



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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NOAA Seeking Public Comment on Long-Term Measures to Address Overfishing and Bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper and Shrimp Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) are seeking comments from the public on proposed long-term regulatory measures to address overfishing and bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico directed red snapper and shrimp fisheries. The status of this population is influenced not only by fishing mortality rates in the directed commercial and recreational fisheries but also by red snapper bycatch mortality rates in the shrimp trawl fishery. A recent assessment indicates red snapper catch and bycatch levels in the directed red snapper and shrimp fisheries are likely to jeopardize the success of the latest plan to end overfishing of red snapper and rebuild the population to sustainable levels. Therefore, long-term regulatory measures have been proposed for these fisheries.

Please comment on the following proposed regulatory measures:

- Revising the red snapper rebuilding plan and reducing the total allowable catch (TAC) for red snapper.
- Establishing measures to constrain recreational harvest to the recreational quota associated with a new TAC.
- Assuming a post-hurricane reduction in fishing effort/landings when setting TAC.
- Setting a bag limit for for-hire captain and crew.
- Modifying the commercial minimum size limit to reduce bycatch in the directed red snapper fishery.
- Establishing fishing gear requirements, such as circle hooks, minimum hook sizes, venting tools, and dehooking devices, to reduce bycatch and/or bycatch mortality in the directed red snapper fishery.

- Establishing a target reduction goal for juvenile red snapper mortality in the shrimp fishery.
- Managing shrimp fishing effort through seasonal area closures to control effort and reduce red snapper mortality.
- Establishing a procedural mechanism for the Council to quickly respond to information indicating shrimp effort is above target levels.

The proposed regulatory measures and the Council's preferred management measures are described in further detail in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Joint Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (Amendment 27/14). The Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of the DSEIS on April 20, 2007 (72 FR 19927).

The regulatory measures evaluated in this DSEIS may be implemented through Amendment 27/14 and are meant to eventually replace the recent temporary (interim) measures implemented by NOAA Fisheries Service. Public hearings for Amendment 27/14 will be held May 14-24, 2007, throughout the Gulf of Mexico. The Council is scheduled to take final action on this amendment at the June 4-8, 2007, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, and make a recommendation to NOAA Fisheries Service as to which proposed long-term measures to implement.

More information about upcoming public hearings and the June Council meeting can be obtained online at: www.gulfcouncil.org, or by contacting the Council at: 2203 N. Lois Ave., Tampa, Florida, 33607; Phone: 813-348-1630.

For Copies of the DSEIS

Copies of the DSEIS may be downloaded from the Southeast Regional Office's Web page (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>); click on Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper, then click on Joint Reef Fish and Shrimp Amendment 27/14) or can be obtained from:

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To Submit Comments on the DSEIS

Comments or questions on this document submitted during the agency's 45-day review period for the DSEIS must be received by 5 p.m., Eastern time, on June 4, 2007. Written comments should be submitted by mail to Peter Hood; see above address. Comments may be submitted by FAX to 727-824-5308. Electronic comments may be submitted by e-mail to 0648-AT87.DSEIS@noaa.gov; include in the e-mail subject line the following document identifier: 0648-AT87.

Copies of comments should also be submitted to:

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SSMC3, Room 15603
1315 East-West Highway
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FAX 301-713-0585
E-mail to nepa.comments@noaa.gov.

How Can We Improve These Fishery Bulletins

NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office (SERO) recognizes fishery management actions are complex and often difficult to understand. SERO is dedicated to providing information to the public in a simple and easy to understand format through the use of fishery bulletins and other materials. If you have any suggestions on how SERO may improve the contents of future fishery bulletins please contact:

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