

Limited Access & Federal Permits for the Commercial Snapper Grouper Fishery in the South Atlantic

In 1998, Amendment 8 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan was implemented, initiating a limited access program for the commercial snapper grouper fishery in the south Atlantic region. This limited entry program was adopted to address overcapitalization in the snapper grouper fishery. It was identified that there were many more vessels permitted in the fishery than necessary to harvest the available yield. Harvest capacity had continued to increase significantly through the use of electronics and greater availability of detailed bathymetric charts. The open access nature of the snapper grouper fishery contributed to the overcapitalization and continued overfishing. In addition, in an effort to rebuild the overfished stocks, restrictive harvest regulations were implemented. The Council thought it was only fair that the fishermen who bore the burden of these regulations be the beneficiaries of a successful rebuilding effort.

Who Qualified?

Under Amendment 8, a vessel was eligible for a limited access commercial permit for South Atlantic Snapper Grouper if the owner owned a vessel with a commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper at any time from February 11, 1996 through February 11, 1997, and owned a permitted vessel that had at least one landing of snapper grouper from the South Atlantic from January 1, 1993 through August 20, 1996, as reported on fishing vessel logbooks.

An owner whose permitted vessels had landings of snapper grouper from the South Atlantic of at least 1,000 pounds in *any* one of the years 1993, 1994, 1995 or in 1996 through August 20, as reported on the fishing vessel logbooks received by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was eligible for a transferable permit.

All other vessels received a non-transferable permit with a 225 pound trip limit.

New Entrants

New entrants into the snapper grouper fishery must obtain two existing snapper grouper transferable permits and exchange them for one new permit. The vessel's catch histories must also be transferred with the permits.

Information regarding the availability and sale of these permits is not available from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council or the NMFS. It is suggested that the validity of any permit be confirmed before purchase through the NMFS permit office. For additional information regarding permit transfers, please contact:

NMFS Southeast Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL
<http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>
Permit office – 727/824-5326

For a copy of Snapper Grouper Amendment 8, contact the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council office.

