

## **Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority (GSRMSA)**

This document outlines elements of a plan in which the Gulf States would coordinate management of red snapper throughout the Gulf of Mexico through the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority (GSRMSA).

### **Management**

The governing body of GSRMSA would be comprised of the principal fisheries manager (or his/her proxy) from each of the five Gulf States. There would be a rotating chair serving a two-year term. All actions of GSRMSA would be by majority vote. The primary function of the GSRMSA would be approval of each state's or group of states' Red Snapper Fisheries Management Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan) which would address all components (commercial and recreational) of the Gulf States red snapper fishery. The Plan may extend to multiple years with annual review of specific components to include, but not limited to: assessment methodology, data collection, annual management measures and timelines.

The Plan would include an initial three-year prohibition on any actions that might affect individual fishing quotas or management structure of the commercial fishery, effective from date of adoption by GSRMSA. During this period, NOAA Fisheries through the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council would continue to manage the commercial fishery under existing regulations.

Each state would be responsible for the management of the fishery in their respective state territorial sea and adjacent exclusive economic zone (EEZ) water using the best available science and information. The states would be required to ensure overfishing will not occur through the full range of management and assessment strategies available to each state or group of states acting in concert. These strategies would not be limited to those based on total allowable catch. The GSRMSA, as a whole would annually review and approve the red snapper management actions of an individual state or groups of states acting in concert. If the status of the fishery in each state is in equilibrium or expanding, no change in management actions may be required. If the status of the fishery is below equilibrium or declining, the responsible state or states would be required to take appropriate action to revise existing management actions to establish equilibrium, and those actions would have to be approved by the GSRMSA.

The GSRMSA or each state would be required to prepare an annual report on the status of the fishery based on the individual states (or states acting in concert) management strategies and assessment methodologies. The GSRMSA will conduct a periodic gulf-wide population review of red snapper on a schedule not to exceed every 5 years.

## **Assessment**

Each individual state or group of states would conduct an assessment of the status of red snapper populations within their adjacent waters. The full range of assessment methodologies would be available to each state or group of states using the best available science to inform management actions.

Assessments would be conducted periodically on a timeline determined by the GRSMA. Assessment methodologies and data collection strategies for both fisheries dependent and independent data would be approved by the GRSMA. The GRSMA would be required to conduct a periodic and Gulf-wide population review of the health of the fishery and status of red snapper on a schedule not to exceed five years between such assessments.

## **Accountability**

Each Gulf state would formally agree to comply fully with management measures developed through the GRSMA-approved Plan under a memorandum of agreement. The GRSMA could request additional accountability actions through the Secretary of Commerce if a Gulf state or group of Gulf states adopted management measures or regulations significantly inconsistent from the red snapper management framework identified in the Plan when such inconsistent measures could negatively impact the interests of other Gulf states with regard to red snapper management.

The procedures established as part of the Striped Bass Act, Sec. 5153 - Monitoring of Implementation and Enforcement by Coastal States would serve as a model for developing procedures for action through the Secretary of Commerce specific to the red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. Federal action to provide accountability and ensure consistency would be limited to the federal waters adjacent to the state(s) that adopted inconsistent management measures or actions. Under no circumstances would federal authority or action supersede that of an individual state within designated state waters. The following link provides greater detail on the procedures used by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in regards to management of striped bass:  
[http://www.asmfrc.org/uploads/file/Striped\\_Bass\\_Act.pdf](http://www.asmfrc.org/uploads/file/Striped_Bass_Act.pdf)

State regulation of red snapper would extend seaward from a state's shoreline to the 200 mile limit (Figure 1). Individual states would enforce regulations within their boundaries under licensing to that state or with agreement and appropriate licensing in other adjacent states. State regulations related to red snapper under the Plan would apply to

all fishing activities associated with red snapper landed in a given state, not just state registered vessels.

State waters for all Gulf States would extend to nine nautical miles for the purpose of uniform enforcement and management actions related to red snapper.

## Funding

Federal funding specific to red snapper now going to federal research, assessment and management would be appropriated to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and passed through to the states for use and distribution under the GSRMSA.

Federal funding of enforcement that is currently provided to the Gulf States for fisheries enforcement shall not be reduced because of transfer of red snapper management to GSRMSA. Federal agents will work in concert with deputized state agents to enforce state regulations approved by the GSRMSA.

The National Marine Fisheries Service will continue to provide access to all fisheries data and services available before transfer of red snapper management under the same arrangements and conditions after the transfer of management authority to GSRMSA.

Figure 1. Jurisdictional boundaries designated for enforcement purposes at a state level. These boundaries may be adjusted based on state(s) exercising the option to work in concert on regulations with each other.



## **Statutory Provisions**

In order to establish the GSRMSA, the management of red snapper must be vacated from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and any provisions that have been established for red snapper with that plan or any amendments to that plan.

Additionally, this Act and any provisions of this Act regarding management and enforcement of any regulations and management provisions to the extent that there is any conflict will take precedence over the MSA and any portions of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan.