

2019 Alabama Exempted Fishing Permit Status Report

Report Number: 3

Period covered: June 1 – July 14, 2019

Background

In 2018 and 2019, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) has been issued an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) from NOAA Fisheries to manage the private vessel and state-licensed charter vessel components of Alabama's recreational Red Snapper fishery (excludes federally-permitted charter vessels). During both years of the EFP, ADCNR will attempt to manage landings within a quota. The 2019 quota is 1,079,513 pounds which was reduced by the harvest overage from 2018 which was estimated to be 2,007 pounds. ADCNR will monitor Red Snapper landings via Snapper Check, the program established to collect mandatory reports from recreational anglers landing Red Snapper in Alabama. Any landings amount above the quota in 2019 will be deducted from the 2020 quota prior to the start of the 2020 season. In order to obtain landings estimates, the number of reported harvested fish are multiplied by the average weight of fish measured and weighed by ADCNR staff from randomly selected vessels. Some fishing trips are not reported because anglers not reporting or not reporting timely. Therefore, an estimate of the number of unreported Red Snapper is needed. Unreported Red Snapper are estimated by determining the ratio of the number of fish from reported trips to number of fish from unreported trips. The ratio is determined by comparing information collected by ADCNR staff at public boat ramps and marinas to vessel reports submitted by anglers through Snapper Check.

2019 Season Summary

An error was made computing the average weight of Red Snapper in Update Report No. 2 (June 1-30, 2019). Dockside surveys of anglers on vessels with Red Snapper conducted during the final weekend of June (June 28-30) were inadvertently removed from mean weight and landings calculations. When the June 28-30 data was included in the estimation analysis the mean weight of Red Snapper caught from private vessels decreased resulting in lower landings than previously reported. However, the mean weight of Red Snapper caught from state-licensed charter vessels increased resulting in an increase in landings compared to what was previously reported. Through July 14, 2019, an estimated 533,078 pounds of Red Snapper have been harvested by recreational anglers fishing from private and state-licensed only charter vessels (Figure 1). Although 78% of the season has elapsed only 49.4% of the 2019 quota has estimated to have been caught. Due to likelihood that significant quota would remain at the end of the announced 27-day season, ADCNR calculated the number of days that could be added to the season using the average daily harvest rates from days in 2019 when the weather was favorable for fishing. Based on the analysis an additional five days (August 1-5) were added to the season. A buffer was implemented prior to the calculations.

Estimated reporting rates for private vessels has remained consistent throughout the season with 50.3% of vessels with red snapper having submitted a landing report. Estimated reporting rates for state-licensed charter vessels has fallen to 40.0% compared to the 50.0% reporting rate estimated through the first two weeks of the season. Enforcement will continue to check anglers to ensure compliance with the mandatory reporting requirement.

Landings in 2018 were 360,732 pounds higher than 2019 landings during the same time period. During 2018, more favorable sea conditions were experienced off the Alabama coast which resulted in higher and more consistent fishing effort (vessel trips) throughout the fishing season compared to the 2019 season (Figure 2). During the 2019 season, anglers appear to have been impacted by higher seas during three of the seven weekends (Figure 3). The last weekend of the report period included weather impacts associated with

Hurricane Barry which formed in the Northern Gulf of Mexico on Thursday, July 11th and made landfall in central Louisiana on Saturday, July 13th. Length-frequency distributions of Red Snapper sampled June 1- July 14 for both 2018 and 2019 are provided in Figures 4 and 5.

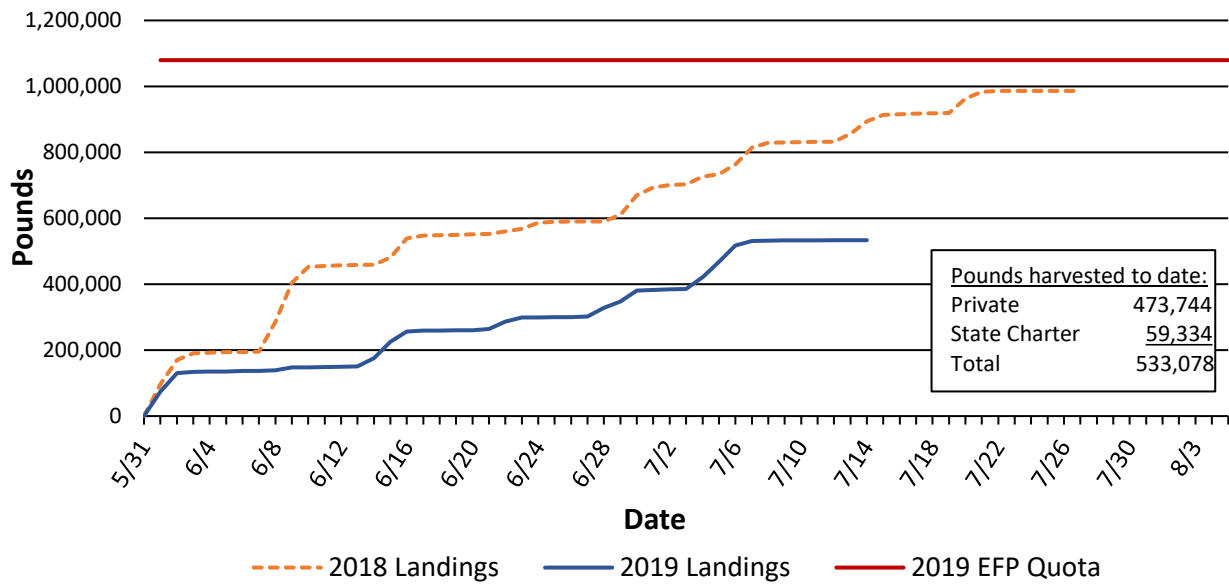


Figure 1. Cumulative Alabama recreational Red Snapper landings for the entire 2018 EFP season and 2019 EFP season (June 1 – July 14, 2019).

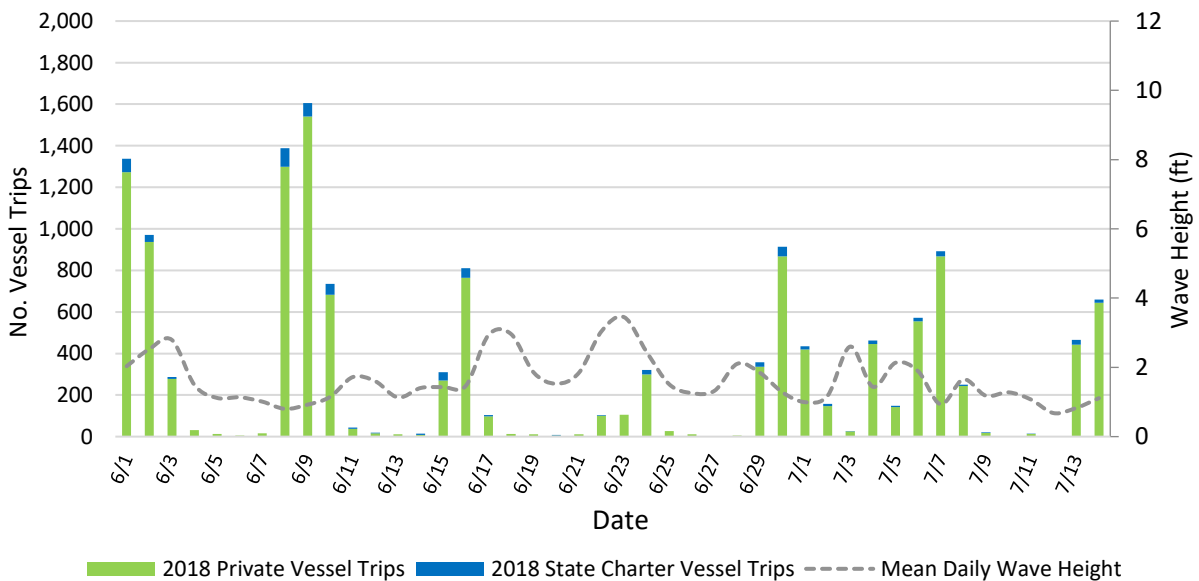


Figure 2. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height during the 2018 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1 – July 14). Wave height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL).

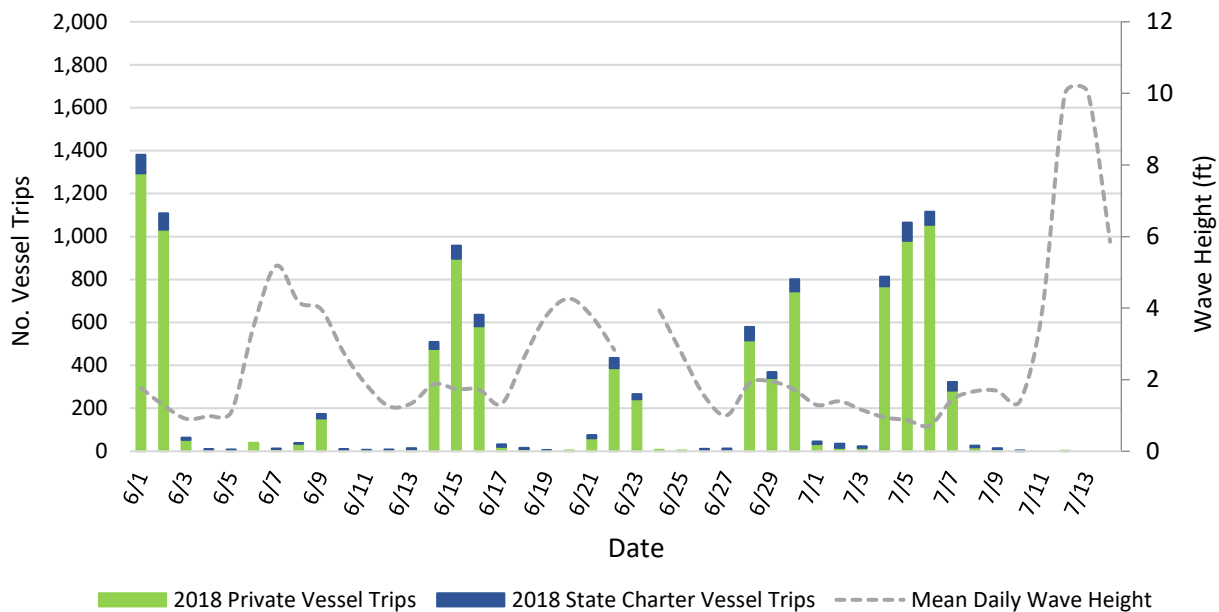


Figure 3. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height during the 2019 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1- July 14). Wave height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL). The gap in the wave height trendline indicates data was not recorded.

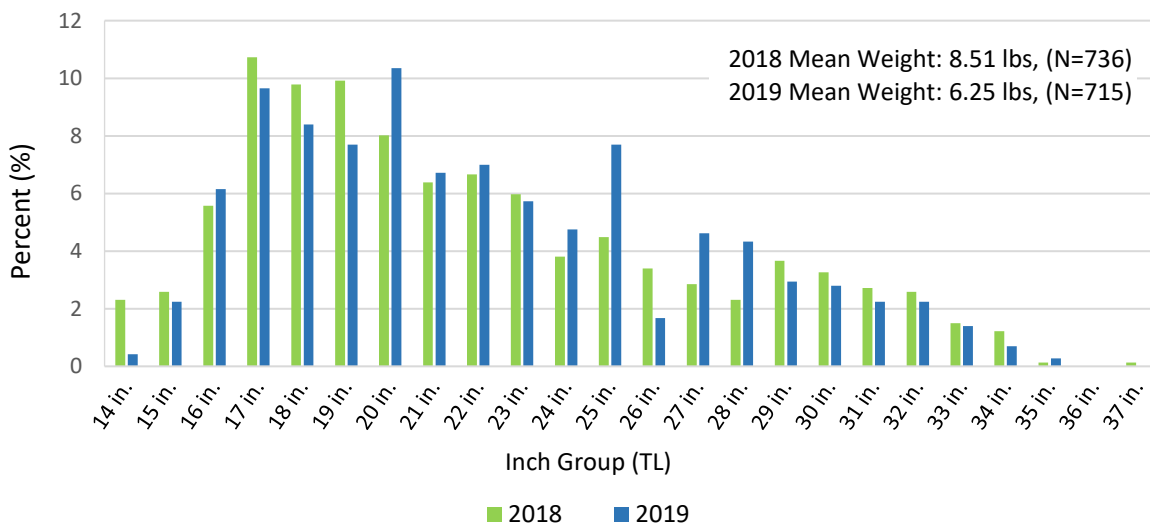


Figure 4. Private vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies (total length) for fish sampled June 1-30, 2018 and 2019.

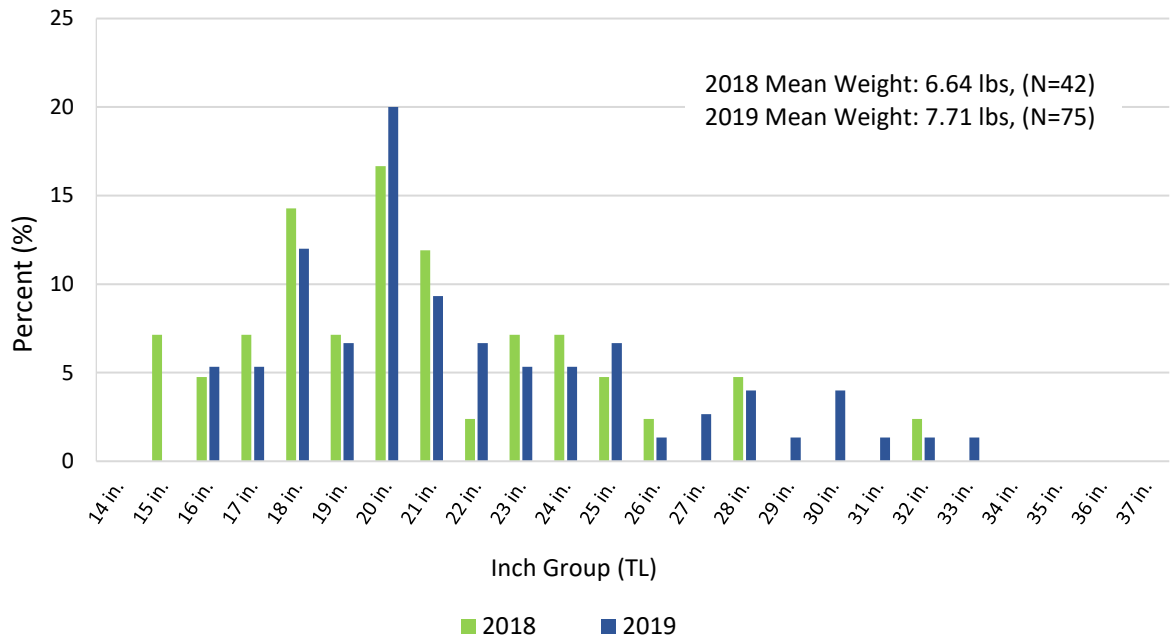


Figure 5. State charter vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies (total length) for fish sampled June 1-July 14, 2018 and 2019.