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The Great Red Snapper Count



As we near the start of the 2018 recreational season for red snapper, it seems like a good time to give an update on The Great Red Snapper Count. As a reminder, this is a project funded through Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant that will estimate the abundance of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico and is a collaborative effort between the five Gulf of Mexico states. I'll start with a Gulf-

wide project update, then provide more specifics about our efforts in Mississippi and Alabama.

Gulf-wide: Scientists from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have been busy making preparations for this project. One of the team's primary objectives is to ensure that the methods used to estimate red snapper abundance are standardized (i.e. consistent) across the entire Gulf. To assist in that process, the team has recently completed the first draft of the Gulf-wide sampling plan. This plan uses a statistical framework to select the specific areas that will be sampled, which include large artificial structures (e.g. platforms in Texas and Louisiana), small artificial platforms (e.g. reef pyramids off Mississippi and Alabama) and natural hard bottom (e.g. rocky banks off Florida). This first draft is currently being tweaked to ensure the strongest possible sampling strategy.

Mississippi-Alabama: While the Gulf-wide sampling plan is being finalized, we've begun testing specific sampling approaches using vertical longlines, remotely-operated vehicles (ROVs), and bottom longlines in Alabama and Mississippi waters. As we complete these gear calibrations, here are some updates you can expect from the Great Red Snapper Count:

- 1) A workshop series, where we'll be visiting each state in the Gulf to meet with stakeholders and discuss our findings with them.
- 2) A YouTube channel where we'll showcase our video series. The first episode will air on the opening day of snapper season, so stay tuned!
- 3) A project-specific website, with updates, pictures from the field, and information about upcoming events, which will also go live on the opening day of snapper season.

We look forward to interacting with you, so please email us your questions and comments on The Great Red Snapper Count at:
snappercount@sportfishresearch.org

**Recreational red snapper
seasons to be set by**

individual Gulf states



Marine resource agencies from five Gulf states (AL, FL, LA, MS, and TX) have recently been awarded Exempted Fishing Permits, or EFPs, from NOAA Fisheries for recreationally harvested red snapper for the 2018 and 2019 fishing seasons. This means opening and closing dates for the recreational red snapper season will be determined by each state. Each state will monitor red snapper landings, and its season will close when the state's assigned quota is reached, or is anticipated to be reached.

In 2017, the recreational fishing season for red snapper was originally three days long and limited to a 2-fish bag limit. Two weeks after the season opened, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would extend the federally managed 2017 recreational red snapper season by 39 weekend days for private recreational anglers in the Gulf of Mexico. For the 2018 and 2019 seasons, the Gulf states applied for EFPs for a more permanent solution to the issues with the recreational red snapper fishery in the Gulf. These next two years will test the effectiveness of Gulf state management of recreationally caught red snapper.

Specifically for 2018, Mississippi has a 137,949-pound quota that will be split between recreational fishermen (135,149 pounds) and state for-hire boats (2,800 pounds). Opening day for the 2018 red snapper recreational season for both state and federal waters in Mississippi is set for May

25 and closing day is set for Labor Day. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources will manage the red snapper landings for the state and if deemed necessary, the recreational fishing season for Mississippi could close from July 9-23. This is to ensure the assigned quota for the combined fishing efforts of recreational and state for-hire fishermen, and the Gulf-wide quota of 6.7 million pounds will not be exceeded. Alabama has set its season as weekends (i.e. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) from June 1st to September 2, plus July 2-5 and September 3.

Elsewhere around the Gulf, Louisiana has set its opening day as May 25, Florida has established a 40-day season from June 11 to July 20, and Texas will maintain their year-round season in state waters.

What does this mean for recreational anglers in Mississippi and Alabama?

For 2018 and 2019, each Gulf state will establish red snapper recreational fishing seasons in both its own waters and federal waters. Licensed private recreational anglers can fish out to 200 nautical miles while vessels with state for-hire permits are allowed to fish in state territorial waters, out to 9 nautical miles. Charter boats and other for-hire vessels with federal permits (those not included in the EFPs) can fish out to 200 nautical miles starting June 1 and ending July 22. Throughout the season, recreational anglers must participate in their state's mandatory reporting program. For Mississippi, that program is Tails n' Scales, while Alabama's program is called Snapper Check.

Details on those programs, as well as Louisiana's LA creel, are shown below.



Name	Snapper Check	Tails n' Scales	LA Creel
State	Alabama	Mississippi	Louisiana
Responsible party	Outdoor Alabama/ADCNR	MS DMR	LDWF
Year implemented	2014	2015	2014
Reporting	Mandatory anytime red snapper are landed in AL, regardless of harvest location	Mandatory anytime red snapper are landed in MS, regardless of harvest location	Mandatory anytime red snapper are landed in LA, regardless of harvest location
How do I report?	Official Outdoor Alabama Pocket Ranger app, www.outdooralabama.com , or paper forms at boat launches	Tails n' Scales app, www.tailsnscales.org , 1-844-MSSNAPP	Weekly access-point surveys, phone surveys, and email surveys
What do I report?	Vessel registration number, number of anglers, number of red snapper harvested and discarded dead, county of landing, and trip type (private or charter)	Vessel registration number, hours spent fishing, number of anglers, number of red snapper harvested and released, habitat fished	Responses to routine survey questions
What's required?	Fishing license AND valid trip number	Fishing license AND valid trip number	Fishing license AND Recreational Offshore Landings Permit (ROLP) (free)
Questions? Contact...	ADCNR Marine Resources (marine.resources@dcnr.alabama.gov)	MS DMR (snapper@dmr.ms.gov)	Jason Adriance (jadriance@wlf.la.gov), Nicole Smith (nsmith@wlf.la.gov)

Do your part by downloading the apps for Alabama and Mississippi below:

[Snapper Check](#)

[Tails n' Scales](#)

In the Galley

Each month in this series, we'll highlight a new way to prepare delicious seafood from the northern Gulf of Mexico. **Enjoy!**



Photo by Matthew Noel for Louisiana Kitchen & Culture

Blackened Snapper with Goat Cheese and Fresh Herb Grits

Recipe courtesy of Louisiana Kitchen and Culture. For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free e-newsletter, please visit

<http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>

Ingredients:

Snapper

- 4 tablespoons paprika

- 4 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 3 teaspoons ground white pepper
- 3 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 4 teaspoons onion powder
- 4 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 3 sticks unsalted butter, melted
- 8 6 oz fillets Fresh-caught Gulf red snapper

Leeks

- 1 1/2 sticks butter, cut into pieces
- 1 cup thinly sliced wild mushrooms (porcini, shiitake, oyster, etc.)
- 5 leeks, chopped, white and pale green parts only (about 4 cups)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoons finely chopped chives

Grits

- 3 cups water
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup stone ground grits
- 1 tablespoons butter
- 4 ounces soft goat cheese (chevre)
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 leaves fresh basil, cut in a chiffonade
- 1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- salt

Method:

Snapper

Mix paprika, cayenne, white and black peppers, salt, onion and garlic powders, thyme and oregano. Heat a large cast iron skillet over high heat for 10 minutes. Dip fish in melted butter and sprinkle each fillet generously on both sides with seasoning mixture. Place fish fillets in hot skillet. Pour 1 tablespoon butter over each fillet. Cook until the coating on the underside of the fillets turns black, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn fish. Pour 1 more tablespoon butter over each fillet and cook until fish flakes easily with a fork, about 2 minutes.

Leeks

Melt butter in skillet over medium heat. Do not brown. Add mushrooms. Season with salt and pepper. When mushrooms are tender add leeks and cook until translucent, about 8 minutes. Add chives.

Grits

Bring water, cream, and salt to a boil over medium-high heat. Slowly add grits, stirring constantly until smooth. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook until smooth, about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. When grits are creamy add goat cheese, herbs and pepper.

Spoon grits into centers of 8 plates or a large platter. Place fish atop grits. Top fish with leeks and mushrooms. Garnish with additional fresh herbs.

Serve.



Sea of Acronyms

Being an informed angler begins with understanding the terminology used in fisheries management. This series helps demystify the concepts hidden beneath a sea of acronyms.

EFP

Exempted Fishing Permit

Permits issued to individuals by NOAA Fisheries that authorize (for limited testing, public display, data collection, exploratory fishing, compensation fishing, conservation engineering, health and safety surveys, environmental cleanup, and/or hazard removal purposes) the target or incidental harvest of species managed under a fishery management plan or fishery regulations that would otherwise be prohibited.



Upcoming events

[Casting for Conservation](#) (May 12)
Gulfport, MS

[Biloxi Wooden Boat Show](#) (May 19 - 20)
Biloxi, MS

[Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo](#) (June 29 - July 4)
Gulfport, MS

[Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo](#) (July 14, 21, 22)
Dauphin Island, AL

[Sharks at St. Martin Public Library](#) (July 27)
St. Martin, MS



I'm Marcus Drymon, an Assistant Extension Professor at Mississippi State University and a Marine Fisheries Specialist at Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant. I'd like to hear from you - please send any comments or questions to marcus.drymon@msstate.edu, and click on the links below for more information on my website and Facebook page.



Facebook Website

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