



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Service Publishes Final Rule to Implement the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2

NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule in the *Federal Register* to implement the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CE-BA 2) on December 30, 2011 (76 FR 82183). Regulations will be effective on January 30, 2012. The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on November 8, 2011 (76 FR 69230), with a comment period ending on November 25, 2011.

CE-BA 2 modifies management of octocorals; modifies management in the special management zones off South Carolina; modifies sea turtle release gear requirements for snapper-grouper fishermen; and designates essential fish habitat and essential fish habitat-habitat areas of particular concern.

Octocoral Management

CE-BA 2 modifies management of octocorals by removing octocorals off Florida from the fishery management unit. As such, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will manage octocorals in the exclusive economic zone off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The annual catch limit for octocorals off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia is zero.

Special Management Zones off South Carolina

As a result of this final rule, harvest and possession of snapper-grouper and coastal migratory pelagic species in special management zones off South Carolina will be limited to the recreational bag limit.

Sea Turtle Release Gear Requirements

CE-BA 2 modifies the sea turtle release gear requirements for the snapper-grouper fishery by requiring different gear for vessels with different freeboard heights. Vessels with a freeboard height of less than four feet will be required to have a reduced suite of sea turtle release gear compared to vessels with a freeboard height of four feet or greater.

Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern

CE-BA 2 designates additional essential fish habitat for *Sargassum* and snapper-grouper species. CE-BA 2 also designates additional essential fish habitat-habitat areas of particular concern for coral and snapper-grouper species. These designations do not result in new regulations for these fisheries but require that future non-fishing activities in the areas be subject to review and consultation.

Addresses

Copies of the amendment/final rule may be obtained from the Federal 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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