

## **NOAA Announces the 2018 Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Recreational Seasons and Clarifies Permit Regulations for Vessels Fishing in Federal Waters**

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### **WHAT/WHEN:**

NOAA Fisheries has issued exempted fishing permits, which allow each Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) state to set their own season for the red snapper private angling component in state and federal waters during 2018 and 2019. The 2018 fishing season for the federally permitted for-hire component will be 51 days in federal waters of the Gulf.

Season dates for each component are:

- **Private Anglers: Gulf states will set seasons through exempted fishing permits. Please read below.**
- **Federally Permitted For-Hire Vessels: June 1, 2018, 12:01 a.m., local time, until July 22, 2018, at 12:01 a.m., local time.**

### **HOW THE SEASONS WERE DETERMINED:**

- The red snapper total recreational quota is 6.73 million pounds, allocated 57.7% to the private angling component and 42.3% to the for-hire component.
- For the private angling component:
  - NOAA Fisheries has issued exempted fishing permits that allow each Gulf state (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida) to set the season for the private angling component for red snapper caught in state and federal waters that are landed in that state. Each state will be providing a separate announcement notifying anglers when their season will open and close.
  - Private anglers with the appropriate licenses from a state are exempt from the federal closure and are able to land fish caught in federal waters during seasons specified by the state.
  - States will monitor red snapper private angler landings and close their seasons if the state's assigned quota is reached or projected to be reached.
- For the for-hire component:
  - The 2018 annual catch target for the federal for-hire component is 2,278,000 pounds whole weight.
  - The number of days for the federal for-hire component to harvest its annual catch target was projected using recent catch rates and mean weights.

### **REGULATIONS FOR FISHING IN FEDERAL WATERS:**

- Anglers fishing from private vessels:
  - When fishing for red snapper in federal waters, private anglers will need a permit, license, or registration from the state in which they intend to land the fish.
  - Anglers can fish anywhere in federal waters, including in federal waters off a state with a closed season, if the state where they intend to land is open.
  - Private anglers must follow all other requirements for landing in the state and abide by the federal bag limit (maximum two fish per person) and size limit (minimum 16 inches total length) when fishing in federal waters.
- For information on state regulations:
  - Florida, please call 850-487-0554
  - Alabama, please go to <http://www.outdooralabama.com/saltwater-fishing/exempted-fishing-permit>
  - Mississippi, please call 228-374-5000 or go to <http://dmr.ms.gov/index.php/component/content/category/159-snapper-tails-n-scales>
  - Louisiana, please call 504-284-2032
  - Texas, please call 512-389-4620 or email [Julie.hagen@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Julie.hagen@tpwd.texas.gov)
- State licensed for-hire vessels without a Federal Gulf Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish:
  - The exempted fishing permits do not allow for-hire vessels to fish for or possess red snapper in or from federal waters without a federal for-hire permit.
  - Please see state regulations relative to fishing for red snapper in state waters.
- Vessels with a Federal Gulf Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish:
  - Persons aboard a federally permitted for-hire vessel cannot fish for or possess red snapper in federal or state waters when the federal for-hire season is closed.
  - If the federal permit is transferred off the vessel, persons aboard the vessel cannot, any time during that fishing year, fish for or possess red snapper in federal waters when the federal for-hire season is closed.

- These restrictions apply even if the vessel is not acting as a charter vessel, for example, the captain is taking his family fishing.
- These restrictions apply regardless of any other permit on the vessel.
- Relevant regulations: 50 CRF 622.39(c) and 622.41(q)(2)(iii)(B).
- Vessels with a Federal Gulf of Mexico Commercial Reef Fish Permit:
  - Persons aboard the vessel can recreationally fish for red snapper when the private angling season is open, if they declare they are recreationally fishing when they hail out through the vessel monitoring system (VMS) or call-in system.
  - While on a recreational trip, each person aboard is restricted to the bag limit, no commercial quantities of any reef fish species can be on board, and the fish may not be sold.
  - This does not apply if the vessel also has a Federal Gulf Charter/Headboat Permit for Reef Fish (see above).
  - Relevant regulations: 50 CFR 622.39(b), 622.28(e), 622.38(a)(2).

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### Why is NOAA Fisheries not setting a private angling red snapper season?

- NOAA Fisheries issued exempted fishing permits to each Gulf state to set their own federal season for the private angling component.
- To accommodate the exempted fishing permits, the private angling season will be closed all year in federal waters, but private anglers with the appropriate licenses from a state are exempt from the federal closure, and can harvest fish from federal waters during that state's season.

#### Why did NOAA Fisheries issue the exempted fishing permits?

- Although red snapper are recovering quickly in the Gulf, the federal recreational fishing season for private anglers has been getting shorter each year.
- Many fishermen are frustrated with the increasingly restrictive federal management of red snapper and see a need for increased cooperation between state and federal governments.
- NOAA Fisheries recognizes new and innovative solutions are needed to manage the Gulf recreational red snapper fishery.

Sector or Component	2018 quota (pounds whole weight)	2018 Annual Catch Target (pounds whole weight)
All Recreational	6,733,000	n/a
Federal for-hire	2,848,000	2,278,000
Private angling	3,885,000	3,108,000

#### What are the quotas and annual catch targets for 2018?

- The quota for red snapper in the Gulf for both the commercial and recreational sectors is 13.74 million pounds whole weight. The recreational sector is allocated 49% of that total, which is 6,733,000 pounds whole weight.
- The red snapper total recreational quota is allocated 57.7% to the private angling component and 42.3% to the for-hire component.
- The annual catch targets are 80% of the quotas. This 20% buffer helps minimize the potential for a quota overage.

#### Where can I find more information on the red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico?

- For more information on red snapper management, please visit [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/red\\_snapper/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/red_snapper/index.html).
- For more information on the exempted fishing permits for state management of red snapper, please visit [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/LOA\\_and\\_EFP/2018/RS%20state%20pilot/home.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/LOA_and_EFP/2018/RS%20state%20pilot/home.html).

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