



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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November 16, 2009
FB09-062

NOAA Fisheries Publishes a Final Rule for South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Amendment 15B

NOAA Fisheries Service published the final rule for Amendment 15B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic region on November 16, 2009. This final rule will:

- Prohibit the sale of snapper-grouper harvested under the bag limits unless the vessel owner has been issued a Federal Commercial Snapper-Grouper Permit.
- Allocate 95% of the total allowable catch of snowy grouper to the commercial sector and 5% to the recreational sector.
- Allocate 50% of the total allowable catch of red porgy to the commercial sector and 50% to the recreational sector.
- Decrease the snowy grouper quota from 84,000 pounds whole weight to 82,900 pounds whole weight, and increase the red porgy quota from 127,000 pounds whole weight to 190,050 pounds whole weight.
- Revise the stock status determination criteria for golden tilefish.
- Expand the allowable transfer of a commercial vessel permit under the limited access program and extend the allowable period for renewal of such a permit to one year.
- Require an owner and operator of a vessel for which a commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit has been issued and that has on board any hook-and-line gear to comply with sea turtle and smalltooth sawfish release protocols and possess on board specific gear to ensure proper release of such species that are incidentally caught.
- Implement a bycatch monitoring program, which requires any vessel (commercial or recreational) that fishes for snapper-grouper in the exclusive economic zone, if selected by NOAA Fisheries Service, to carry an observer and install an electronic logbook and/or video monitoring system.

Implementation Dates

The extension of the snapper-grouper permit renewal period is effective immediately in order to prevent the unintentional loss of snapper-grouper permits during the 30-day wait period. The effective date for the requirement for federally-permitted snapper-grouper vessels to carry sea turtle dehooking tools and protected species handling and release guidelines/protocols will be February 15, 2010. The provisions expanding the allowable transfer of a commercial vessel permit under the limited access program and implementing a bycatch monitoring program will be effective at a future date to be announced by NOAA Fisheries Service in a separate Federal Register notice. All other actions in the amendment will become effective on December 16, 2009.

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

Addresses

Electronic copies of the final rule or the amendment 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:

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Frequently Asked Questions for Snapper Grouper Amendment 15B can be found on line at:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

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:

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