

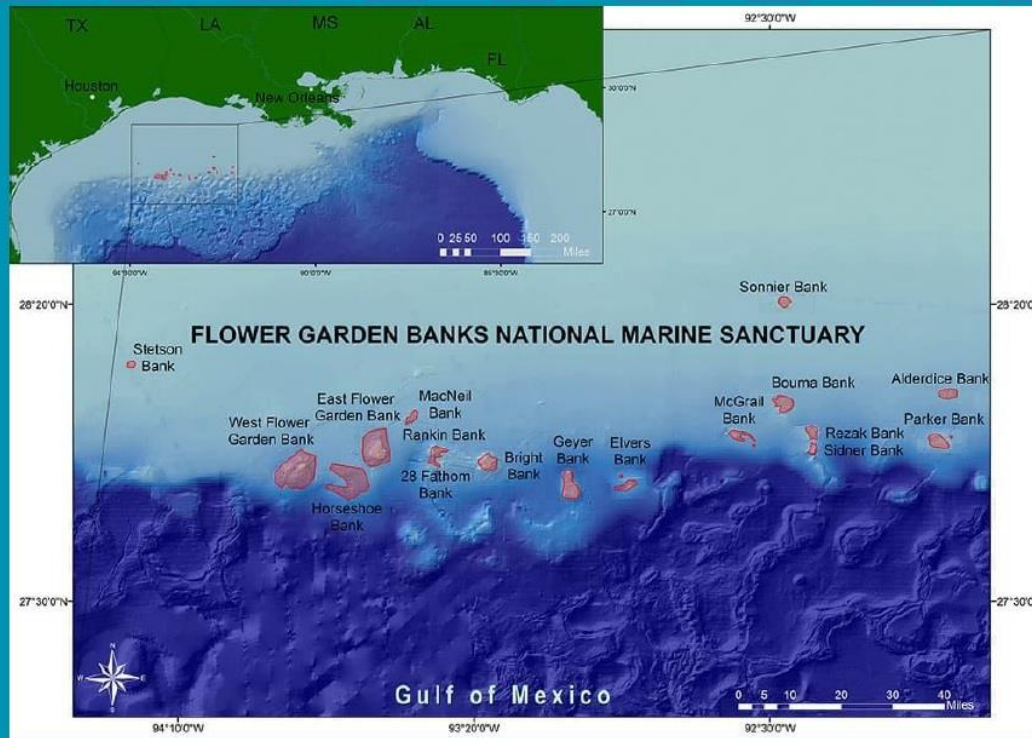


LOUISIANA WAHOO RECREATIONAL BAG LIMIT REGULATIONS

Chris Schieble | Gulf Council Meeting | August 25, 2025

Presentation Given by FGBNMS at June 2024 Gulf Council Meeting

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary



- Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) is the only sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico
- Expanded in size in 2021 from 3 to 17 reefs and banks
- Encompasses a variety of habitats important to fish and invertebrates

Dockshot From Texas

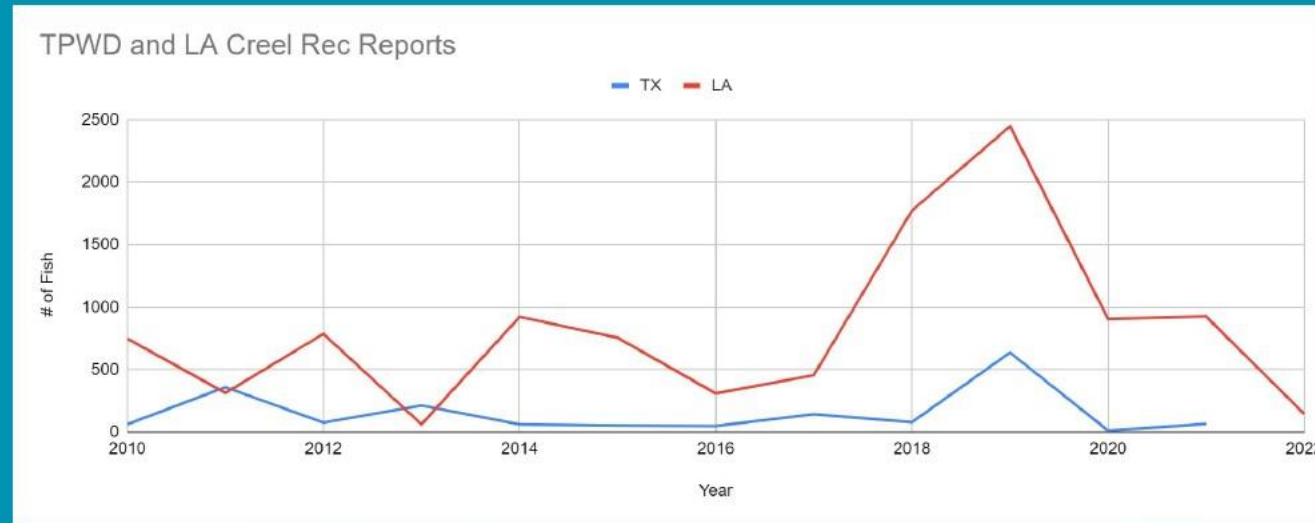
Summary



Reported State-wide Wahoo Landings

Reported Wahoo TX and LA Data

- State data does not reflect true landings for wahoo
- In 2023, fisher reports up to 15 vessels within FGBNMS often returning with 20-30 wahoo per boat
 - Previously, there would only be 1-2 vessels within the sanctuary



Wahoo Management Options Presented

Options for Management of Wahoo in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

- A new FMP* is created for a Gulf stock of wahoo by the Gulf Council
- A Gulf stock of wahoo is added to an existing Gulf FMP*
- SA Council amends its Dolphin Wahoo FMP* to redefine the geographic scope of the wahoo management unit to include the Gulf (if one genetic stock in South Atlantic and Gulf)
- NOAA pursues regulations under the NMSA for take within FGBNMS
- FMP* for wahoo and pursue regulations in FGBNMS
- States put in regulations

*Need to determine if wahoo is in need of conservation and management based on 50 CFR 600.305(c).
Two years to develop or add wahoo to FMP with management measures and 9-11 months for rulemaking.

Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Title 16 U.S.C. Section 1856

- §1856. State jurisdiction
- (a) In general
- (3) A State may regulate a fishing vessel outside the boundaries of the State in the following circumstances:
 - (A) The fishing vessel is registered under the law of that State, and (i) there is no fishery management plan or other applicable Federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating; or (ii) the State's laws and regulations are consistent with the fishery management plan and applicable Federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating.



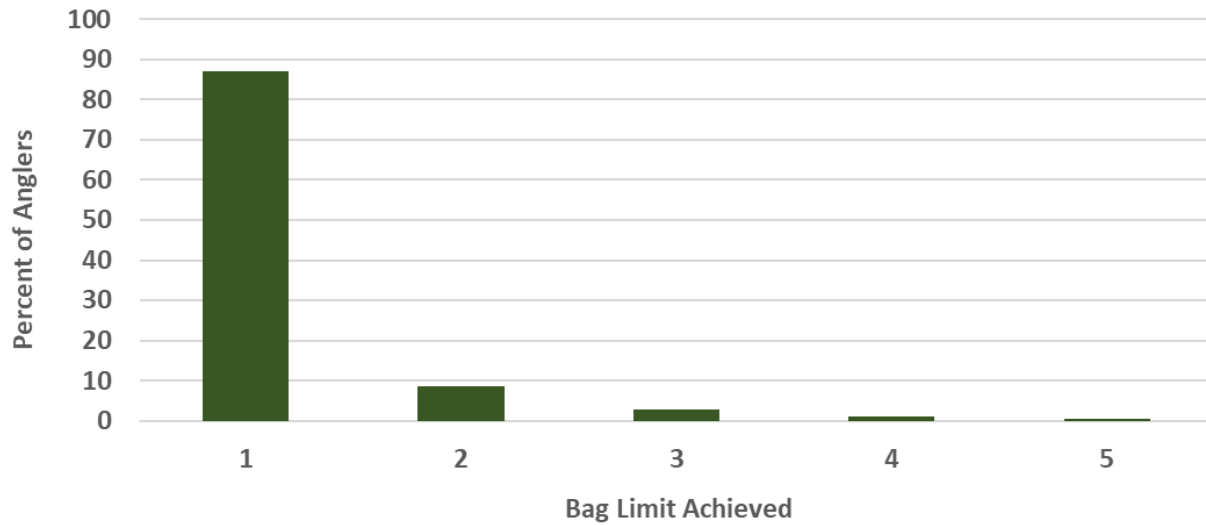
Wahoo Life History

- Wahoo are related to tunas and mackerels and can be found in tropical and subtropical waters.
- Wahoo are fast growing, short-lived, and mature relatively quickly.
- 50% maturity in female wahoo occurs at about 1 year old and about 40 inches, however, spawning may be as late as 3 years old and 45 inches.
- Spawning is generally from June through September in the Gulf of America.
- Maximum age is approximately 5 to 6, but the majority of the population is around 2.
- Maximum size is around 100 inches, but typically between 40 to 70 inches when encountered by anglers.



Wahoo Recreational Landings Data

Wahoo Bag Achieved by Anglers (LA Creel Data 2014-2024)



Wahoo Landings Estimates in Numbers of Fish (LA Creel Data 2014-2024)

Year	Charter	Private Recreational	Total
2014	381	542	923
2015	211	545	756
2016	168	142	310
2017	456	0	456
2018	508	1266	1774
2019	713	1734	2447
2020	261	956	1217
2021	333	593	926
2022	33	187	220
2023	277	482	759
2024*	129	182	311

Bag	Number Angler Trips	Percent Achieving Bag
1	339	87.15
2	33	8.48
3	11	2.83
4	4	1.03
5	2	0.51

Bag	Percent Decrease in Landings
1	87
2	8
3	3
4	1
5	<1



Why Propose Management of Wahoo

- Concerns have been raised at Gulf Council regarding Wahoo landings from the Flower Gardens during times when Wahoo aggregate and some constituents are asking for federal regulations.
- Establishing state regulations would potentially stave off more restrictive federal regulations while retaining state management of this species and extending state regulations out into federal waters.
- While biological and scientific data is sparse, this would be a precautionary approach in terms of reducing large one-time catches during aggregations.
- Five fish Bag limit encompasses 100% of the retained bag limits LDWF has observed dockside.



JEFF LANDRY
GOVERNOR



007252JUL2025

TYLER M. BOSWORTH
SECRETARY

PO BOX 98000 | BATON ROUGE LA | 70898

June 21, 2025

Dr. Carrie Simmons
Executive Director
Gulf Council
4107 West Spruce Street, Suite 200
Tampa, Florida 33607

Re: Request for Extension of Wahoo Regulations into Federal Waters

Dear Dr. Simmons,

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has evaluated the management of the Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) fishery, including the possibility of extending state regulations into adjacent federal waters. Wahoo do not currently have any species-specific fishing regulations in federal waters off Louisiana. LDWF has implemented species-specific regulations for the recreational harvest of Wahoo and is seeking to extend those regulations into federal waters.

According to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Title 16 U.S.C. Section 1856, a state has the ability to extend their regulations into federal waters if there is no federal fishery management plan, or if there are no regulations for federal waters.

LDWF staff presented a rule proposal for Wahoo management at the February 6, 2025, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The rule establishes a five fish per person recreational bag and possession limit for Wahoo. The rule was accepted by the LWFC, moved through the administrative rule making process with public comment considered, and published as final on June 20, 2025.

It is our understanding that the Gulf Council has previously discussed the possibility of Wahoo regulations, but has no imminent plans to consider managing Wahoo in federal waters. The LDWF is committed to conserving these resources for future generations and is requesting to extend its regulatory authority into federal waters. Please contact me or Ryan Montegut if you have any questions or concerns about this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "T. Bosworth".

Tyler M. Bosworth
Secretary

cc: Mr. Johnathan Dugas, Chair





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast>

07/29/2025

F/SER24:KO

Mr. Tyler M. Bosworth, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries
PO Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Dear Mr. Bosworth,

This letter acknowledges your letter, requesting to extend Louisiana State recreational and commercial fishing regulations for wahoo into federal waters.

Under section 306(a)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1856(a)(3)), states may regulate a fishing vessel in federal waters under certain specified circumstances. Your letter refers to one of the circumstances specified in 306(a)(3)(A): the fishing vessel is registered under the law of that State and there is no federal fishery management plan or other applicable federal fishing regulations for the fishery in which the vessel is operating. Currently, there is no federal fishery management plan or other federal fishing regulations for wahoo in the Gulf of America (Gulf). Therefore, Louisiana may regulate those vessels that are registered with the state and are fishing for wahoo in federal waters.

It is my understanding that the Gulf Council does not have imminent plans to recommend federal management measures for wahoo. If NOAA Fisheries implements federal regulations for wahoo in the Gulf at a future date, then the state could only regulate Louisiana-registered vessels fishing for wahoo in federal waters if the state's regulations are consistent with the federal fishery management plan and applicable regulations.

NOAA Fisheries commends your office for its commitment to conserving this resource.

Sincerely,

STRELCHECK.AND
REW.JAMES.13858
63152

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Date: 2025.07.29 09:18:09 -0400

Andrew J. Strelcheck
Regional Administrator



Questions

Chris Schieble
cschieble@wlf.la.gov

