

Delegation to Gulf States of the Management Authority for the Federal For-hire Red Snapper Component



Biloxi, MS
November 2025

Council Motion

During the April 2025 meeting, the Council approved the following motion:

Motion: To direct staff to begin work on a presentation to the Council to modify recreational management of red snapper by delegating management authority for the federal for-hire component of the recreational sector to the respective five Gulf states. Proposed management measures should include an option for individual states to opt-out of delegation of federal for-hire management authority. The federal for-hire component in those states that opt-out would continue to be managed under the federal status quo.



Current Recreational Red Snapper Management

Reef Fish Amendments 50 A to F delegate some management authority for recreational fishing of red snapper by **private anglers in federal waters** to the Gulf states. Each state is allocated a portion of the red snapper private angling quota and has authority to set the **private angling fishing season, bag limit, and minimum size limit (between 14-18 inches)**. In addition, states can **request closure of federal waters adjacent to state waters**. If the landings of a state exceed that state's quota, the state's quota will be reduced by the amount of the overage in the following year. The state specific private angling quota percentages are as follows:

State	Louisiana	Mississippi	Alabama	Florida	Texas
Percentage of Total Private Angling Quota	19.120	3.550	26.298	44.822	6.210

Federal for-hire component for red snapper was allocated **42.3%** of the recreational red snapper ACL (RF Amendment 40) and continues to be federally managed Gulf-wide

For-hire Vessels with a Valid or Renewable Federal Gulf For-hire Reef Fish Permit by State

Year	AL		FL		LA		MS		TX	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2016	135	10.0%	813	60.2%	124	9.2%	35	2.6%	244	18.1%
2017	142	10.6%	820	61.0%	122	9.1%	33	2.5%	228	17.0%
2018	140	10.4%	829	61.6%	125	9.3%	32	2.4%	219	16.3%
2019	148	11.0%	840	62.6%	117	8.7%	31	2.3%	206	15.4%
2020	152	11.4%	832	62.3%	114	8.5%	29	2.2%	209	15.6%

For-hire Data Collection Programs

- **Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida:** Effort from the Federal Marine Recreational Information Program For-Hire Survey (MRIP FHS); Catch from MRIP's Access-Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS)
- **Louisiana:** Catch and effort from LA Creel Program
- **Texas:** Catch and effort from Texas Parks and Wildlife creel survey
- **Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS):** Headboats Gulf-wide catch and effort
- **Alabama and Mississippi:** Creel surveys undergoing testing; expected to replace MRIP and other state survey programs for red snapper in the future.
- The Council is developing Modifications to the **Gulf For-hire** Data Collection Program

Steps towards Delegating Management Authority

- Purpose and Need Statement
- Allocation of the Federal for-hire component red snapper ACL
- Management measures to be delegated
- Regulatory actions and recreational quotas

Purpose and Need Statement

To begin work on amendment(s) to modify the recreational management of red snapper by delegating management authority for the federal for-hire component to the respective Gulf states and include an option for individual states to opt-out of delegation of federal for-hire management authority.

The Council would specify a purpose and need for this action:

- what would the amendments achieve?
- what are the issues or challenges these amendments would address?

Allocation of the Federal For-hire Component Red Snapper ACL

To delegate management authority for the federal for-hire component to Gulf states and allow individual states to opt-out of delegation, the Council will have to **allocate the for-hire red snapper ACL between the states**. Criteria to consider could include:

- for-hire red snapper landings
- red snapper abundance off each state
- negotiated agreement between the states (used in RF 50)

How would state quotas be structured (separate federal for-hire, and private angling, or state-wide quotas) ?

**For-hire Component
Quota**



**Private Angling Component
Quota**

or

**State Red Snapper
Allocation**

**(Combined For-Hire and
Private Angling Quotas)**

Regulatory Actions

Would a series of amendments be developed (umbrella amendment and individual states' amendments as in RF Amendments 50 A-F)

What parts of the management authority for the federal for-hire component would be delegated to states:

- for-hire red snapper fishing season
- for-hire red snapper bag limit
- for-hire red snapper size limit (with a minimum and maximum)
- request closure of Federal waters adjacent to state waters.

Questions

Are there calibration issues to address due to the different for-hire data collection programs?

Would the Southeast Region Headboat Survey continue to collect data for headboats in all states?

If a for-hire vessel fishes out of more than one state? Would landings be assigned to the state it was landed in?

What are the implications for federal for-hire permits of delegating red snapper for-hire management to the states?

Are there enforcement challenges due to delegating federal management for a single reef fish species (red snapper)?