



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Service Seeks Public Comment on the Proposed Rule for Amendment 20A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

Comment Period Ends April 30, 2012

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on the proposed rule for Amendment 20A. The proposed rule published on **March 30, 2012** (77 FR 19165), with a comment period ending on **April 30, 2012**.

Amendment 20A addresses the commercial sector of the wreckfish component of the snapper-grouper fishery, which is managed under an individual transferable quota program. When the wreckfish individual transferable quota program was implemented in 1992, the total allowable catch was set at 2 million pounds. On December 30, 2011, an amended proposed rule to the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment was published in the *Federal Register* (76 FR 82264) to set the wreckfish annual catch limit at 235,000 pounds whole weight. NOAA Fisheries Service approved the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment on January 18, 2012, and the final rule published in the *Federal Register* (77 FR 15916), on March 16, 2012. When implemented on April 16, 2012, the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment will also allocate 95 percent (223,250 pounds whole weight) of the wreckfish annual catch limit to the commercial sector. With this reduction in the commercial sector's allowable catch, each wreckfish shareholder's annual allocation will be reduced by approximately 89 percent.

Amendment 20A considers alternatives that would:

- Define and revoke inactive wreckfish shares.
- Redistribute revoked shares to active shareholders.
- Define a cap on the number of shares one entity may own.
- Establish an appeals process for determinations of share status and redistribution.

Actions included in Amendment 20A are intended to promote the management provisions of the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan and to allow commercial fishermen with wreckfish shares to maximize harvest potential within the constraints of the new annual catch limit.

Request for Comments

Comments on this amendment must be received no later than **April 30, 2012**, in order to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the **Addresses** section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Electronic copies of the amendment may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Service Web site <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SGAmendment20A.htm>, or the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>.

If you would like the files in a different format (such as hard copies), please submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the NOAA FOIA Office. Guidelines on submitting a FOIA request can be found on the NOAA FOIA Web page (<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~foia/index.html#guide>).

You may submit comments by the following method:

- Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Enter the following docket number into the "Search" box: NOAA-NMFS-2011-0277. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin may not be considered.