Where do red snapper live in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico?

- Red snapper are distributed across a variety of habitats.
- The seafloor consists primarily of sand and mud, along with natural reefs; these areas provide habitat for red snapper.
- Concentrated areas of artificial structures also serve as red snapper habitat.
- The coverage of sediments, natural reefs, and artificial structures differs dramatically across the Gulf.

What types of artificial structures exist in the Gulf?

- Large oil and gas platforms are common in the western Gulf.
- Smaller structures (chicken transport cages, pyramids, military tanks, planes, car bodies, and others) are deliberately placed on the seafloor to create fish habitat.

This illustration shows some of the various reef types present in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico (clockwise from top left: natural reef, pyramid, toppled rig, and chicken transport cage).

Questions or comments? Contact the project team at snappercount@harteresearchinstitute.org
For more information, visit snappercount.org
What is habitat classification?

- Habitat classification is “Phase 1” of the Great Red Snapper Count.
- This phase involves determining where each of the various habitat types exist across the Gulf.

How did scientists approach the habitat classification process?

- U.S. Gulf waters were separated into four regions: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi-Alabama, and Florida.
- Each region was divided into three depth zones, creating 12 unique sections.
- For each section, scientists compiled existing data from various sources to characterize known habitat features.

What did scientists learn from this process?

- Scientists calculated the amount of the U.S. Gulf seafloor that is covered by sand, mud, and natural reefs.
- Scientists also determined the quantity of existing artificial reef structures.

Why is this information useful?

- Based on the distribution and number of different habitat types, scientists decided which sampling approaches, or “gear types,” to use in the Great Red Snapper Count.
- This will result in the best possible estimate of red snapper abundance in each section of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.