during license purchase.
 - Suggested as a more accurate way to estimate true participation by species and avoid overcounting.
- Suggestion for a voluntary reef fish surveyor program.

- Recreational, charter, and commercial participants could opt-in to collect underwater video of reef sites with narration and geolocation data.
- These videos would be reviewed publicly during management discussions and stock assessments.
- Framed as a way to boost transparency, stakeholder voice, and supplement traditional assessment models.