



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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NOAA Seeks Public Comment for a Proposed Rule to List Nassau Grouper as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comments on a proposed rule to list Nassau grouper as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed rule filed in the *Federal Register* on September 2, 2014 (79 FR 51929).

The proposed rule is based on key conclusions from a Biological Report and the Extinction Risk Analysis conducted by NOAA Fisheries.

The results of the comprehensive status review are as follows:

- (1) The species still occupies its historical range made up of a single population over a broad geographic area, (historical range means areas where Nassau grouper were typically found);
- (2) The species possesses life history characteristics that increase vulnerability to harvest;
- (3) The species forms large spawning aggregations, (spawning aggregations are areas where large numbers of fish come to reproduce); spawning aggregations are declining in size and number across the species' range;
- (4) Current regulations and/or lack of law enforcement throughout the species' range are not effective in protecting Nassau grouper or their spawning aggregations;
- (5) The combination of vulnerability to harvest, life history characteristics, and a lack of regulations and/or law enforcement indicate that the species is likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future.

For more information on the listing process, please visit:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/listing_petitions/faqs/index.html

Currently, harvest and possession of Nassau grouper is prohibited in all U.S. waters, including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Additionally, some countries have restrictions on harvest, including size limits and seasonal closures.

Request for Comments

Written comments on the proposed rule must be received by no later than **December 31, 2014** to be considered by NOAA Fisheries. We will consider all comments and information received during the comment period in making our final decision whether to list Nassau grouper as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

All comments received by NOAA Fisheries will be addressed in the final rule.

Electronic copies of the proposed rule may be obtained from the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> and NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office's website at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/listing_petitions/species_esa_consideration/index.html.

The biological report is also available at the same webpage.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

Electronic Submissions: Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>

- Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: NOAA-NMFS-2014-0101.
- Select the appropriate title, and click “Submit a Comment.” This will display the comment webform.
- Attachments to electronic comments (up to 10 MB) will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Mail:

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