NOAA Fisheries Announces a Final Rule for South Atlantic Golden Tilefish

NOAA Fisheries has published a final rule to implement Amendment 18B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. Amendment 18B establishes a longline endorsement program to limit participation and reduce overcapacity in the golden tilefish component of the snapper-grouper fishery. A final rule implementing these regulations published in the Federal Register on April 23, 2013 (78 FR 23858), with an effective date of May 23, 2013.

The final rule for Amendment 18B includes:

- An endorsement program for the longline sector of the golden tilefish component of the snapper-grouper fishery.
- Establishment of landings criteria to determine who will receive endorsements. Only golden tilefish fishermen who meet certain landings criteria and also have a valid Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit will receive an endorsement and be allowed to use longline gear to harvest golden tilefish.
- An appeals process for the golden tilefish endorsement program.
- Establishment of a procedure to allow transferability of golden tilefish endorsements.
- Allocation of 75% of the commercial annual catch limit to the longline sector and 25% to the hook-and-line sector.
- Modification of the golden tilefish trip limits to remove the 300 pound gutted weight trip limit when 75% of the commercial annual catch limit is caught.
- Establishment of a 500 pound gutted weight trip limit for those who do not qualify for a golden tilefish endorsement.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the Federal Register will be resolved in favor of the Federal Register.

More Information
For more information on Amendment 18B please click on this link to the Amendment 18B Frequently Asked Questions http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm or view the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s Web page at: www.safmc.net.

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