

2019 Alabama Exempted Fishing Permit Status Report

Report Number: 1

Period covered: June 1 – 16, 2019

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 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.

Through June 16, 2019, an estimated 315,377 pounds have been harvested by recreational anglers from private and state-licensed only charter vessels (Figure 1). The percentage of harvested quota and elapsed fishing days are nearly identical at 29.2 and 28.6, respectively.

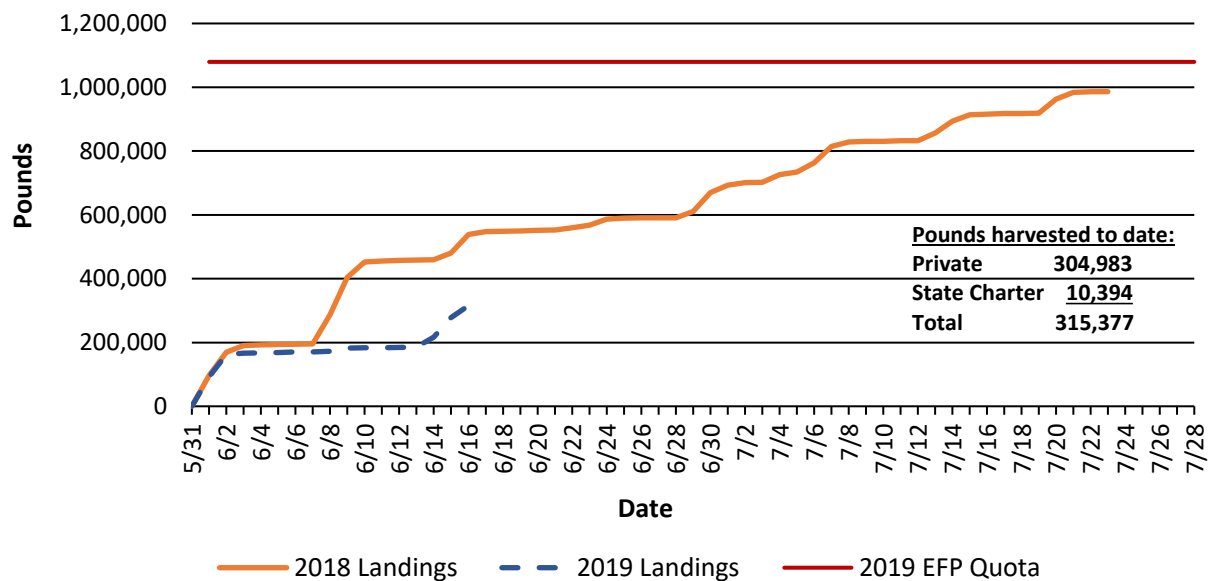


Figure 1. Cumulative Alabama recreational Red Snapper landings for the entire 2018 EFP season and 2019 EFP season (June 1 – June 16).

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 part of the 2019 EFP season, reporting rates for private and state charter vessels are 50.4% and 50.0%, respectively (Figure 2). Although a large portion of the season remains the private vessel reporting rate has improved compared to the 2018 estimate of 42.9%. State charter vessel reporting in 2018 was estimated to be 60% of completed trips.

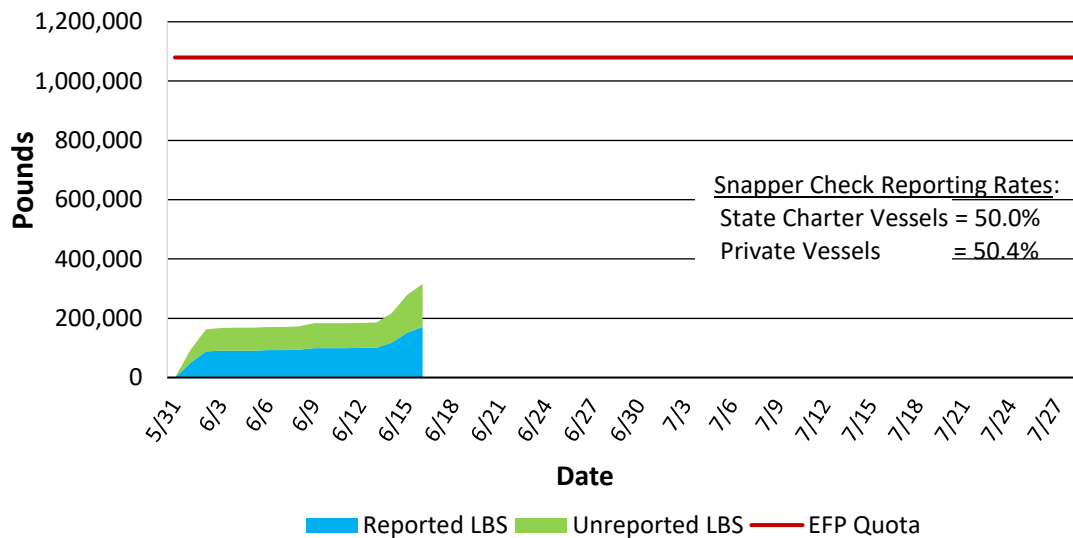


Figure 2. 2019 cumulative daily reported and estimated unreported Red Snapper landings.

Through June 16, 2018 landings were estimated to be 539,037 pounds or 70.9 % higher than the 2019 landings estimate through the same period. The reduced 2019 landings can be attributed to rough seas during the second weekend (June 7-9) of the 2019 season compared to 2018 which resulted in significantly lower numbers of landings reports (Figures 3 and 4). In addition, lower landings in 2019 could be attributed to fewer fishing days (8) compared to the same period in 2018 (9 days).

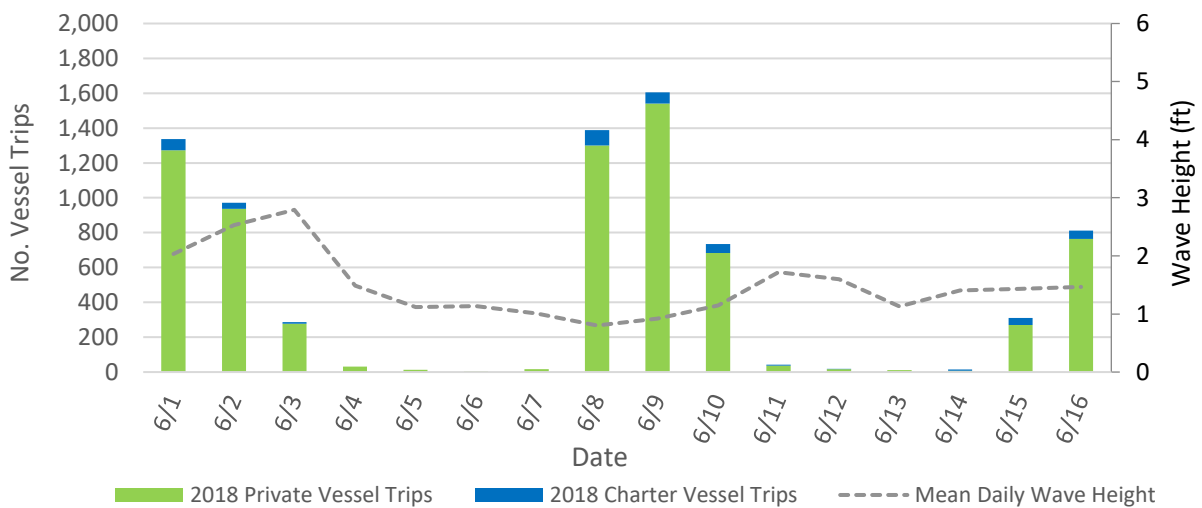


Figure 3. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height* during the 2018 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1-16). Wave Height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL).

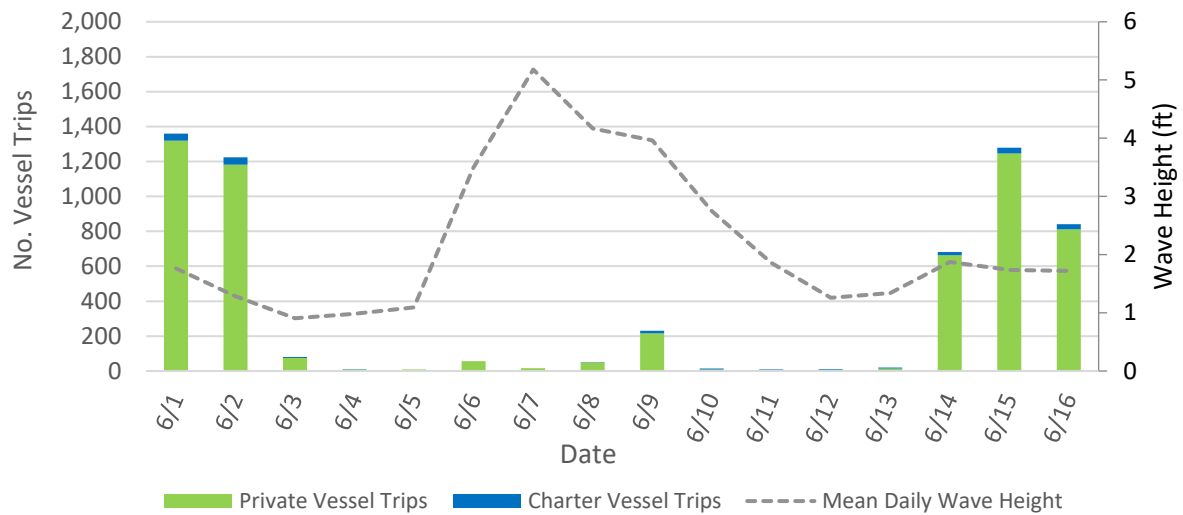


Figure 4. Daily private vessel and state charter vessel trips landing Red Snapper and mean daily wave height* during the 2019 Alabama Red Snapper season (June 1-16). Wave Height data from NOAA Data Buoy Center, Station #42012 (Orange Beach, AL).

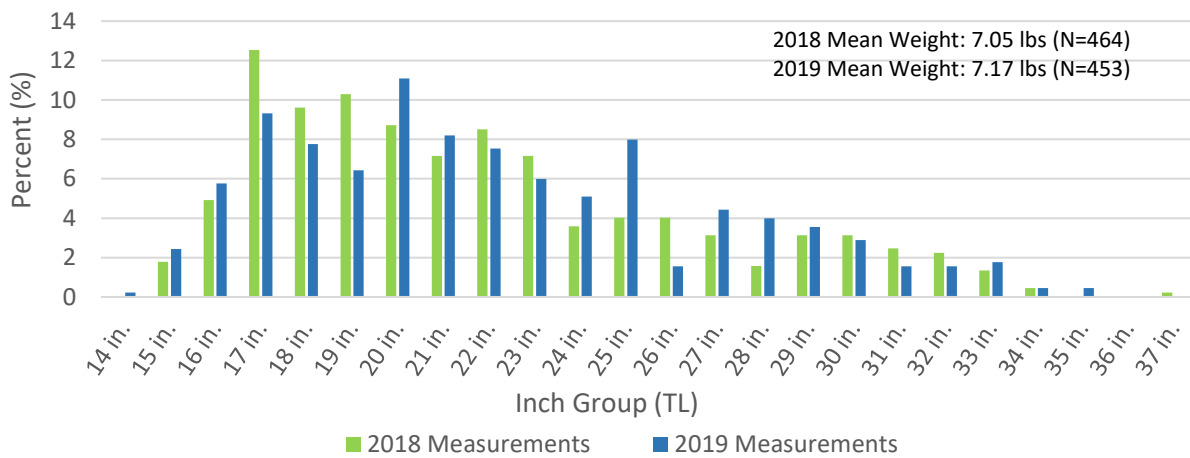


Figure 5. Private vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies for fish sampled June 1-16, 2018 and 2019.

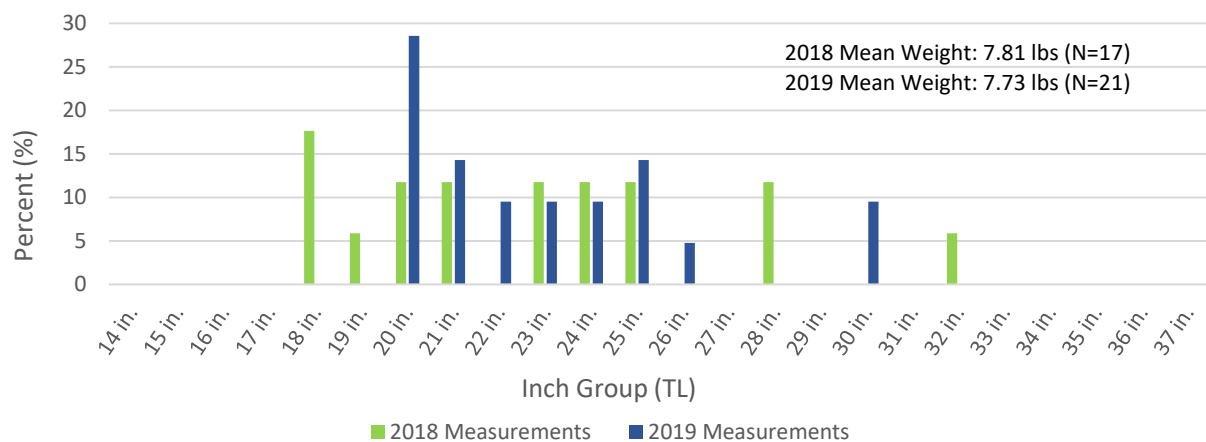


Figure 6. State charter vessel Red Snapper length-frequencies for fish sampled June 1-16, 2018 and 2019.