



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Delayed Start Date of the 2012/2013 Commercial Fishing Season for Black Sea Bass in the South Atlantic *Commercial Fishing Season for Black Sea Bass Begins July 1, 2012*

NOAA Fisheries Service is issuing a temporary rule to delay the start date of the commercial fishing season for black sea bass in the South Atlantic. This emergency action will allow time for Amendment 18A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region to be implemented, if approved by the Secretary of Commerce. The black sea bass commercial sector has met their quota very early in the fishing season for the past three fishing years, and Amendment 18A contains several management measures that would reduce the rate of black sea bass harvest in the commercial sector to address derby conditions.

If approved, Amendment 18A will not be effective before the usual June 1 start date of the next commercial fishing season. This temporary rule will allow management measures in Amendment 18A to become effective before the 2012/2013 commercial fishing season opens, NOAA Fisheries Service is delaying the start date of the fishing season by one month.

Commercial Sector Management Measures in Amendment 18A:

- An endorsement program for the commercial black sea bass pot segment of the snapper-grouper fishery, where only endorsement holders who meet certain landings criteria and also have a valid Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permit would be allowed to use pot gear to harvest black sea bass.
- A limit of 35 black sea bass pot tags issued to each endorsement holder each permit year.
- A requirement to bring black sea bass pots back to shore at the end of each trip.
- A 1,000 pound gutted weight (1,180 pound whole weight) commercial trip limit for the black sea bass commercial sector.

- An increase to the commercial minimum size limit from 10 inches total length to 11 inches total length.

Allowing the provisions in Amendment 18A to become effective before the commercial fishing season opens will mitigate socioeconomic impacts and management problems in the snapper-grouper fishery.

***Please Note:** If the black sea bass pot endorsement program is approved for implementation, a 30-day freeze on transfers of Unlimited South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Permits with black sea bass landings using black sea bass pot gear between 1999 and 2010 will begin on the publication date of the final rule, which will be announced with another fishery bulletin.

More Information

For more information on this temporary rule please click on this link to the [Black Sea Bass Temporary Rule Frequently Asked Questions](#).

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