



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 31, 2017

Extended Gulf State Red Snapper Seasons Lead to Unprecedented Three-Day Season in Federal Waters

Proven, Science-Based Approach Only Way to Manage the Fishery for Recreational, Charter and Commercial Fishermen

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance today issued the following statement at the outset of the shortest federal recreational red snapper season on record in the Gulf of Mexico:

Commercial, charter and recreational fishermen all agree: The red snapper fishery requires responsible management. For years, the five Gulf States have continued to extend recreational red snapper seasons in state waters, which does not comply with scientific evidence and has increased pressure on the entire fishery. As a result, the federal season has been shortened to just three days to offset state mismanagement. This is an unacceptable outcome that has understandably upset recreational fishermen and is a serious concern for all whose livelihoods depend on a strong, sustainable red snapper fishery in the Gulf.

The Facts Are Clear: The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that up to 80 percent of the recreational red snapper quota will be caught in state waters in 2017 – leaving just 20 percent of the quota for a federal recreational season. If any Gulf State extends its state season after the start of the federal season (as happened in 2016), that 20 percent would shrink even further, raising the real possibility of ending the federal season early or causing the recreational angler sector to exceed its quota. That would trigger a payback in 2018 by shortening *that* season even further.

We need to manage the fishery effectively, but the answer is *not* to compound the problem by extending state control. Instead, we must work together to help states improve management of their own recreational seasons in a sustainable and accountable way. This means embracing the same kind of proven, science-based approach commercial fisherman adopted to bring the red snapper population in the Gulf back from the brink of disaster.

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If you are writing about the federal and state seasons or the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery and would like more detail on the commercial fishermen's point of view, please contact Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Shareholders' Alliance at 919-451-1971.