



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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NOAA IMPLEMENTS NEW REGULATIONS FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO VERMILION SNAPPER FISHERY AND THE RED SNAPPER INDIVIDUAL FISHING QUOTA (IFQ) PROGRAM Small Entity Compliance Guide

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) has published a final rule implementing new regulations for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. New regulations relax harvesting restrictions on vermilion snapper commercial and recreational fisheries. The final rule also clarifies landing and offloading requirements for the red snapper IFQ program. The vermilion snapper regulations will become effective 30 days after publication of the final rule on February 4, 2008. The clarification of IFQ requirements becomes effective immediately upon publication of the final rule on January 3, 2008.

New Regulations for Vermilion Snapper Fishery

In summary, the regulations will:

- Reduce the commercial and recreational vermilion snapper minimum size limit from 11 inches to 10 inches total length;
- Eliminate the 10-fish recreational bag limit restriction for vermilion snapper within the existing 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit; and
- Eliminate the 40-day commercial closure for vermilion snapper, which extends from April 22 through May 31 each year.

These new regulations are intended to provide fishermen the opportunity to increase harvest of vermilion snapper. A recent assessment indicated vermilion snapper is no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing.

Landing and Offloading Requirements Clarified for the IFQ Program

Some program participants had noted that two landing and offloading requirements of the IFQ program were inconsistent with the intended regulatory effect. Therefore, we clarified the regulations to make them consistent with the original intent of the IFQ program. Specifically, we modified the regulatory text so: 1) The definition of landing removes any reference to

“offloading,” and 2) only “offloading” is restricted to the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The regulations have been clarified so IFQ fishermen:

- 1) Can land their vessels anytime during the day and night, provided that a landing notification has been given between 3 to 12 hours prior to landing, 2) can only offload red snapper from 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., and 3) do not need to give a law enforcement an offloading notification for red snapper.

These regulatory clarifications provide participants flexibility in their operations without substantially impacting the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts. The intent of the 3-hour landing notification is to provide law enforcement officers the opportunity to be present at the time of landing. Offloading between 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. is required so that law enforcement officers can monitor and enforce red snapper requirements dockside.

Note: For the purposes of these regulations, the term “landing” means tying a vessel to a dock. “Offloading” means removing red snapper from a vessel.

Written copies of the final rule implementing these 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, once published, may be obtained from the *Federal Register* Web site at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

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*.

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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If you would like to receive these fishery bulletins via e-mail as soon as they are published, please e-mail us at: sero.communications.comments@noaa.gov and include: (1) "Request for Electronic Fishery Bulletins" in the subject line; and (2) your preferred e-mail address in the body of the e-mail. You will still receive a print copy of these bulletins through the mail.

CLARIFICATIONS TO IFQ PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	Landing a Vessel with Red Snapper	Offloading Red Snapper
3-hour landing notification needed?	Yes	No
Restricted to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.?	No	Yes

VERMILION SNAPPER MANAGEMENT ACTION	Previous Regulations	New Regulations
Recreational and Commercial Size Limit	11 inches	10 inches
Commercial Seasonal Closure	April 22 to May 31	No seasonal closure
Recreational Bag Limit	10-fish bag limit within 20-fish reef fish aggregate	Included within 20-fish reef fish aggregate

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