



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

## FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Peter Hood Peter.Hood@noaa.gov  
727-824-5305, FAX 727-824-5308

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## INTERIM MEASURES FOR GULF OF MEXICO GAG, GREATER AMBERJACK, RED SNAPPER, AND GRAY TRIGGERFISH EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2009

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) has published a final rule implementing interim measures in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. The rule published in the *Federal Register* on December 2, 2008, and the measures are effective **January 1, 2009**.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) requested a temporary rule be effective at the beginning of 2009 to address overfishing of gag, as well as red snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish until more permanent measures can be implemented through Amendment 30B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The Council developed Amendment 30B to end overfishing of gag, revise shallow-water grouper management measures in light of new information on gag and red grouper stocks, and improve the effectiveness of federal management measures. NOAA Fisheries Service is presently reviewing Amendment 30B with subsequent rulemaking occurring later in 2009.

### New Management Measures

The interim rule will:

- Establish a two-fish gag recreational bag limit (recreational grouper aggregate bag limit will remain at 5 fish).
- Adjust the recreational closed season for gag to February 1 through March 31 (the recreational closed season for red and black groupers will remain February 15 to March 15).
- Establish a 1.32 million pound commercial quota for gag.
- Require operators of federally permitted Gulf of Mexico commercial and for-hire reef fish vessels to comply with the more restrictive of federal or state reef fish regulations when fishing in state waters for red snapper, greater amberjack, gray triggerfish, and gag.

All measures implemented through this final temporary rule will expire at 12:01 a.m. on June 1, 2009, unless extended on an interim basis for one additional 186-day period or replaced by measures implemented through another rule.

NOAA Fisheries Service prepared an environmental impact statement for the interim action and Amendment 30B in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. A record of decision (ROD) documenting the determination by NOAA Fisheries Service, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, to approve a temporary rule to set interim measures was signed on November 24, 2008. A copy of the interim rule and the ROD are available from the Sustainable Fisheries Division of NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701. Electronic copies of the final rule may be obtained from the *Federal Register* Web site at:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html> (do an advanced search under final rules for "page 73192").

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information pertinent to the rule. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

For more information on Gulf of Mexico shallow water grouper fishery, log onto: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/> or call 727-824-5305.

### 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:

Kim Amendola, Communication Specialist,  
Phone: 727-551-5707, FAX: 727-824-5320,

e-mail: [SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov](mailto:SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov)