



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

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February 6, 2009
FB09-011

NOAA Seeks Public Comment on a Proposed Rule for Changes to South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Regulations

Comment Period Ends March 9, 2009

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on a proposed rule to implement management measures proposed in Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. Amendment 16 was developed to address overfishing and other management issues in the snapper-grouper fishery. If approved, Amendment 16 would establish management reference points and specify interim allocations for the commercial and recreational sectors for gag and vermilion snapper, as well as implement management measures which would be applied to the commercial and recreational sectors of the snapper-grouper fishery. The proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on February 6, 2009 (74 FR 6257).

New measures would include:

- A four month prohibition on recreational and commercial harvest of shallow-water grouper species including gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper.
- A five month prohibition on recreational harvest of vermilion snapper.
- Modifications to gag and vermilion snapper commercial quotas.
- Reductions in recreational bag limits for vermilion snapper, gag, black grouper, and the grouper aggregate.
- A requirement for the commercial and recreational sectors to use venting and dehooking tools when necessary.

For a person on board a vessel for which a federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the provisions of the closures for gag and vermilion snapper would apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or federal waters. Captain and crew on for-hire vessels would be prohibited from retaining vermilion snapper, grouper, or tilefish.

Summary table of current and proposed regulations for the South Atlantic.

Measures	Current	Proposed in Amendment 16
Recreational		
Grouper aggregate bag limit	5 fish	3 fish
Gag/black grouper bag limit within aggregate	2 gag or black grouper (combined)	1 gag or black grouper (combined)
Vermilion snapper bag limit	10 fish	5 fish
Shallow-water grouper* closed season	None	January-April
Vermilion snapper closed season	None	November-March
Commercial		
Shallow water grouper* closed season	March-April (gag/black grouper)	January-April (all shallow-water groupers*)
Gag quota	None	352,940 lbs gutted weight
Vermilion Snapper Quota	1,100,000 lbs gutted weight	315,523 lbs gutted weight (January-June); 302,523 lbs gutted weight (July-December)
* Gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper.		

The notice of availability for the draft environmental impact statement was published on April 25, 2008, with a comment period ending June 6, 2008 (73 FR 22365). The Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) on November 7, 2008, with a comment period ending December 8, 2008 (73 FR 66241). The notice of availability for the amendment was published on December 24, 2008, with a comment period ending February 23, 2009 (73 FR 79037).

Request for Comments

Written comments on this proposed rule must be received no later than March 9, 2009, 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 proposed rule or FEIS may be obtained from the e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>, or:

NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- 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 or the proposed rule may not be considered.
- Mail: Jack McGovern
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
- Fax: 727-824-5308, Attention: Jack McGovern

How Can We Improve These Fishery Bulletins?

If you have any suggestions on how we may improve the contents of future fishery bulletins, please contact:
Kim Amendola, Communications Specialist
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If you would like to receive these fishery bulletins via e-mail as soon as they are published, send your e-mail address to sero.communications.comments@noaa.gov. You will still continue to receive these bulletins through the mail.

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