

The Daily News.

Increase in red snapper catch limit worries commercial anglers

By KERI HEATH The Daily News

Aug 29, 2022



Red snapper lie in a bin at Katie's Seafood Market in Galveston on Aug. 2, 2017.
The Daily News/File photo

GALVESTON

Citing fear of a population collapse, commercial anglers are calling foul over a recent federal council decision to raise red snapper catch limits to 16.3 million pounds from 15.5 million pounds a year.

The advisory council, however, contends the increase is supported by science and data reflecting a healthy stock of the valuable fish.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council last week decided to increase the limit by 800,000 pounds, citing data showing the population of the popular red snapper fish was healthy.

The move worries commercial anglers, however, said Ashford Rosenberg, policy director for the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholder's Alliance.

"In recent history, commercial and charter fishermen are having a harder time catching fish that they normally catch," Rosenberg said.

The advisory council is a recommending body, which will suggest the increased catch limits to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The council is made up of governor-appointed industry members from the Gulf states and a representative from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, and similar agencies in other states. Some commercial anglers are worried about the long-term health of the red snapper population on which they rely, said Buddy Guindon, executive director and owner of Katie's Seafood Market in Galveston.

"We went there knowing that what we're asking for is going to cost the commercial fishery over \$5 million in gross sales," Guindon said. "We're asking them not to give it to us because we would like to see the stock recover."

Many commercial anglers also are concerned they don't have adequate representation on the council, he said. Instead, there are too many appointees representing recreational anglers, he said. They argue the catch taken by recreational anglers is only loosely monitored, largely on an honor system, which contributes to pressure on snapper stocks.

The council contends it has clear data indicating the snapper fishery is doing well, however, Chairman Dale Diaz said.

"We take the comments we hear from our fishing public very seriously and work to balance scientific recommendations with on-the-water insight," Diaz said. "In this case, the council recommended increasing the red snapper annual catch limit based on the recommendations of its scientific and statistical committee."

The council also is conducting a detailed assessment it expects to finish by the end of next year, which will provide more detailed data about the red snapper population, he said.

The council's recommendation still must be formally considered by the department of commerce. Before that, the federal government will open another public comment period.

Keri Heath: 409-683-5241; keri.heath@galvnews.com

https://www.galvnews.com/news/article_b5ba944b-fc44-5b49-a4f0-271faa2ca820.html?utm_source=galvnews.com&utm_campaign=%2Fnewsletters%2Fheadlines%2Ftuesday%2F%3Frefreshed%26-dc%3D1661855424&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headline