



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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## NOAA Seeks Comments on an Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit for a Pilot Study by Alabama For-Hire Vessels Evaluating an Allocation-Based Management System

NOAA Fisheries is accepting comments on an application for an exempted fishing permit from the Alabama Charter Fishing Association Cooperative (Cooperative). The Cooperative proposes to evaluate the efficiency of an allocation-based management system in a 2-year pilot study.

This study, to be conducted in the Gulf of Mexico, is intended to assess whether such a system can better achieve conservation goals established in the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico; evaluate the effectiveness of a more timely electronic data reporting system; and evaluate the potential social and economic benefits of an alternative management strategy for the for-hire segment of the recreational fishing sector within the Gulf reef fish fishery.

### Dates:

Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on August 2, 2014.

### Addresses:

You may submit comments on the application, identified by RIN 0648-XD168, by any of the following methods:

- **E-mail:** 0648-XD186.ACFAC.EFP@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the e-mail the following document identifier: "ACFAC EFP".
- **Mail:** Steve Branstetter, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

This bulletin only provides an overview of the exempted fishing permit application. Interested parties are encouraged to review the entire application at the following Web page: [Alabama Exempted Fishing Permit](#).

For additional information, Contact Steve Branstetter, 727-824-5305; e-mail: [Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov](mailto:Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov).

### Program Concept

The Cooperative is requesting an exempted fishing permit authorizing their members to fish for red snapper, based on

allocations issued to them, outside the normal recreational fishing season, subject to in-season closures only if NOAA Fisheries determines the red snapper recreational quota is met during the fishing year. Their allocation would be based on the Cooperative participants' 2011 through 2013 average landings of red snapper as a percentage of the total landings in those years. That proportion would then be applied to the 2015 and 2016 red snapper recreational quota to determine the amount of fish authorized for harvest under the permit. The Cooperative would be responsible for distributing the allotted fish to the participants, and for reporting their landings electronically to NOAA Fisheries.

All vessels in the program would be required to purchase, install, activate, and maintain a Vessel Monitoring System. A participating captain would "hail out" as the vessel leaves the dock, and "hail in" at least one hour prior to landing, alerting law enforcement and port samplers to his/her return. Landings would be reported at the end of the trip using a software application (*iSnapper*) developed by Texas A&M University's Harte Research Institute.

Academic researchers, in collaboration with the Cooperative, would conduct a socio-economic study of the anticipated effects of the change in for-hire vessel management using currently available data sources. Simultaneously, the academic researchers and the Cooperative would develop additional survey instruments to gather economic data for an analysis of the effects of the pilot project on Cooperative vessels after its first and second years. Data collection would emphasize impacts of the pilot project.

NOAA Fisheries finds this application warrants further consideration, and is seeking public comment on the application. A final decision on issuance of the exempted fishing permit will depend on NOAA Fisheries' review of public comments received, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's recommendation, consultations with the affected states, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as a determination that it is consistent with all applicable laws.