

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

Reef Fish Amendment 64



**Biloxi, MS
August 2026**

Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of this action is to establish a program structure through which a Gulf state may establish a management program that would provide flexibility in the management of the federally permitted vessels' harvest of red snapper for their anglers.

The need is to consider the management of the federal for-hire harvest of red snapper within the context of the states of the Gulf to prevent overfishing, while achieving, on a continued basis, the optimum yield from the harvest of red snapper by the federal for-hire sector; take into account and allow for variations among and contingencies in the fisheries; fisheries resources and catches; and provide fair and equitable access for the sustained participation of fishing communities of the Gulf and, to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities.

Purpose and Need Statement (Revised)

The purpose of this action is to delegate authority to the Gulf states to set specific management measures for the federal red snapper charter vessel/headboat component of the Gulf of America reef fish fishery to provide regional flexibility in managing federally permitted for-hire vessels that take anglers fishing for red snapper.

The need is to consider state management of the red snapper charter vessel/headboat component of the Gulf of America reef fish fishery to better respond to regional variations and contingencies, provide for the sustained participation of fishing communities and, to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on those communities, while preventing overfishing and achieving optimum yield on a continuing basis.

Action 1: Delegation of the Federal For-Hire Management Authority for Red Snapper to Gulf States

Alternative 1: No Action. Maintain federal management for red snapper for the federal for-hire component.

Alternative 2: For the federal for-hire red snapper component, delegate the management authority to set state-specific federal for-hire red snapper season, and bag and size limits to the state of:

Option a: Alabama

Option b: Florida

Option c: Louisiana

Option d: Mississippi

Option d: Texas

Alternative 3: For the federal for-hire red snapper component, delegate the management authority to set state-specific for-hire red snapper season, and bag and size limits to **ALL** Gulf states.

For-Hire Permit Requirements by State

State	Required State Permits & Licenses
Louisiana	Charter Recreational Offshore Landing Permit (ROLP) & State Charter License
Florida	Florida Charter Boat or Headboat License
Alabama	Resident or Non-Resident Charter License
Mississippi	Mississippi Charter Boat License
Texas	Texas Commercial Guiding License & Saltwater Endorsement

Action 1 – Related Issues

Would red snapper endorsements to the federal permit be required? If yes, include an action establishing endorsements

Would a vessel be allowed to get multiple endorsements (several states)

Would the vessel be allowed to change endorsement during the year

Would endorsements be transferable

Are there minimum and maximum values for the bag and size limits to consider (for example, bag limit no more than 4 fish /person)

Action 1 – Related Issues (Excerpts from RF 50A)

Endorsements

Alternative 1: No Action. State management areas are defined by boundaries that extend outward from each state into federal waters of the Gulf (Figure 1). If a state is managing the federal for-hire component, the owners or operators of federally permitted vessels fishing for or possessing red snapper within that state's management area must follow the regulations specific to that state's management program. If a state is not managing the federal for-hire component, the owners or operators of federally permitted vessels fishing for or possessing red snapper within that state's management area must follow the federal default regulations.

Action 1 – Related Issues (Excerpts from RF 50A)

Endorsements

Alternative 2: Establish a state-specific red snapper endorsement to the Gulf reef fish charter/headboat permit to fish for or possess red snapper in federal waters of the Gulf. A vessel with an endorsement for a state with an approved state management plan that includes the federal for-hire component must follow the regulations specific to the state program for which the endorsement is issued. A vessel with an endorsement for a state without an approved state management plan that includes the federal for-hire component, must follow federal default regulations.

Option a: A charter/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish with a red snapper endorsement may be used to land red snapper in one state per fishing year. If an endorsement is associated with a permit that is transferred, an endorsement for a different state will not be issued to the transferred permit until the following fishing year.

Option b: A charter/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish with a red snapper endorsement may be used to land red snapper in one state per fishing year, unless the permit is transferred. If a charter/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish with an associated endorsement is transferred during the fishing year, a new endorsement may be issued upon request for a different state.

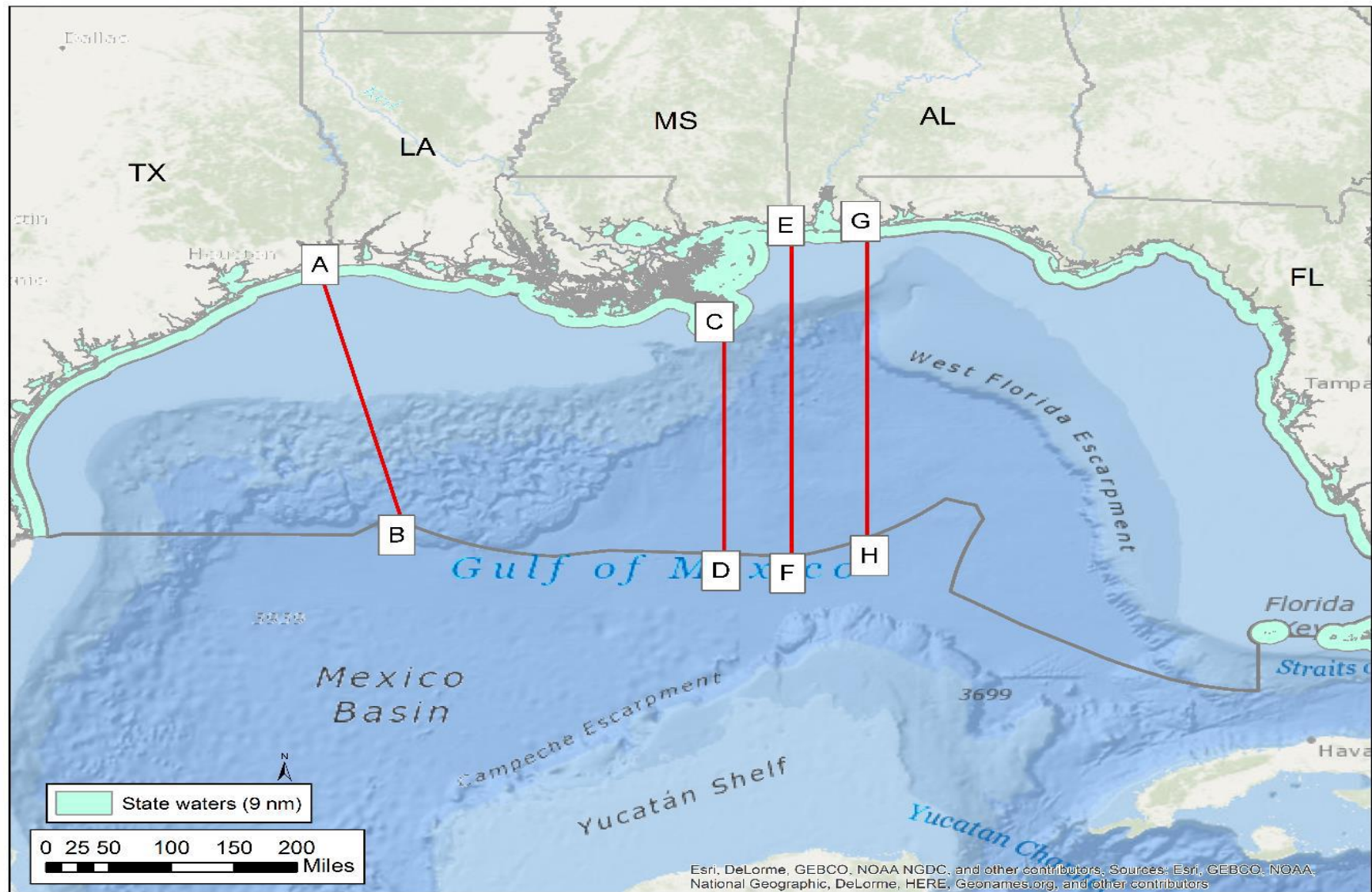


Figure 1. Map with green shading to identify reef fish management in state waters from federal waters and established and proposed boundaries between states extending into federal waters.

Action 2: Delegation Sunset Provisions

Alternative 1: No Action. No sunset provision

Alternative 2: The delegation of the federal for-hire management authority for red snapper to Gulf States will sunset after:

Option a: 2 years

Option b: 3 years

Option c: 4 years

Option d: 5 years

**Action 3: Allocation of the Federal For-hire Component
Red Snapper Quota among Gulf States**

Alternative 1: Do not allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota among states.

Alternative 2: Allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota among Gulf states based on each state’s average red snapper landings between **2016 and 2024**

Alternative 3: Allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota among Gulf states based on each state’s average red snapper landings between **2021 and 2024**

Alternative	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas
Alternative 2	26.50%	48.80%	5.40%	0.70%	18.50%
Alternative 3	22.60%	53.10%	4.70%	0.50%	19.00%

continued

Action 3: Allocation of the Federal For-hire Component Red Snapper Quota among Gulf States

Alternative 4: Allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota among Gulf States based on the Amendment 40 Sector Separation Formula ($50\% \times 1986-2005, 2007-2009, 2011-2013$) + ($50\% \times 2007-2009, 2011-2013$).

Alternative 5: Allocate the federal for-hire red snapper quota among Gulf States based on 50% of Amendment 40 Sector Separation Formula ($50\% \times 1986-2005, 2007-2009, 2011-2013$) + ($50\% \times 2007-2009, 2011-2013$) and 50% of each state's average red snapper landings between 2021 and 2024 + ($50\% \times 2021-2024$) in Alternative 3.

Alternative	Alabama	Florida	Louisiana	Mississippi	Texas
Alternative 4	36.73%	26.29%	11.08%	0.80%	25.09%
Alternative 5	38.96%	25.69%	10.27%	0.76%	24.32%

Action 4: Post-season Accountability Measures

Alternative 1: No Action. No post-season accountability measures.

Alternative 2: If a state's red snapper federal for-hire component landings exceed the applicable state's component annual catch limit (ACL), the National Marine Fisheries Service will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register, at or near the beginning of the following fishing year, reducing that state's federal for-hire ACL by the amount of the ACL overage in the prior fishing year.

Action 5: Procedure to Request Closure to Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing of Areas of Federal Waters Adjacent to State Waters

Alternative 1: No Action. States can not request NMFS close areas of federal waters adjacent to state waters to red snapper for-hire fishing.

Alternative 2: Establish a procedure to allow a state to request NMFS close areas of federal waters adjacent to state waters to red snapper for-hire fishing. The state would request the closure by letter, providing dates and geographic coordinates for the closure. Should the request be within the scope of the analysis provided in this amendment, NMFS will file a notification with the Office of the Federal Register to implement the closure.

