

RECREATIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL for Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish



Presented by
A Coalition of For-Hire & Private
Recreational Anglers Fishing the
Gulf of Mexico

THE PROBLEM

- Data Used to Estimate Recreational Red Snapper Catches Is Fatally Flawed
- Currently MRFSS & For-Hire Surveys are Estimating Effort & Catch Data
- In 2006 the National Research Council Recommended A Total Redesign of these Systems

NEW DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

- Congress instructed NMFS to establish a Federal Saltwater Fishing Registry by January, 2009 to improve recreational data
- NMFS Has Delayed Implementation Until at Least January 1, 2010
- Pilot For-Hire electronic logbook system to be implemented early 2009

MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHING STATISTICAL SURVEY (MRFSS)

- MRFSS Estimates Effort (number of trips) by Random Digit Dialing Surveys in Coastal County Households
- Catch Data is Determined by Random Dockside Interviews
- The Sample Size for Both is Less than 2% of the Fishing Population
- This Estimate is Statistically Extrapolated to Determine Number of Anglers, Trips, Catches and Discards

FOR-HIRE SURVEY (FHS)

- Randomly Selected For-Hire Vessels Interviewed Weekly to Establish
 - Number of Anglers
 - Number of Trips during previous week
 - Hours Fished per trip
- Random dockside interview determines number of fish and size

MRFSS = SKEWED DATA

- July & August 2008 Showed the 4TH Highest Number of Trips Taken Since 1986, with
 - High Fuel Costs
 - Economic Recession
 - Bag Limit Reduction of 50%
 - Red Snapper Fishing Season reduced from 6 Months to 64 Days
- This data ignores common sense

COASTAL COMMUNITIES WILL CONTINUE TO SUFFER UNTIL WE HAVE

- Accurate Numbers of Anglers Fishing for Red Snapper
- Accurate Numbers of Trips Fishing for Red Snapper
- Accurate Numbers of Red Snapper Discards
- Accurate Numbers of Red Snapper Landed

RESULTS OF BAD DATA

- Decline of Tourism in Coastal Communities
- Loss of Jobs
- Shorter Seasons
- Lower Bag Limits
- Infrastructures crumbling
- Decline in Tax Base for Communities

THE PROPOSAL/SOLUTION

- Establish New Gulf of Mexico Angling Reporting System (GOMARS) for all Recreational For-Hire Vessels (FH) and Private Recreational Vessels (PRV) and/or Anglers (PR) Targeting Red Snapper
- Reporting System
 - Web-based Reporting
 - Telephone Reporting
 - Logbook Reporting
 - Simple Call In and/or Electronic System to Report Depart/Return to Port
- Provide NMFS tools to address
 - Accountability Measures
 - Usable Catch Limits
 - Improved Stock Assessments

GOMARS ADVANTAGES

- Provide Real Time Regulatory Accountability of Harvest
- Easy Expansion to Other Reef Fish Species
- Simple to use for Vessels of All Sizes
- Encourages Coordination between Federal & State
- Suggests Aggregate Bag Limits to Reduce Unnecessary Discards
- Reduces Interaction with Marine Mammals
- Enhances Ease of Enforcement

GOMARS CAN PROVIDE

- Collection of Critical Data
 - Disposition & Number of Discards
 - Time Fishing for each Species
 - State or Federal Waters
 - Depth of Water Fished
 - Number of Hooks per Line
 - Other Data as Necessary
- Ease of adding Other Reef Species

AGGREGATE BAG LIMITS

- Pilot Program to Study aggregate bag limits to eliminate discards
 - Increase Stock Biomass by Reducing Discards & Discard Mortality
 - Reduce the interaction with Marine Mammals
 - Simplify Regulations
 - Improve Enforcement

CONCLUSION

- Positive First Step
- Provide Data from All Recreational Anglers
- Identify
 - Effort
 - Number of Fish Harvested & Discarded
 - Real Time Fisheries Management
 - Accountability for All Recreational Anglers

Q & A