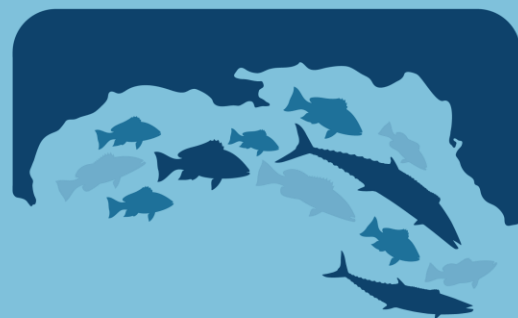


Draft Reef Fish Amendment 66:

Establishing Flexible Management Authority for Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing



GULF
COUNCIL

Background: Council Direction

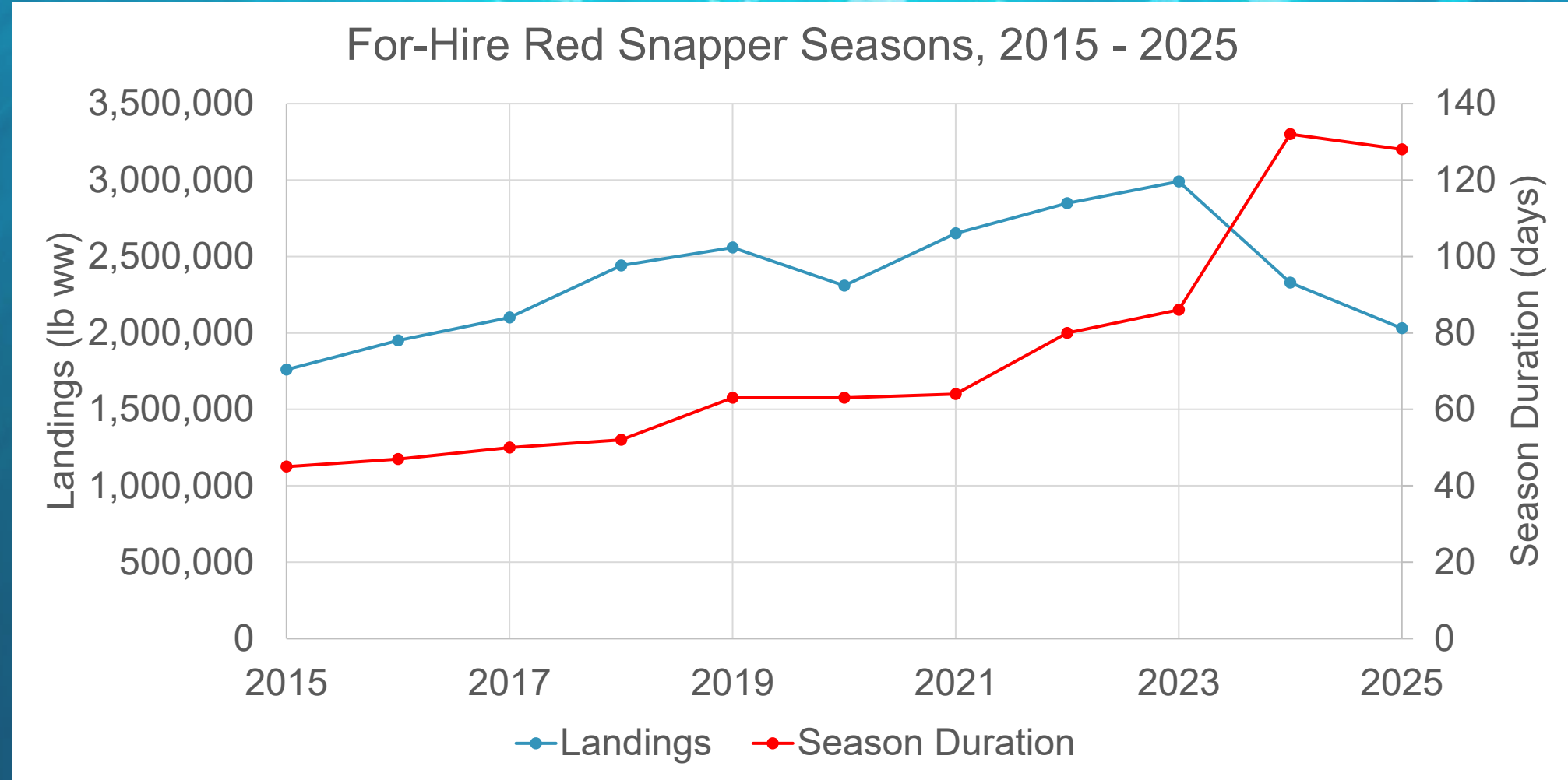
- Despite longer fishing seasons, FH not landing ACT recently
- Designate authority to NMFS to modify select federal for-hire fishing regulations for red snapper based on predetermined criteria:
 - Bag limits
 - ~~Minimum size limits~~
 - Fishing season start dates, structure, core season?
 - ~~Weekends only~~ Continuous? Split season?
- RA can already reopen the fishing season prior to the end of the fishing year
- Core priorities, in order:
 1. Predictable fishing season
 2. Access to catch annual catch target (ACT)

Start date

Fishing Year



Landings versus Season Duration



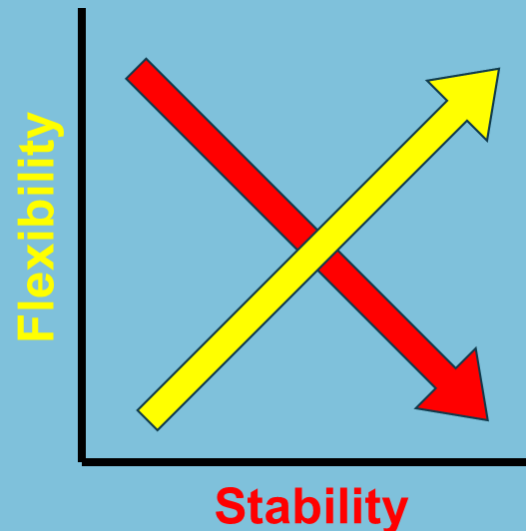
Amendment Type

- Plan amendment needed
- Framework Procedure:
 - Modified to allow NMFS to make changes to federal FH regulations annually
- Default: Current red snapper regulations
 - Season opens Friday before Memorial Day (*transmitted*) 
 - Season closes when FH ACT is projected to be met 
 - 16-inch total length minimum size limit 
 - 2 fish per person daily bag limit 



Timing of Regulatory Changes

- Framework procedure will be explicit about changes to be smoothly implemented
 - Closed framework process
 - Scope of possible effects analyzed in advance
 - Public would be able to predict changes and effects
 - E.g., “if, then, else”
- Remember:



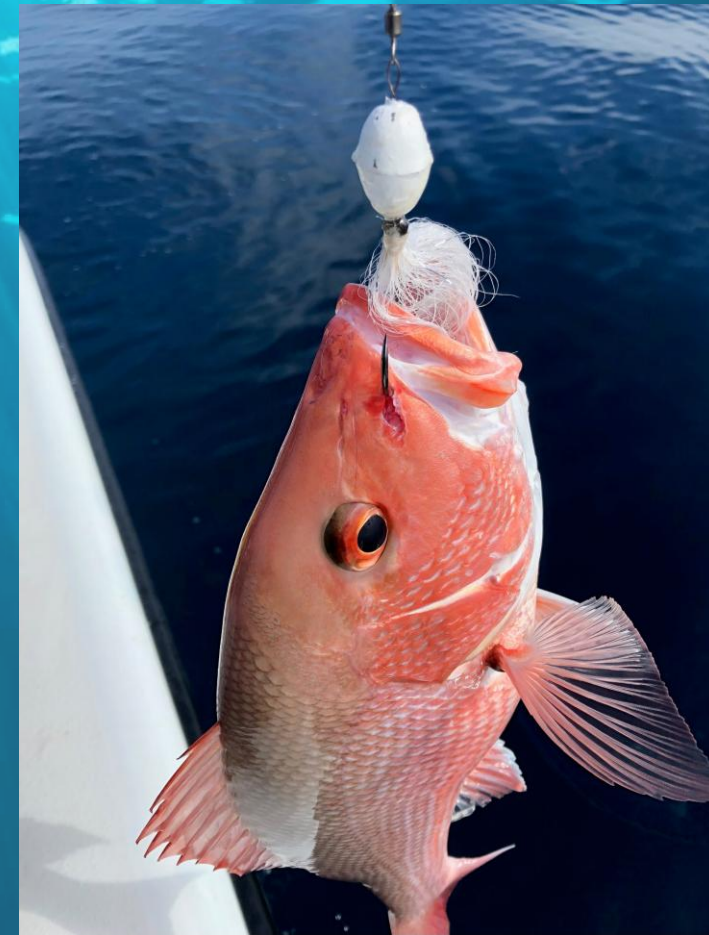
Purpose and Need

- Purpose:
 - The purpose is to develop procedures that provide NMFS the authority to make management modifications within a specified timeframe and pre-analyzed range of alternatives for the federal for-hire fleet for red snapper in the Gulf.



Purpose and Need

- Need:
 - The need is to provide management flexibility including improved access to red snapper for the federal for-hire fleet while preventing overfishing and on a continuing basis achieving the optimum yield from the harvest of red snapper by the federal for-hire fleet in the Gulf.



Action 1: Modify the Recreational Fishing Year for Red Snapper

- 407(d): Rec sector still managed as a single sector, despite sector separation
 - If combined sector landings reach sector ACL, fishery closes
 - Means a change to the recreational fishing year affects both sector components
- **Alternative 1: No Action**
 - Fishing year: January 1 – December 31



Action 1: Modify the Recreational Fishing Year for Red Snapper

- **Alternative 2:** Modify the recreational fishing year for red snapper to begin on May 1 and end on April 30.
- **Alternative 3:** Modify the recreational fishing year for red snapper to begin on April 1 and end on March 31.
- **Notes:**
 - Possibility for spring break season for both components (**improved access**)
 - States have latitude to set fishing seasons within the fishing year
 - Catch projections lack data for January 1 – May 31
 - “Learn as we go”
 - Can infer fishery dynamics from other reef fish species



Action 2: Establish a Core For-Hire Fishing Season

- **Alternative 1:** No Action. Do not modify the FH fishing season. The FH fishing season opens the Friday before the federal Memorial Day Weekend and closes when the FH ACT is projected to be met.



Action 2: Establish a Core FH Fishing Season

- **Alternative 2:** Modify the FH fishing season. Establish a core fishing season that opens the Friday before the federal Memorial Day Weekend and closes by **August 15**, or when the FH ACT is projected to be met, whichever occurs first.
- **Alternative 3:** Modify the FH fishing season. Establish a core fishing season that opens the Friday before the federal Memorial Day Weekend and closes by **August 31**, or when the FH ACT is projected to be met, whichever occurs first.



Action 2: Establish a Core FH Fishing Season

- **How it might look:**
- **Alternative 2: August 15**

	June 1 to August 15					
	June	July	August	Total Predicted	Federal FH	% of ACT
	30 days	31 days	15 days	Landings (lb ww)	ACT (lb ww)	
2021	1,360,260	652,209	315,585	2,328,054	3,076,322	76%
2022	1,517,070	827,018	400,170	2,744,258	3,076,322	89%
2023	1,398,030	891,250	431,250	2,720,530	3,076,322	88%
2024	1,018,890	604,717	292,605	1,916,212	3,076,322	62%
2025	807,600	514,352	248,880	1,570,832	3,076,322	51%

- **Alternative 3: August 31**

	June 1 to August 31					
	June	July	August	Total Predicted	Federal FH	% of ACT
	30 days	31 days	31 days	Landings (lb ww)	ACT (lb ww)	
2021	1,360,260	652,209	631,170	2,643,639	3,076,322	86%
2022	1,517,070	827,018	800,340	3,144,428	3,076,322	102%
2023	1,398,030	891,250	862,500	3,151,780	3,076,322	102%
2024	1,018,890	604,717	585,210	2,208,817	3,076,322	72%
2025	807,600	514,352	497,760	1,819,712	3,076,322	59%



Action 2: Establish a Core FH Fishing Season

- **Notes: The core fishing season...**
 - Represents the preferred time to fish for the FH component
 - Opens first in the FH fishing year
 - **Predictable fishing season**



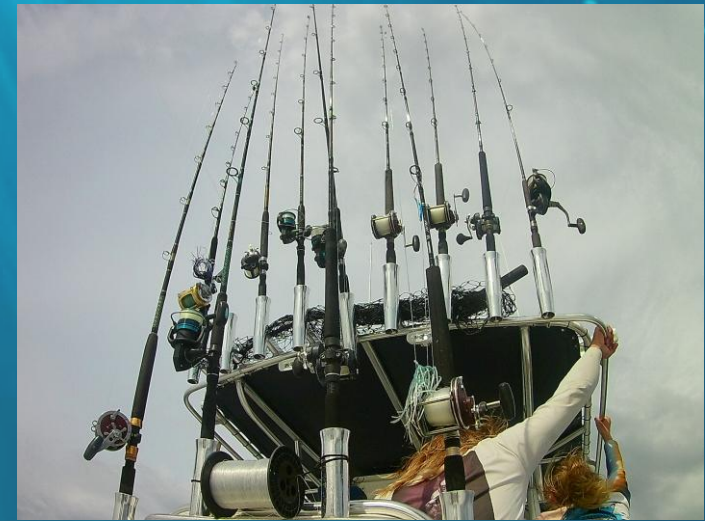
Action 3: Reopening the FH Fishing Season in a Fishing Year

- **Alternative 1: No Action.** Do not modify the FH fishing season. The FH fishing season opens the Friday before the federal Memorial Day Weekend and closes when the FH ACT is projected to be met.



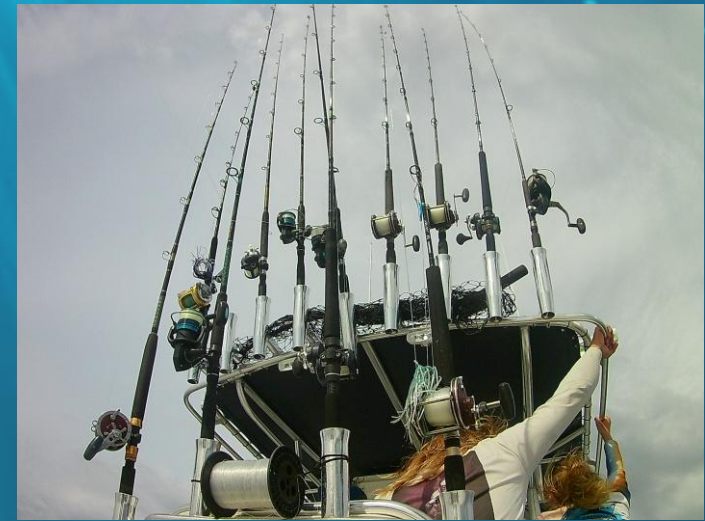
Action 3: Reopening the FH Fishing Season in a Fishing Year

- **Alternative 2:** Modify the FH fishing season. If the FH core fishing season as defined in Action 2 is completed and NMFS determines enough of the FH ACT remains to reopen the FH fishing season before the end of the recreational fishing year, NMFS may reopen the FH fishing season on or about **November 15** and close the FH fishing season when the ACT is projected to be met, or by the end of the recreational fishing year as defined in Action 1, whichever occurs first. This FH fishing season modification would occur under the closed framework process.



Action 3: Reopening the FH Fishing Season in a Fishing Year

- **Alternative 3:** Modify the FH fishing season. If the FH core fishing season as defined in Action 2 is completed and NMFS determines enough of the FH ACT remains to reopen the FH fishing season before the end of the recreational fishing year, NMFS may reopen the FH fishing season on or about **March 1** and close the FH fishing season when the ACT is projected to be met, or by the end of the recreational fishing year as defined in Action 1, whichever occurs first. This FH fishing season modification would occur under the closed framework process.
- Notes:
 - Alternative 3 **requires** changing the fishing year in Action 1
 - **Improved access, predictable reopening**



Action 4: Modifying FH Bag Limits under the Reef Fish Framework Procedure

A quick review...

- **Closed Framework:** does not require any action by the Council for NMFS to implement
- **Open Framework:** Council reviews and recommends a management action to NMFS



Action 4: Modifying FH Bag Limits under the Reef Fish Framework Procedure

- **Alternative 1: No Action.** Do not modify the Reef Fish framework procedure as established by Reef Fish Amendment 49.
- **Notes:**
 - Current framework procedure would require an open framework process for changing bag limits
 - Hard-coding the fishing season part in Actions 2 and 3 simplifies this to some extent for those measures
 - Clearly defined triggers needed to operate within the closed framework procedure for bag limit modifications
 - Triggers make changes predictable for agency and public



Action 4: Modifying FH Bag Limits under the Reef Fish Framework Procedure

- **Alternative 2:** Modify the Reef Fish framework procedure as established by Reef Fish Amendment 49. If, at the end of the recreational fishing year, more than a percentage of the FH ACT has not been caught, then in the following fishing year, NMFS may increase the daily bag limit for the FH component to increase the likelihood that the FH component catches its ACT. This decision will be based on landings projections relative to the core FH fishing season, and the FH daily bag limit and FH ACT in the same fishing year.



Action 4: Modifying FH Bag Limits under the Reef Fish Framework Procedure

- **Alternative 2:** Modify the Reef Fish framework procedure...

ACT Percentage Trigger

- **Option 2a:** If more than 30% of the FH ACT remains at the end of the recreational fishing year.
- **Option 2b:** If more than 15% of the FH ACT remains at the end of the recreational fishing year.

Bag Limit Trigger Response

- **Option 2c:** NMFS may increase the FH daily bag limit to not more than 3 fish per person for the following fishing year only.
- **Option 2d:** NMFS may increase the FH daily bag limit to not more than 4 fish per person for the following fishing year only.



Action 4: Modifying FH Bag Limits under the Reef Fish Framework Procedure

- **Alternative 3:** Modify the Reef Fish framework procedure as established by Reef Fish Amendment 49. If the FH fishing season is projected to close before the end of the core fishing season as established under Action 2, then NMFS may decrease the daily bag limit to one fish per person for the FH component to increase the likelihood that the FH component remains open throughout the core fishing season. This decision will be based on landings projections relative to the core FH fishing season, and the FH daily bag limit and FH ACT in the same fishing year.
- Notes:
 - May **improve access**, when access is otherwise reduced because of a catch limit reduction



Next Steps?

