



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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## **GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH TRAP ENDORSEMENTS SET TO EXPIRE FEBRUARY 7, 2007**

NOAA Fisheries Service would like to remind commercial fishermen possessing Gulf of Mexico fish trap endorsements that the use or possession of fish traps in federal waters will be prohibited after February 7, 2007 [50 CFR 622.31(c)]. After this date, fishermen possessing a commercial reef fish permit with a trap endorsement will be able to use their reef fish permit, but trap endorsements will no longer be valid.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) approved Amendment 14 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan in 1996. On March 24,

1997 (62 FR 13983), NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule implementing Amendment 14. This final rule implemented a 10-year phase-out of the Gulf of Mexico reef fish trap fishery. The 10-year phase-out was established to address concerns about the impacts of incidental catch of non-target species, increasing unreported fishing effort, lack of compliance with fish trap regulations, and long-term ghost fishing from abandoned or lost traps. To reduce the economic impacts of the fish trap prohibition, the Council recommended phasing out the use of fish traps in federal waters over a 10-year period.

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