



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 4, 2020

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NOAA Fisheries Informs Council of Possible Red Snapper Season in the South Atlantic Region for 2020

Jekyll Island, GA - If a recreational season is allowed this year for red snapper, the season would last for three days with a one fish per person daily bag limit. That was the word today from NOAA Fisheries, provided during a presentation to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Snapper Grouper Committee as part of the Council's week-long meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia. NOAA Fisheries is responsible for determining if a season can be allowed each year, based on the annual catch limits for red snapper. The recreational annual catch limit is currently set at 29,656 fish for the South Atlantic region, covering the Carolinas, Georgia and the east coast of Florida. The recreational sector receives 71.93% percent of the total annual catch limit.

The 2020 recreational opening is contingent on a change to current regulations that do not allow the recreational season to open if NOAA Fisheries determines the season to be three days or less. In December 2019, the Council approved an amendment to modify that restriction to allow for a shorter season. Regulatory Amendment 33 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan has been submitted to NOAA Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries plans to issue a Proposed Rule for public comment. A Final Rule to implement Regulatory Amendment 33 would need to be issued before the recreational season is allowed. The Council's intent is to have the amendment in place prior to the 2020 season.

The decision from NOAA Fisheries regarding the length of the recreational season is based on recreational landings data from 2019. The data are collected by individual state agencies, as well as NOAA Fisheries Marine Recreational Information Program and the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey. According to NOAA Fisheries, preliminary landings during the 5-day 2019 recreational season totaled an estimated 49,674 fish, exceeding the current recreational annual catch limit. As a result, the season would need to be reduced in 2020.

The red snapper commercial season will begin the second Monday in July as scheduled with a 75-pound trip limit. The season will continue until NOAA Fisheries determines that the commercial annual catch limit has been met.

The Council meeting will continue through Friday. The meeting is open to the public and available via webinar each day as it occurs. Additional information, including links for webinar registration, briefing book materials, and committee reports is available from the Council's website at: <https://safmc.net/march-2020-council-meeting-details/>.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.