



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## ***NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE IS SEEKING COMMENTS ON A PROPOSED TEMPORARY RULE TO ADDRESS OVERFISHING OF GULF OF MEXICO RED SNAPPER DURING 2007***

***Comment period ends January 26, 2007***

NOAA Fisheries Service is requesting comments from the public regarding the proposed temporary rule to address overfishing of Gulf of Mexico red snapper during 2007. The proposed temporary rule will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 14, 2006. The proposed rule would:

- Reduce the red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) quota to 6.5 million pounds (mp), resulting in a commercial quota of 3.315 mp and a recreational quota of 3.185 mp.
- Reduce the red snapper recreational bag limit from four fish to two fish per person per day.
- Prohibit the captain and crew of for-hire vessels from retaining the recreational bag limit.
- Reduce the commercial minimum size limit from 15 inches to 13 inches total length.
- Establish a target red snapper bycatch mortality reduction goal for the shrimp fishery that equates to 50 percent of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003 and a level of shrimp effort equal to that observed in the fishery in 2005.

The Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. Multiple sources of fishing mortality influence the status of this stock, including the commercial and recreational red snapper fishery, and the shrimp trawl fishery, which takes red snapper incidentally when harvesting shrimp. At the August 2006 Council meeting, the

Council voted to delay consideration of regulatory actions needed to address red snapper overfishing until January 2007 when additional data and information are available. The Council's decision to postpone regulatory action effectively prevents NOAA Fisheries Service from implementing any permanent regulations proposed by the Council in time to address overfishing during 2007. If overfishing continues in 2007, then substantially more severe harvest reductions would be required in 2008 to end overfishing within the time frame the Council approved in the red snapper rebuilding plan. Consequently, NOAA Fisheries Service has determined interim measures are needed to address overfishing of red snapper during the 2007 fishing year.

NOAA Fisheries Service is aware that there has been considerable discussion among affected stakeholders since the agency announced its intent to develop an interim rule for the 2007 red snapper fishing season, and that the Council has also received input on the matter. The public comment period on the proposed temporary rule will extend through the last day of the January 2007 Council meeting to allow the Council to review the issue in light of that input and the provisions of the proposed rule. NOAA Fisheries Service encourages the Council to carefully consider the proposed temporary rule and, in making any suggested revisions, to ensure consistency with the mandates

of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Similarly, the agency encourages the affected public to participate in the Council process.

Written comments on the proposed rule must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on January 26, 2007. See the **Addresses** section at the end of this bulletin for information on where and how to submit comments.

More information on this proposed temporary rule and answers to frequently asked questions on red snapper can be found on the Southeast Regional Office's Web page at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

### **Addresses**

Written copies of the proposed temporary rule may be obtained from:

NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office  
Sustainable Fisheries Division  
263 13th Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Electronic copies of the proposed temporary rule may be obtained from the *Federal Register* website at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

Comments regarding the proposed temporary rule should be sent to Mr. Peter Hood at NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office at the address provided above. Comments may also be submitted via fax to 727-824-5308 or by e-mail to: 0648-AT87.Proposed@noaa.gov. For e-mail comments, include in the subject line the following identifier: 0648-AT87.

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