2019 Alabama Exempted Fishing Permit Status Report

Report Number: 2

Period covered: June 1 – 30, 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

Through June 30, 2019, an estimated 472,922 pounds have been harvested by recreational anglers fishing from private and state-licensed only charter vessels (Figure 1). The estimated harvest represents 43.8% of the 2019 quota; however, 51.8% of the projected 27-day season has elapsed.

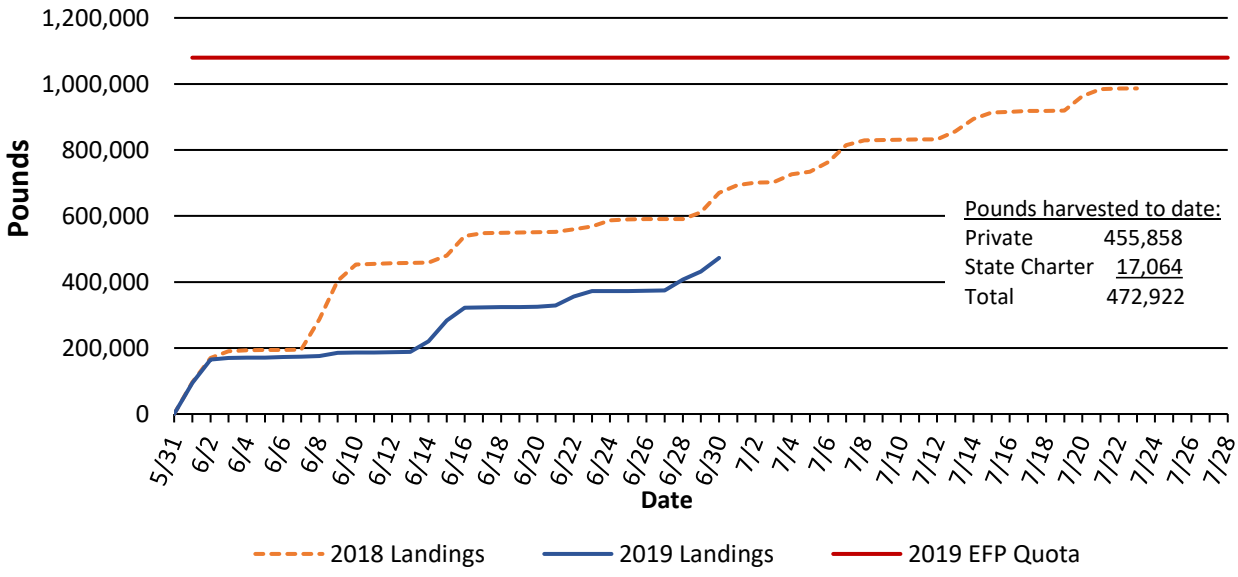

Figure 1. Cumulative Alabama recreational Red Snapper landings for the entire 2018 EFP season and 2019 EFP season (June 1 – June 30).

Confidence in determining the season length and in-season quota monitoring depend on the level of reporting. High levels of unreported harvests introduce higher uncertainty in the decision-making process and can result in shorter seasons. However, when reporting rates are relatively high ADCNR fisheries managers can be more confident determining the length of future seasons or deciding if additional days can be added to an existing season if quota remains after the season has ended. Through the first half of the 2019 EFP season, reporting rates for private and state charter vessels are 50.3% and 37.5%, respectively (Figure 2). Compared to the first reporting period the private vessel reporting rate remained unchanged and the state charter reporting rate declined from 50% to 37.5%.

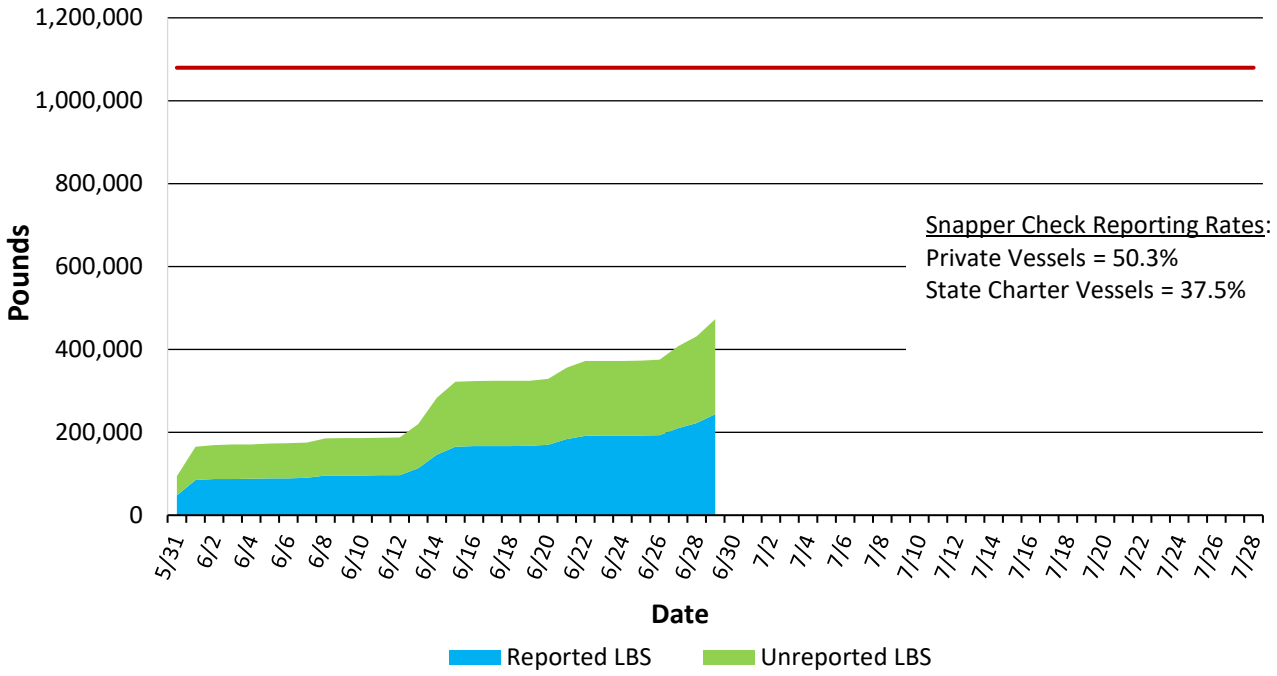

Figure 2. 2019 cumulative daily reported and estimated unreported Red Snapper landings.

The Red Snapper landings in 2018 were estimated to be 669,661 pounds for June 1-30 or 41.6% higher than the 2019 landings estimate through the same period. The lower 2019 landings can be attributed to rough seas during the second and fourth weekends of the 2019 season compared to 2018 which resulted in significantly lower numbers of landings reports (Figures 3 and 4).

The length-frequency distribution of sampled Red Snapper landed by private vessel anglers is also similar to the length-frequency of Red Snapper landed by the same type of anglers in 2018 (Figure 5). Consequently, the mean weight of Red Snapper landed by private vessel anglers in both years was similar. The length-frequency distribution of sampled Red Snapper caught in 2019 by anglers fishing from state-licensed charter vessels correlates with the larger calculated mean weight compared to Red Snapper caught in 2018 (Figure 6).

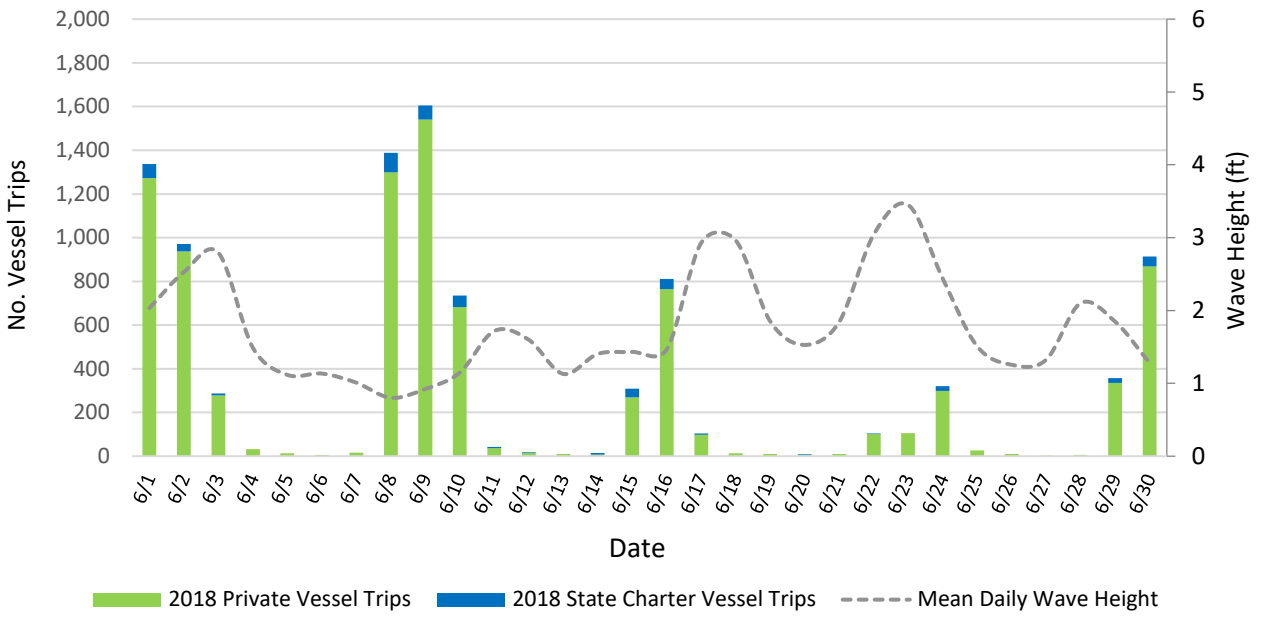

Figure 3. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height during the 2018 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1-30). Wave height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL).

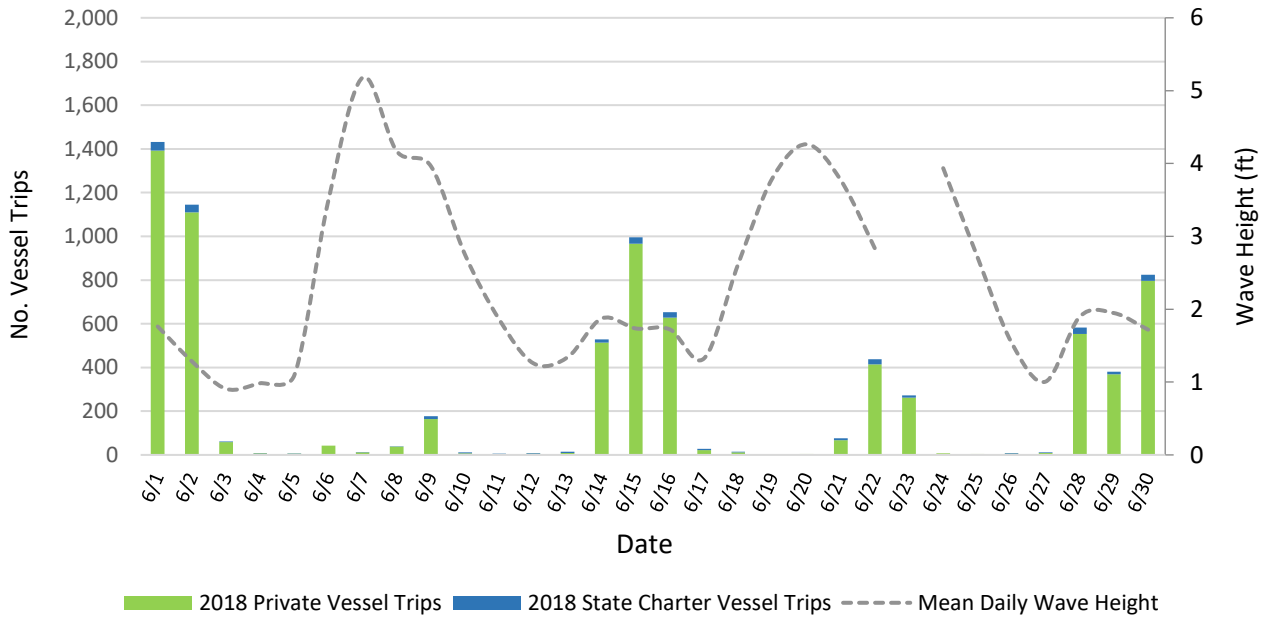

Figure 4. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height during the 2019 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1-30). Wave height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL). The gap in the wave height trendline indicates data was not recorded.

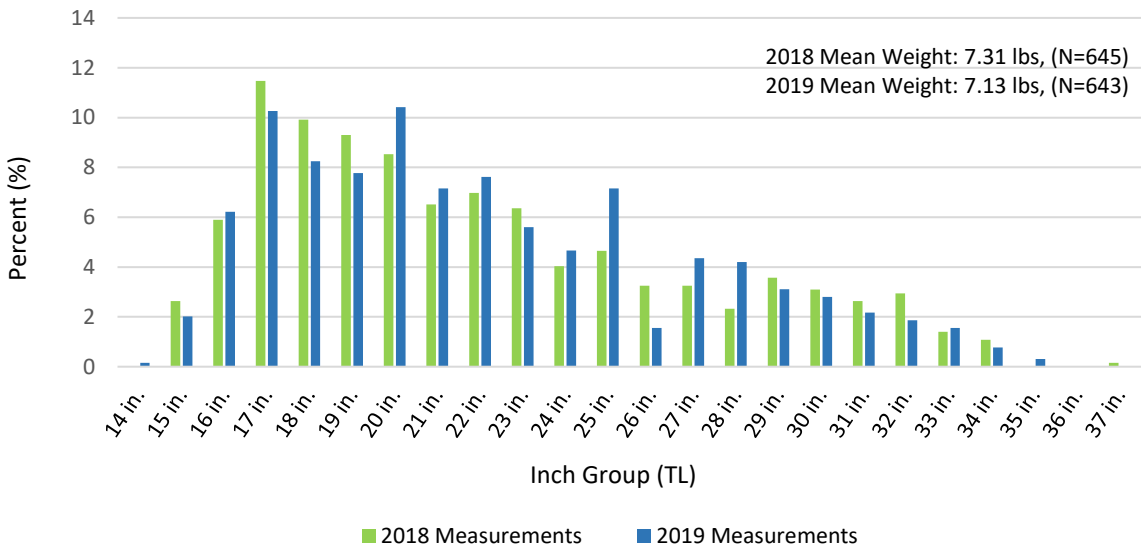

Figure 5. Private vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies (total length) for fish sampled June 1-30, 2018 and 2019.

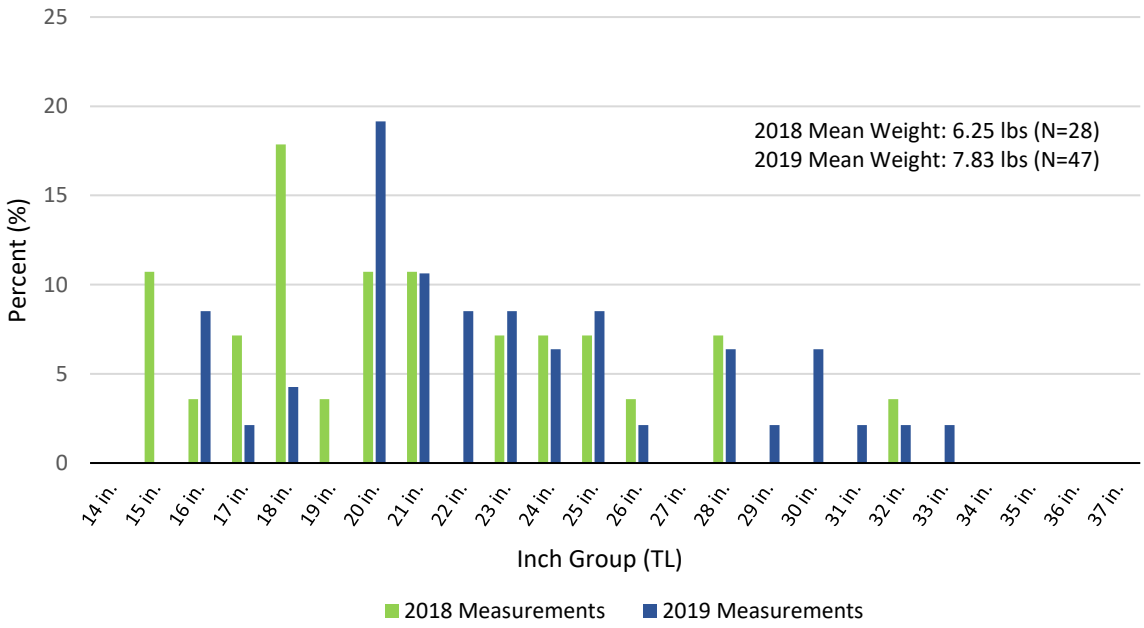

Figure 6. State charter vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies (total length) for fish sampled June 1-30, 2018 and 2019.