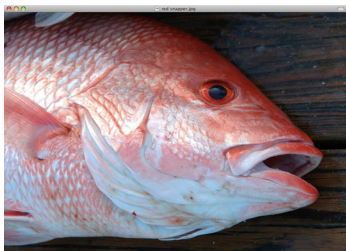




SCOPING GUIDE

1/11/13



Reef Fish Amendment 39 - Regional Management of Recreational Red Snapper



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What is Scoping?

During scoping, fishery issues are identified and potential impacts and management options are suggested. Scoping is the first and best opportunity for you to make suggestions or raise issues to the Council before an amendment is developed.

How does scoping affect fishery management?

Scoping comments are reported to the Council and used in the development of management options. Once options are developed, the public hearing process begins. During this phase, you will have the opportunity to comment on the management alternatives under consideration. Your input will be considered as the Council deliberates and chooses the most appropriate management measures.

How else can I get involved?

There are many ways you can help the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identify fishery management needs and develop reasonable management alternatives. There is a range of options for participation in fisheries management, each dependent on how actively involved you want to become. The first step to getting involved is to educate yourself about the management process by visiting www.gulfcouncil.org. Sign up to receive our communications, and contact council members and staff to discuss your questions or concerns. You can attend meetings and serve on panels and committees to advise the Council on fishery issues. You can even apply to become a Council member.

Introduction

Red snapper is managed as a single unit in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Since red snapper is subject to a Gulf-wide quota, states with inconsistent regulations impact federal management. Texas is the only state that regularly adopts recreational red snapper regulations that are different from

federal regulations. Recently, other states have begun to express a desire to make red snapper regulations that are more suitable to local needs.

Quota

The amount of fish that can be harvested before the fishery is closed for the remainder of the year.



This amendment considers dividing red snapper management among different regions in the Gulf. Regional management would encourage more flexibility in how the recreational quota is managed, and it would enable areas of the Gulf to propose management measures tailored to specific regions. However, red snapper would remain a federally managed species and federal conservation goals and annual quotas would apply.

The Council has considered regional management scenarios many times. While there are advantages to the idea, there are also some challenges that need to be considered. The

following document outlines the actions that will need to be addressed if the Council decides to move forward with regional management.

Scope of Actions

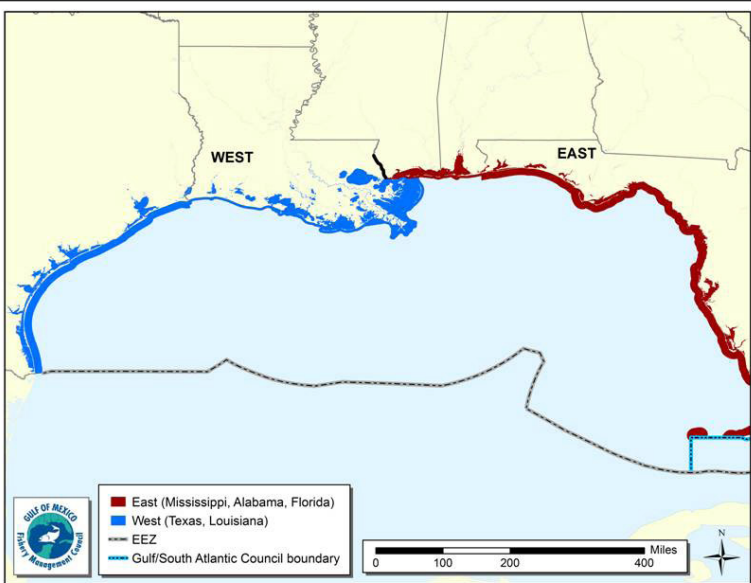
I. Defining Regions

Recreational red snapper management regions could be based on geographical, political, or ecological criteria. Regions could be defined by the Council or the Council could establish a program framework that allows regions to submit their own proposals. Regional boundaries will have to be defined and could extend into federal waters to correspond with regional regulations.

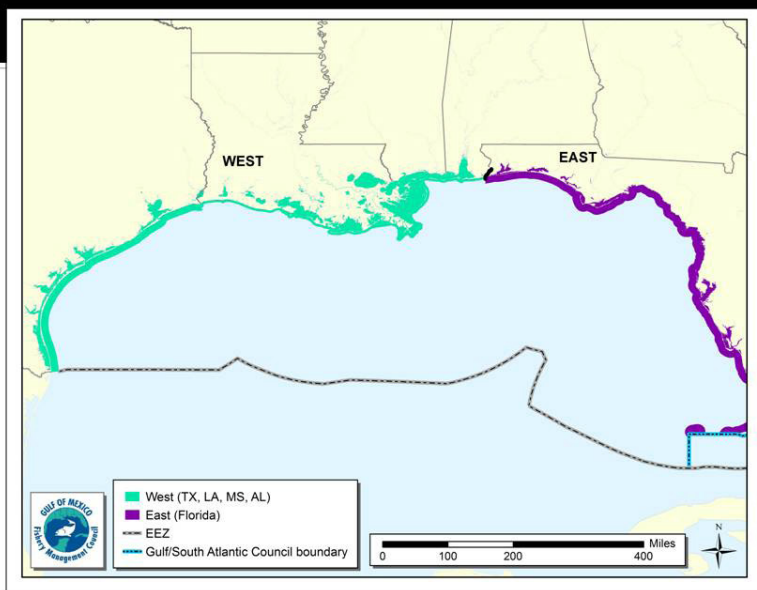
Unique challenges will arise based on the number of regions selected. More regions will make allocation, enforcement, and estimating catch more complicated, while fewer regions will require greater cooperation among states within the same region.

The following maps show examples of regions that have been discussed by the Council.

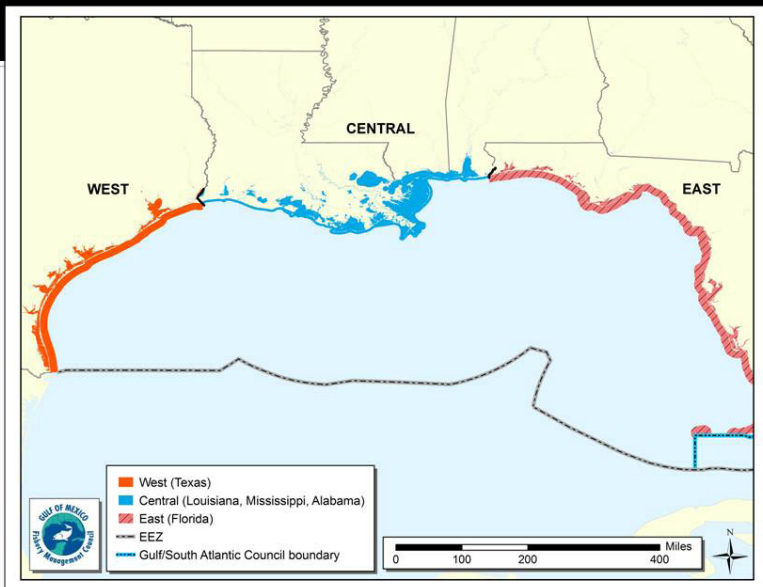
East-West at Mississippi River



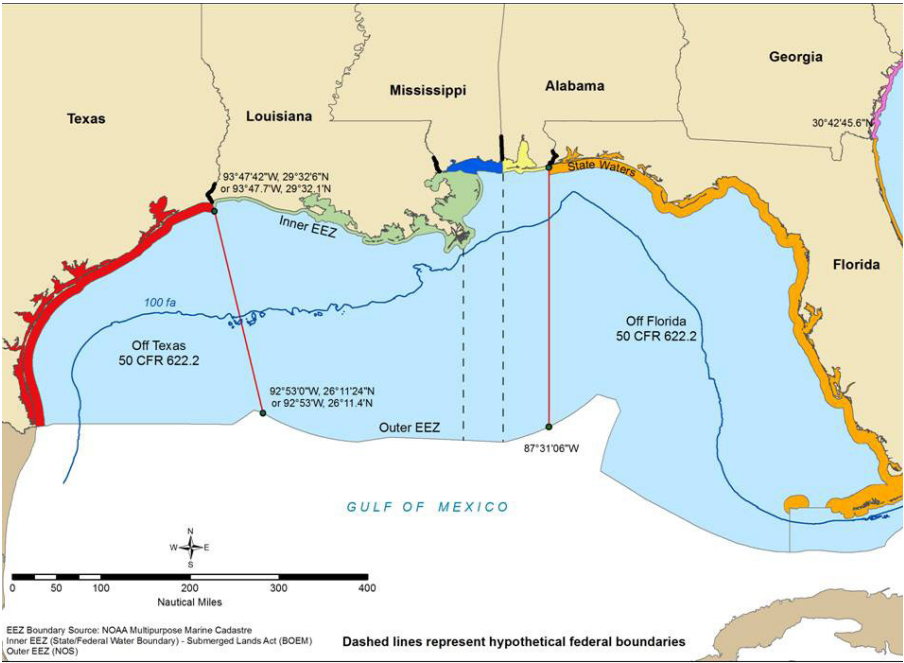
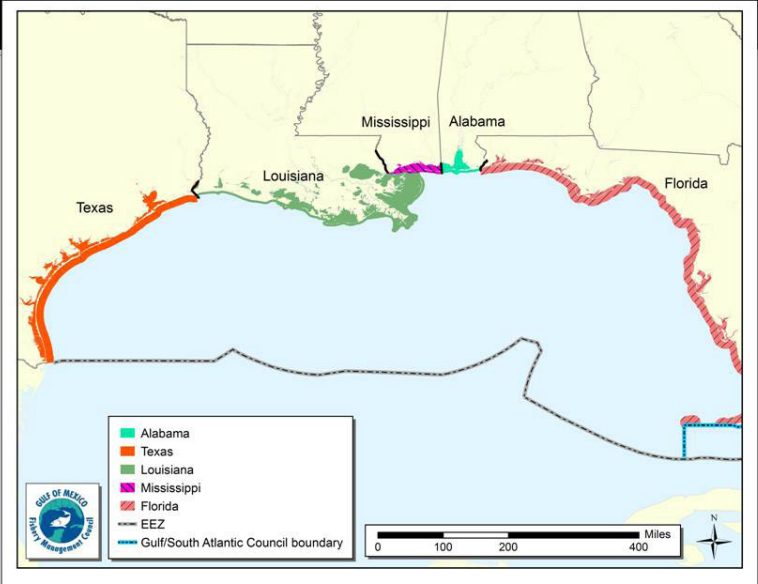
East-West at Faunal Break



East-Central-West



Each state as own region



Scoping Questions:

- Should the Council define regions or should the states identify regions?
- How many regions should be used?
- Where should the regional boundaries be?
- Should the regional boundaries extend through the federal waters?
- What regulations should be attached to the boundaries?

II. Allocating Quota Among Regions

Once regions are selected the Council will need to allocate the recreational red snapper quota among the selected regions. Allocation decisions must follow the Council's Fishery Allocation Policy and could be based on historical landings, biological abundance of red snapper, or abundance of anglers in different regions.

Allocation

1. The act of distributing something.
2. The amount of a resource assigned to a recipient.

Scoping Questions:

1. Historical landings data
 - Which years' landings would be used to determine allocation?
 - Would states get credit for landings that occur outside the federal season?
2. Biological abundance - as the red snapper stock rebuilds, the geographic distribution of the fish is expected to change.
 - Should allocation be based on the regional abundance of fish?
3. Angler abundance - the relative portion of anglers among regions.
 - Would number of angler trips by state be used?
 - Would number of fishing licenses be used?
 - Should headboat and charter boats be given greater weight than private licenses?
 - Should offshore anglers be differentiated from inshore anglers?

III. Program Logistics

An administrative program would have to be established for a regional management system for recreational red snapper. The program would establish minimum management guidelines; a review process for regional management proposals; and accountability measures, among other actions.

Scoping Questions:

1. Management guidelines - the Council could choose to set minimal management requirements that the regions must follow.
 - Should the Council establish thresholds that regional management proposals may not exceed?
 - Should a minimum size limit for red snapper be required?
 - Should regions be prohibited from making regulations that affect private and for-hire fishermen differently?
 - What other guidelines should be used?
2. Regional management proposals - each regional management plan will be required to follow federal mandates and adhere to the Gulf-wide recreational red snapper quota. The proposals will need to specify how each region will monitor landings, enforce rules, and report to the National Marine Fisheries Service.
 - Should each region be required to submit a management proposal to ensure proposed regulations are scientifically accurate and consistent with federal laws?
3. Permits and licenses - federal conservation and management measures cannot discriminate between residents of different states. Currently, state fishing licensing systems do not fulfill that requirement because each of the Gulf states charges differently for resident and non-resident fishing licenses.
 - How would the states permit for red snapper fishing under a regional management system?

4. Accountability measures - Recreational red snapper will remain under federal control and is subject to season closure when the Gulf-wide quota is reached. Under a regional management system, recreational red snapper fishing would close in the entire Gulf when the quota is met, regardless of which regions have harvested their allocation.

- Should each region be subject to individual accountability measures if their allocation is exceeded?
- How would an overage by one region affect other regions?

Accountability Measure

1. An action taken to prevent harvest from exceeding the quota.
2. An action taken to correct an overage if harvest exceeds the quota.

Further Considerations

- Should there be a sunset provision on regional management?
- Should the initial allocation be periodically adjusted?



The Council is collecting input on this amendment both online and through a series of meetings across the Gulf coast. Each of the following meetings will begin at 6 p.m. local time and conclude no later than 9:00 p.m.

January 14, 2013

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

DoubleTree by Hilton
4964 Constitution Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
(225) 925-1005

January 14, 2013

Texas City, Texas

Holiday Inn Express
2440 Gulf Freeway
Texas City, TX 77591
(409) 986-6700

January 15, 2013

Corpus Christi, Texas

Hilton Garden Inn
6717 S. Padre Island Dr.
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
(361) 991-8200

January 15, 2013

Biloxi, Mississippi

Four Points by Sheraton
940 Beach Blvd.
Biloxi, MS 39530
(228) 546-3100

January 16, 2013

Orange Beach, Alabama

Hilton Garden Inn
23092 Perdido Beach Blvd.
Orange Beach, AL 36561
(251) 974-1600

January 17, 2013

Destin, Florida

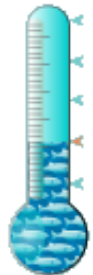
Destin Community Center
101 Stahlman Ave.
Destin, FL 32541
(850) 654-5184

January 22, 2013

St. Petersburg, Florida

Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park
950 Lake Carillon Dr.
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
(727) 540-0050

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, your input is still important. A virtual presentation is also available. To view the online presentation or to comment on the proposed changes, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/8gzi87p>, or click on the thermometer icon on our home page at www.gulfcouncil.org.





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