The Great Red Snapper Count
Project Overview

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION


Photo by Quentin Hall

This project overview describes the Great Red Snapper Count, which is a 2-year research project to estimate the abundance of red snapper in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

Why is this study important?

- Red snapper comprise an economically valuable and culturally relevant fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.
- The stock is currently under a rebuilding plan.
- Although the red snapper fishery is showing signs of recovery, anglers are frustrated by restrictions, such as shortened seasons.
- Stakeholders collectively desire a healthy, well-managed red snapper stock.
- A lack of abundance data hinders the best possible stock management.

Who is funding the study?

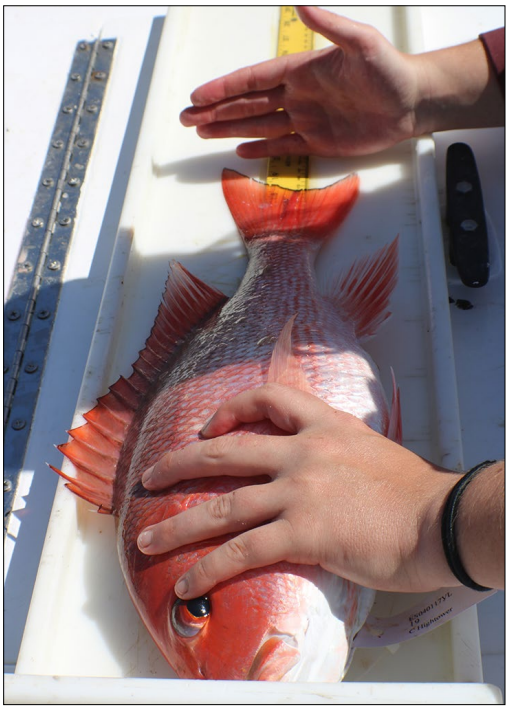
- Congress made $10 million in funding available for research projects designed to independently estimate red snapper abundance.
- After a competitive review process, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant awarded the $10 million for a 2-year (2017–19) project.

What is the goal of the study?

The central objective of this study is to independently (separately from NOAA Fisheries) estimate the abundance of red snapper in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

Who is involved in the study?

A well-integrated, multidisciplinary team of investigators, which includes leading fisheries experts from the Gulf region and beyond, is leading the project.


A scientist measures a red snapper that was caught during a scientific research study. Photo by Dauphin Island Sea Lab/University of South Alabama Fisheries Ecology Lab

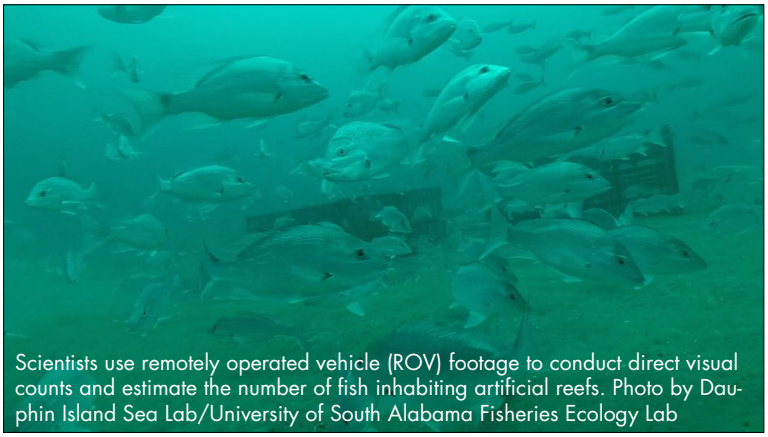
Questions or comments? Contact the project team at *snappercount@harteresearchinstitute.org*. For more information, visit *snappercount.org*.

How will scientists develop the abundance estimate?

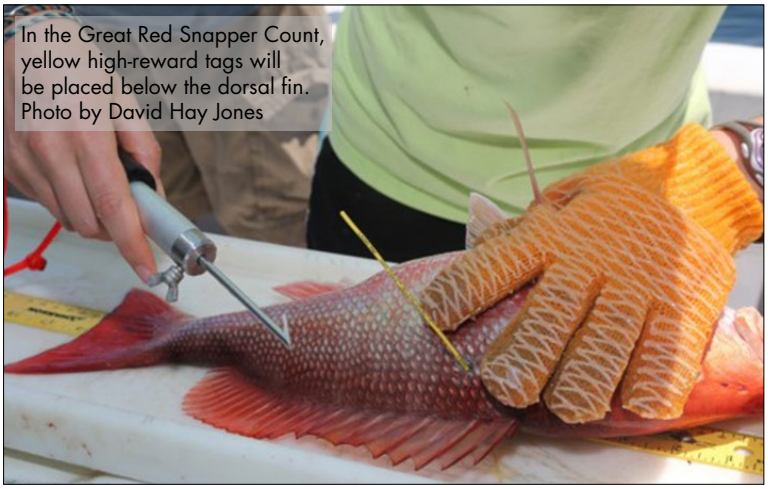
Scientists will use a suite of methods, including habitat classification, direct visual counts, depletion surveys, and a tagging study, across the entire U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

What are the expected outcomes of the study?

- Legislators and fishery managers will review the abundance estimate from this project and use it to make more informed management decisions.
- This will lead to
  - calibration of the current stock assessment.
  - increased confidence in the status of the stock.
  - maximum fishery access for stakeholders.



Scientists use remotely operated vehicle (ROV) footage to conduct direct visual counts and estimate the number of fish inhabiting artificial reefs. Photo by Dauphin Island Sea Lab/University of South Alabama Fisheries Ecology Lab



In the Great Red Snapper Count, yellow high-reward tags will be placed below the dorsal fin. Photo by David Hay Jones

Scientists conduct sampling surveys in conjunction with ROV surveys to provide another estimate of fish abundance. Photo by Dauphin Island Sea Lab/University of South Alabama Fisheries Ecology Lab

This independent study is being conducted by a leading team of red snapper scientists from across the Gulf of Mexico and beyond:

Sea Grant Mississippi-Alabama · The University of Southern Mississippi · USF University of South Florida · Mississippi State University · Texas A&M University Corpus Christi Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies · Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries · Auburn University · VIMS Virginia Institute of Marine Science, William & Mary · SMU · UF University of Florida · LSU Louisiana State University · Texas A&M University Galveston Campus · FIU Florida International University · USA University of South Alabama

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