Public comments received during the review stage of SEDAR 98

SEDAR

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Assessment

SEDAR 98 Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper

SEDAR 98 addresses the benchmark stock assessment for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper. Data Scoping for this project was held in August 2024, with an in-person Data Workshop in December 2024. The assessment process will be a series of webinars from April through October 2025, with an in-person Review Workshop in March 2026. For more information on the review, please contact the SEDAR Coordinator for this project, Julie Neer: Julie.neer@safmc.net

Submit Date	Submitted By	Comment
9/21/26	First Name: Jeff Last Name: Pippin Email: Jeff@pppholdco.com	Based on my trips the red snapper stock is healthy. The smalll to medium fish are abundant in most depths. The bigger fish have pushed a bit deeper. Overall the stock seems as healthy as it's ever been
9/22/26	First Name: Sean Last Name: Heverin Email: seanhev77@yahoo.com	As a fish house operator and someone who must source Snapper allocation for the 60-70+ fisherman in the fleet we buy from across the Gulf to catch I can say that Snapper allocation has been harder than ever to find and obtain. The price of Snapper allocation continues to rise each year as demand grows. From a landing perspective we have seen the same amount of landings each year for Snapper from 2021-2026. We have already landed all of the Snapper allocation we leased this year and have had to go out and source more to finish out 2026. If the Snapper fishery wasn't strong then the Snapper allocation would be readily available and much cheaper meaning that all of the available allocation on the market was not getting caught each year much like SWG or Tile is. When there is 95% or more of the commercial Snapper ACL fishery getting caught each year then it shows that the Snapper fishery is strong and healthy. Some fisherman are commenting that the fishery has suffered localized depletion in their home areas. However, gulf wide there is still enough Snapper out there that the commercial fleet has still been able to fill their quota which represents that the fishery is healthy. The moment that the commercial landings for Snapper dip below historic norms and only reach 50-75% of the commercial ACL for Snapper than I think there would need to be a reduction in the Snapper ACL.
9/22/26	First Name: bob Last Name: zales Email: bobzales@sfaonline.org	I heard a comment from one of the panelists after the presentation about red snapper comments re the fishery that said people tend to provide info over time about stock status with those being negative and the survey was only from 22 to 26 and since there was no such survey prior would be difficult to know if the status concerns predated 22. While the survey helped provide the info on the negative status of gulf rs comments from the public have been provided at every council meeting prior to 22 and concerns about the stock have been expressed from the com and for hire sectors and some pri recs. Those concerns have grown every year. The concerns about lack of rs, smaller fish, more difficult to catch bag limits, com fishermen having to fish longer and further from shore along with for hire doing the same have been expressed since about '18. Fishermen have seen a decline in the gulf stock since the pri rec sector has been allowed to fish in the eez under state management with more days, thus excess effort, more than the fishery can handle. Effort and landings need to be seriously considered in this assessment.
9/22/26	First Name: Michael Last Name: Drexler Email: mdrexler@oceanconservancy.org	There is a perception that recreational discard information is highly uncertain and not reliable and I've heard it repeated during this assessment many times. However, most of the catch queries I've conducted show a lower PSE for discard estimates than for landings estimates over the same period. This is likely due to the higher sample size of intercepts with discards for stocks with shorter seasons. So, is it accurate to say discard information is more uncertain than landings given there is more information to inform those estimates -resulting in lower PSEs than landings?
9/22/26	First Name: bob Last Name: zales Email: bobzales@sfaonline.org	There appears to be a lack of explanation to the CIE reviewers about how the gulf red snapper fishery is prosecuted by the 3 sectors fishing, Commercial, for hire charter (including headboats), and private recreational. I think it is safe to assume that these folks are not knowledgable about these fisheries and the science center seems to have failed in providing the important information as to how and why each sector fishes. My below explanation is simply to help folks understand the differences. Since each gulf state has been able to mange their pri rec sector each state has a different fishing season. An open rs rec season does not mean anglers stop fishing, they just can't keep rs. Discards of rs continue year round. In recent years since FL adopted a no boat check by FWC officers a couple years ago, anglers know as long as they drive a straight line odds of being stopped for any kind of check, safety of fish, is slim to noe so they know they can land whatever, stow their fishing gear, and drive home with their catch, legal or not, and will not get caught so illegal fishing has expanded and there is no record. During the both open and closed seasons this activity occurs. High grading is an issue during the open season due to restricted bag limits as some, and I suspect many do not high grade because they understand the impact of discards. Because each state has it's own season tracking landings is more difficult but because state data programs are imrpoved most of those lanbdings and discard info should be accounted for. A key issue in the pri rec sector everywhere is unlimited access, no constraint on effort, as there is no restriction or cap on the number of pri rec licenses sold. There is a difference in central gulf vs east gulf because of the amount of effort. AL and the FL panhandle have a lot more effort for rs than east FL due mostly to the fact rs can be landed closer to shore in the panhandle and AL as water is deeper faster than central and south FL and rs has always been a major target in the central gulf. The for hire charters and headboats have a self enforcement ability when it comes to discards, the number of people on board andin many cases they don't know each other so high grading is more difficult and much less on these boats. Their primary season is rs snapper in most areas of the Gulf so fishing is heavy then and less when snapper is closed. Fishing occurs outside rs season but there is much less effort. The fed season is the same for all across the gulf so you don't have the varying seasons that pri recs do. Because the for hire charters and headboats are restricted by required fed fishing permits and all are limited entry effort has been capped for many years. Because each business depends on those permits owners are more prone to comply with the law as their business is at stake. The commercial fishery is an IFQ fishery and consistantly their harvest is within their allowed quota, They do not exceed it. A prime arguement for the IFQ was to reduce discards. Unfortunately when the NOAA/NMFS folks decised to open the ownership of quota to anyone and owners entered the game to lease quota and prices are considered to high, some fishermen who fish for groupers and other species do not lease and must discard rs which in some cases is high as rs snapper are located where they seek other species. This has created the discard problem in the com fishery. Because these fishermen can fish whenever they want as long as they have quota their fishing typically extends throughout the year. Their discards are much less than the pri recs. Also, the com discards are recorded by required logbooks which provide much better discard data and is more reliable. Over the past several years the IFQ fishermen have had to fish further from shore to harvest their catch and fish are smaller. Also due to the fact they are also constrained by limited entry permits and IFQs they operate in a legal way as their business is always at stake. Their effort, along with for hire charter and headboat effort is capped, unlike the pri rec sector. Hopes this helps folks understand more about the rs fishery.
9/23/26	First Name: Sean Last Name: Beckham Email: sbeckham411@gmail.com	For the last three years with the increase to recreational access from the governor, I feel I have seen less red snapper in federal Waters from the 27 north to the 24 north. until NOAA can determine, which species of fish should be used for entertainment versus which species of fish should be used for a food source. I don't see it getting any better, in southwest Florida
9/24/26	First Name: George Last Name: Hisler III Email: hislergeorge@gmail.com	I am writing to share my observations regarding historical trends in the red snapper fishery and to provide input on reporting requirements for commercial fishermen. Based on my direct experience on the water over the past two decades, I have observed the following key changes: - 2007–2012: There was a noticeable, major upward climb in the population of red snapper. - 2013–2018: As quotas increased, I shifted from multi-species trips to targeting red snapper primarily to keep pace with market demand. - 2019–Present: The overall population appears to have reached its growth potential and is now flat or slightly declining rather than increasing. Larger fish (specifically in the 4–10 pound range) have become increasingly difficult to find and require more effort, longer hours, and traveling further distances—from offshore Morgan City, Louisiana, down to the U.S.–Mexico border. - Pressure & Habitat: While red snapper remain present across most habitat types, heavier localized fishing pressure in accessible areas—potentially driven by an increase in smaller vessels with limited range—prevents fish from reaching larger size classes. Additionally, oil platforms have been removed, though larger wrecks and fish havens still hold schools of fish (albeit not necessarily larger individuals). Finally, regarding reporting requirements, it is extremely frustrating, as a commercial fisherman, to hear that our mandatorily reported data does not get used in the stock assessment. Commercial fishermen are a consistent, near-real-time source of fishing effort and landings, while recreational data collection relies on surveys that have dismal return rates. Data gathered directly from fishermen offers the most immediate, real-world evidence of current fishery and community trends, and it should be put to meaningful use in stock assessments if reporting is mandated. I urge NOAA and the scientists who conduct stock assessment to begin working with commercial fishermen now on how to include our data in future stock assessments.