



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Announces the Gulf of Mexico Gag Recreational Season and Modification to the Recreational Shallow-Water Grouper Closure Small Entity Compliance Guide

NOAA Fisheries announces a final rule establishing the 2013 gag recreational fishing season that opens on July 1 and closes on December 3, 2013. The rule also limits the geographical extent of the February 1 through March 31 shallow-water grouper closure to waters seaward of a line approximating 20 fathoms. The final rule will be effective July 5, 2013.

Definitions

Annual catch limit is the highest level of landings that is acceptable to maintain a healthy stock size.

Annual catch targets provide a buffer to account for management uncertainty around the annual catch limit. If fishermen catch the annual catch target within the year, they cannot catch gray triggerfish until the next year. This makes gray triggerfish annual catch targets into quotas.

Gag Recreational Season

The recreational gag season opens on July 1, 2013, and the rule closes the season on December 3, 2013. December 3, 2013, is when the annual catch target of 1.287 million pounds is projected to be caught. However, if at any time landings are projected to exceed the 2013 annual catch limit of 1.495 million pounds during the federal season, gag accountability measures would close fishing for gag. The December 3, 2013, closure date does factor in the effect of incompatible state regulations by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that open state waters off four counties from April 1 through June 30.

Recreational Shallow-Water Grouper Closure

The rule restricts the geographical extent of the fixed February 1 through March 31 shallow-water grouper closed season to apply only to waters seaward of the 20-fathom boundary. This allows grouper fishing to occur year-round while providing some protection to species that spawn during February and March. Figure 1 displays the boundaries.

Other information

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This bulletin provides only a summary of the information about the rule. Discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the final rule are available by contacting NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701 or by downloading it off the Southeast Regional Office's Web site for reef fish at

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/swg_framework/index.html

once it has published.

Need more information on these topics?

Southeast Regional Office's Web page:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

Figure 1. Map showing the 20-fathom boundary for the shallow-water grouper time area closure.

