

Cruise Summary

Ship: F/V Finest Kind II

Project: East Coast Cooperative Red Snapper Tagging Project

Cruise Dates: February 7, 2011

PI: Russ Brodie **Scientific crew:** Justin Solomon, Jeff Sauer

Captain: Paul Nelson, Jr. (PN) **Fishers:** Paul Nelson, Sr. (PS), Duane Kennard (DK),
Pat Murphy (PM)

Also On Board: Jordan Kahn, outdoor writer for the Daytona Beach News-Journal

PI Summary

This was the first directed cruise on the Atlantic coast to tag red snapper. The F/V Finest Kind II is a local commercial/charter vessel out of Ponce Inlet, Florida. The objective of this cruise was to target red snapper and tag as many fish as we could in a single day trip. This cruise was paid for by a grant that was secured by Bob Jones and fishing industry partners. The Finest Kind II supplied all the fishing gear, bait, and fishers for this cruise. Three FWC staff were on board to process fish and tag red snapper. All fish that were landed were identified and measured. Measurements included standard length (SL), fork length (FL), and total length (TL). Any fish showing signs of expanded swim bladders were vented. On this cruise, only red snapper were tagged. We used the current FWC offshore Fisheries-Independent Monitoring program datasheets for this cruise and recorded all applicable data. A copy of the datasheets and a code list will be provided to the Captain as requested for his records as well.

We fished 8 sites selected by the captain during this 1-day cruise and processed a total of 126 fish. Another 28 fish, mostly Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=23), were released at the boat (referred to as 'Boat Release') and were recorded as a tally in the notes section of our data sheets since no measurements were made. A total of 67 red snapper were tagged (tags EC01001 through EC01067). Most tagged red snapper were lip hooked, but hook position was also recorded as throat (n=3), gut (n=1), and foul (n=1). The gut hooked fish had the line cut and it appeared to be in a healthy state so was tagged and released. The foul hooked fish had the hook on the outside of the mouth. It appeared healthy and was tagged and released as well. All tagged fish were seen to swim back down quickly after release. Two sites were very productive for red snapper (sites 3 and 7) and accounted for 92% of the total red snapper tagged for the day. Atlantic sharpnose sharks were plentiful (n=26) at some sites and once they began to bite regularly, we would end our fishing and the Captain would relocate to another site. Also collected were black seabass (n=24), vermillion snapper (n=3), tomtate (n=3), gag grouper (n=1), gray triggerfish (n=1), and little tunny (n=1). Other species that had boat releases were red snapper (n=3), black seabass (n=1), and cobia (n=1). Table 1 has a summary of the catch. Table 2 summarizes the standard and total lengths of all red snapper that were tagged during the day.

Standard conventional fishing gear, spinning (n=2) and conventional (n=3) reels, were used during this cruise. Most fishers used the conventional reels, though Captain Paul used a spinning reel all day. All conventional reels had 80 lb. main line and then either 60 lb. or 80 lb. leader. The spinning reel had 30 lb. main line with a 60 lb. leader. Only one hook was fished per rig; a 6/0 offset circle hook. Bait included whole sardines, cut menhaden, and live pinfish. Chum (cut menhaden) was used at only the first site. As the day progressed fishers often used multiple baits at a site, which was recorded on the data sheets. The boat was anchored at each site except for the last site where the Captain motored over the site the entire time.

The Finest Kind II is well suited for conducting this type of research. She has plenty of area to work, a large fish box in the middle of the back deck, and a large covering over the back deck to provide cover during bad weather. Would also be useful in extreme heat conditions by supplying shade to the crew. Captain Paul and the rest of the crew did an excellent job on this cruise and caught on to what we were

doing very quickly. They were easy to work with, fished hard, and made every effort to put us on sites that had plenty of red snapper. They asked plenty of questions about what we were doing and were genuinely interested in helping our tagging program in any way they could. Jordan Kahn took a great deal of photos and video on this cruise. Photos included fish being landed as well as fish processing. A few videos were made where Jeff, Justin, or I explained step-by step what we were doing while measuring, venting, tagging fish, or recording data. Jordan stated that he would provide FWC with a link to where photos and video could be viewed after he had time to process what he had captured.

When we arrived at the boat dock it was steadily raining, but by the time we got to our first site, the weather began clearing up. Seas were roughly 3-4 feet at the first site, but it calmed down as the day progressed. It was mostly overcast during the morning, but the skies cleared by mid-day and the sun came out. No one aboard had expected the day to be as nice as it turned out. Winds were fairly light but began to pick up at the last site as a very strong front began to move in as we headed back to port. Ride in was slow and rough as the seas quickly picked up to ~ 8 feet with some very nice sized rollers. Winds also became very strong. Captain did a great job getting us all back safely and Jordan should have some nice footage of a very angry sea. Arrived back at dock at approximately 6:30 pm. Packed up our gear and headed home. All agreed that it was a very successful first trip.

Cruise chronology

Justin Solomon and I drove in from Jacksonville and met Jeff Sauer (IR) at the boat dock in Ponce Inlet, FL. Our trip was aboard the *Finest Kind II* captained by Paul Nelson, Jr. Aboard were Paul Nelson, Sr., Duane Kennard, Pat Murphy and Jordan Kahn. Jordan Kahn is an outdoor writer for the *Daytona Beach News-Journal*. He was asked to ride along by the captain to document the day's activities through photographs and video. The boat left the dock at approximately 0630 and steamed offshore approximately 2 hours to the first site.

Site #1:

We arrived at the first site at approximately 0845, anchored over the site and began fishing at 0852. A menhaden chum was used at this site, but only a handful of pieces were thrown over. Water depth was 75 feet. Pat Murphy landed the first fish which was a red snapper that we tagged. At 0909 the captain wanted to re-anchor on the site as we had drifted away off the intended site. An 8 minute break was recorded for all fishers during this re-anchor. Fishing resumed at 0917 with only a few Atlantic sharpnose sharks (boat released) and one tomtate being landed until fishing stopped at 0925. A total of 9 fish were processed at site #1 which included red snapper (n=2), Atlantic sharpnose shark (n=3), vermillion snapper (n=2), and tomtate (n=2). We pulled anchor and motored to Site #2.

Site #2:

We arrived at Site #2, anchored up and began fishing at 0942. Water depth was 75 feet. No chum was used at this site. Only 3 Atlantic sharpnose sharks were landed and processed at this site. One shark was boat released. Fishing ended at 0955 as the Captain wanted to try another site. We pulled anchor and motored to Site #3.

Site #3:

We anchored on Site #3 and began fishing at 1008. Water depth was 76 feet. This was a very productive site for red snapper. The first 15 fish landed were all red snapper. After 46 minutes of fishing, the captain wanted to re-anchor on the site as we had drifted off. A ten minute break was recorded for all fishers. Fishing resumed at 1104 and ended at 1145. There were several other small breaks recorded for fishers due to having to re-tie leaders and hooks due to line breaks. A total of 56 fish were processed at this site which included red snapper (n=31), Atlantic sharpnose shark (n=12), gag

grouper (n=1), black seabass (n=10), gray triggerfish (n=1), and tomtate (n=1). Forty-six percent of the total red snapper tagged for the day were collected at this site. Fish that were boat released at this site included black seabass (n=1), red snapper (n=1), and Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=9). The red snapper bite slowed as the shark captures increased, so the captain decided to pull anchor and move to another site. We pulled anchor and motored to Site #4.

Site #4:

We anchored at Site #4 and began fishing at 1154. Water depth was 77 feet. No red snapper were collected at this site. Five fish were landed and processed that included Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=2) and black seabass (n=3). Fishing ended at 1204 as the captain wanted to change sites. We pulled anchor and motored to Site #5.

Site #5:

We anchored at Site #5 and began fishing at 1212. Water depth was 78 feet. Three fish were processed at this site which included black seabass (n=1) and Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=2). Fish that were boat released at this site included Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=1). Fishing ended at 1221 as the Captain wanted to change sites due to the presence of sharks and a few line breaks. We pulled anchor and motored to Site #6.

Site #6:

We anchored at Site #6 and began fishing at 1243. Water depth was 80 feet. Two fishers used live bait (pinfish) at this site for a short time. A total of 14 fish were processed at this site which included red snapper (n=3), Atlantic sharpnose shark (n=1), and black seabass (n=10). Fish that were boat released at this site included Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=3). Fishing ended at 1315 as the Captain wanted to try and find more productive red snapper areas. We pulled anchor and motored to Site #7.

Site #7:

We anchored at Site #7 and began fishing at 1350. Water depth was the deepest of the day at 90 feet. All the baitcasting fishers changed leader size from 60 lb. to 80 lb test at some point during their fishing due to line breaks. Two fishers also changed bait types during the time which is recorded on the datasheets. This was also a very productive site for red snapper. A total of 35 fish were processed at this site which included red snapper (n=31), Atlantic sharpnose shark (n=3) and vermilion snapper (n=1). This site also accounted for forty-six percent of the total red snapper tagged for the day. Fish that were boat released at this site included Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=3), red snapper (n=2), and cobia (n=1). Fishing ended at 1455 as the sharks began to move in. The Captain decided to try another site and we pulled anchor and motored to Site #8.

Site #8:

We motor fished at this site as it was decided that since weather was fast approaching we would need to leave fairly soon and head for port. Water depth was 90 feet. Wind was also beginning to pick up. Off in the distance you could see the front approaching. Jeff Sauer and Justin Solomon filled in for the Captain and Paul Nelson, Sr. at this site and fished. Fishing began at 1513. Two fish were processed at this site that included Atlantic sharpnose shark (n=1) and little tunny (n=1). Fish that were boat released at this site included Atlantic sharpnose sharks (n=3). Fishing ended at 1527 as it was decided by the Captain that we had better call it day as the bad weather was fast approaching and that it would probably be a very long, slow ride back to Ponce Inlet.

Table 1. Summary of fishes collected during cruise ECD11-01 off Ponce Inlet, FL February 7, 2011. Total Measured is the total number of fish that were brought aboard and processed for each species. Boat Release is the number of fish that were brought to the boat, were visibly identified, and broke off with no measurements being recorded. The minimum and maximum total length (TL) for each species processed is also given in millimeters.

Species	Total Measured	Boat Release	Totals	Total Lengths (mm)	
				Min	Max
Red Snapper	67	3	70	403	756
Atlantic Sharpnose Shark	26	23	49	795	917
Vermillion Snapper	3	0	3	303	334
Tomtate	3	0	3	245	250
Gag Grouper	1	0	1	805	805
Gray Triggerfish	1	0	1	450	450
Little Tunny	1	0	1	795	795
Black Seabass	24	1	25	248	366
Cobia	0	1	1	-	-
TOTALS	126	28	154	-	-


Table 2. Summary of red snapper tagged during cruise ECD11-01 off Ponce Inlet, FL February 7, 2011. Provided are the standard length (SL) and total length (TL) of each red snapper tagged and the site number that they were captured at. All measurements are given in millimeters. Total lengths that are highlighted in green are fish smaller than the 508 mm (20 inches) legal size when the fishery was open. Also provided at bottom are the number of boat released fish and the site where that occurred.

Red Snapper		
SL	TL	Site
473	609	1
410	519	1
318	403	3
572	730	3
460	594	3
482	624	3
469	612	3
454	588	3
382	488	3
501	665	3
545	701	3
461	604	3
453	583	3
502	651	3
476	615	3
521	674	3
478	616	3
401	524	3
493	633	3
322	417	3
504	648	3
365	480	3
537	686	3
449	576	3
381	498	3
393	503	3
527	682	3
509	652	3
531	679	3
371	479	3
592	756	3
398	509	3
510	665	3
582	731	6
433	558	6
504	645	6
470	605	7
449	570	7
451	584	7
431	555	7
455	587	7

Red Snapper		
SL	TL	Site
399	516	7
510	675	7
520	674	7
475	621	7
462	594	7
375	502	7
479	617	7
491	630	7
553	704	7
482	621	7
465	601	7
501	635	7
433	556	7
469	607	7
495	646	7
449	581	7
441	581	7
468	607	7
411	541	7
476	611	7
476	613	7
443	588	7
495	650	7
449	584	7
431	562	7
357	466	7

Boat Release (no measurement)

#	Site
1	3
2	7
TOTAL	3

 = under 20 inch total length regulation size

20 inches = 508 mm

