



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE EXTENDS INTERIM MEASURES FOR GULF OF MEXICO RED SNAPPER AND SHRIMP FISHERIES Small Entity Compliance Guide

NOAA Fisheries Service announces it is extending interim regulations for the Gulf of Mexico red snapper and shrimp fisheries. These interim measures are intended to address overfishing of red snapper in 2007. The temporary rule also amends regulations for the distribution of Gulf of Mexico red snapper 2008 individual fishing quota (IFQ) allocations.

Extension of Interim Measures

Interim measures may be implemented by the Secretary of Commerce to reduce overfishing until such measures can be replaced by a fishery management plan (FMP), FMP amendment, or regulations taking remedial action. These measures may remain in effect for no more than 180 days, but may be extended for an additional 186 days if the public has had an opportunity to comment on the measures and a fishery management council is actively preparing measures to address overfishing on a permanent basis.

NOAA Fisheries Service determined interim measures were needed to temporarily address overfishing of red snapper in 2007 while the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) developed additional, long-term measures to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock. The final rule for the interim measures published on April 2, 2007, and these measures will expire on September 29, 2007.

In June 2007, the Gulf Council approved long-term measures to reduce red snapper harvest and bycatch. These long-term measures are proposed through Amendment 27 to the Reef Fish FMP and Amendment 14 to the Shrimp FMP (Amendment 27/14), which are currently under Secretarial review. Amendment 27/14 will not be implemented before the interim measures expire; therefore, NOAA Fisheries Service is extending the interim measures.

Please note: The proposed rule for Amendment 27/14 has not been published in the *Federal Register* yet. Once published, NOAA Fisheries Service will be seeking public comment on the rule.

In summary, the interim measures to be extended will:

- Continue the commercial red snapper minimum size limit at 13 inches total length.
- Maintain the red snapper bycatch mortality reduction goal in the shrimp fishery to 50 percent of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003.
- Maintain the total allowable catch of red snapper for 2007 at 6.5 million pounds (mp), resulting in a commercial red snapper quota of 3.315 mp and a recreational red snapper quota of 3.185 mp.
- Maintain the recreational red snapper bag limit at two fish per person per day.
- Continue the prohibition of the captain and crew of for-hire vessels from retaining the recreational bag limit.

Distribution of IFQ Allocations

Amendment 27/14, if approved and implemented, will reduce the commercial red snapper quota from 3.315 mp to 2.55 mp. If the amendment is approved, the new lower quota (2.55 mp) may not be implemented in time for NOAA Fisheries Service to distribute 2008 IFQ allocations. In that case, NOAA Fisheries Service would have to issue allocation based on the higher quota currently in effect and then revoke some of the allocation later if the lower quota is implemented. This would be disruptive to the industry and administratively burdensome. Thus this final temporary rule amends the regulations to distribute and issue 2008 IFQ allocations based on the more restrictive 2.55 mp quota proposed in Amendment 27/14.

Other Information

NOAA Fisheries Service prepared a Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) and a Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (FRFA) that augments the findings of the initial interim rule’s RIR. The FRFA is available from the Sustainable Fisheries Division of NOAA Fisheries Service’s Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701.

Written copies of the final rule implementing these interim measures may be obtained from 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 after September 24, 2007, at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>. (Select final rules and regulations and search on “red snapper”)

This Small Entity Compliance Guide complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. Any discrepancies between this document 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 red snapper, visit our Web site at <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 future fishery bulletins please contact:
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