


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
 Southeast Regional Office
 263 13th Avenue South
 St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

F/SER24:SB

Mr. Kevin Anson, Chairman
 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
 Tampa, Florida 33607

MAR 24 2015

Dear Mr. Anson:

With this letter, I am providing you the March-April 2015 Regional Administrator's Report. The report is intended to inform the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) of the status of actions transmitted for review and implementation by the Secretary of Commerce.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 20B: This amendment would modify fishing years and trip limits, establish regional quotas for king and Spanish mackerel in the South Atlantic, adjust the framework, revise annual catch limits (ACLs) and establish allocations between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic for cobia, and establish transit provisions. A notice of availability published on October 17, 2014, with the comment period ending December 16, 2014. A proposed rule published October 31, 2014, with a comment period ending December 1, 2014. The final rule published January 27, 2015, effective March 1, 2015.

Red Snapper Framework to Establish Annual Catch Targets (ACTs) and Accountability Measures (AMs): This action is in response to a 2014 District Court decision (*Guindon v. Pritzker, 2014 WL 1274076; D.D.C. Mar. 26, 2014*), finding in pertinent part that NOAA Fisheries failed to require adequate AMs to prohibit the retention of fish after the recreational quota had been harvested and address any overages. The rule addresses the Court's decision, establishing ACTs for the recreational and commercial sectors, and establishing a "payback" for the subsequent year if the sector-specific ACL is exceeded. Calculated from the Council's ACL/ACT control rule, the recreational ACT is a 20 percent buffer from the recreational quota; the ACT for the commercial sector is 0 percent as the individual fishing quota (IFQ) constrains harvest to the quota. Federal recreational fishing seasons are calculated to meet the ACT (versus previous years where the season was based off the quota) and avoid exceeding the recreational quota. The proposed rule published November 21, 2014, with a comment period through December 22, 2014. The final rule published March 19, 2015, effective April 20, 2015.

Shrimp Amendment 16: This amendment would resolve current discrepancies in the regulations where the established ACL is less than the established quota, and two conflicting AMs exist. An in-season closure is to occur when the quota is met and a post-season closure would occur if the ACL is exceeded the previous year. The rule would remove the quota and in-season closure and retain the ACL and post-season closure. A notice of availability published December 24, 2014, with a comment period through February 23, 2015. The proposed rule published January 26, 2015, with a comment period through February 26, 2015. The final rule published March 25, 2015, effective April 24, 2015.

Red Grouper Bag Limit and AM Framework: This action would reduce the red grouper recreational bag limit from 4 fish to 2 fish, and remove a post-season AM, where the bag limit is reduced if the



recreational ACL is exceeded. A proposed rule published January 27, 2015, with a comment period through February 26, 2015. A final rule is under review and expected to publish before the end of March 2015.

Reef Fish Amendment 40: This amendment would establish separate sub-quotas for red snapper between the for-hire and private anglers within the recreational sector. Sub-quotas would be based on historical catch histories between the two components of the recreational sector. Based on recalibrated landings data from the Marine Recreational Information Program, the allocation between the federal for-hire and private angling components would be 42.3 and 57.7 percent, respectively. The proposed program, if implemented, is scheduled to expire in three calendar years without further action by the Council. A notice of availability published January 16, 2015, with a comment period through March 17, 2015. A proposed rule published January 23, 2015, with a comment period through March 9, 2015. NOAA Fisheries must approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment by April 16, 2015. More than 18,000 comments were received during the two comment periods; these comments will be considered in NOAA Fisheries' determination regarding approval of the amendment. If approved, a final rule would need to publish by May 1, 2015, to be effective for the 2015 recreational fishing season.

Permits: The following totals are the number of permits issued or renewed within the last 12 months, which can be used to fish in the appropriate fishery (expired but renewable limited access permits are in parentheses). These totals do not represent activity in the fishery. The number of permits as of March 23, 2015, is:

- 1,369 (98) moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 284 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,186 (115) for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 31 (3) historical captain permits
- 1,356 (101) commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic); 19 (2) commercial king mackerel gillnet
- 1,723 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,172 (117) for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 30 (3) historical captain permits
- 785 (77) commercial reef fish moratorium permits; 60 (2) longline endorsements
- 213 commercial spiny lobster permits and 230 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)

Recreational and commercial landings, catch limits and quotas, fishing seasons, and closures can be tracked on the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) Web site at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/acl_monitoring/index.html.

For IFQ species, up-to-date landings can be tracked on the SERO's Reef Fish IFQ Web page at <https://portal.southeast.fisheries.noaa.gov/cs/main.html#>

Sincerely,



FOR Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator