



# 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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## Control Date for the Gulf of Mexico Grouper/Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program

On December 8, 2014, NOAA Fisheries published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking to set a control date of January 1, 2015, for the Gulf of Mexico Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program. This notice informs current and potential future participants that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering additional restrictions limiting participation.

Beginning January 1, 2015, all U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens are eligible to receive transfers of grouper and tilefish IFQ shares or allocation. The Council is considering re-establishing the requirement to possess a Gulf commercial reef fish permit to receive shares or allocation under the program. This notice informs current and potential future participants of the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program that possession of IFQ shares or allocation after the control date may not ensure participation under future management of the program.

Implementation of any new restrictions would require preparation of an amendment to the fishery management plan and publication of a notice of availability and proposed rule with pertinent public comment periods. If the Council prepares an amendment to restrict participation in the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program in relation to this control date, an analysis of specific biological, economic, and social effects will be prepared at that time.

On November 30, 2011, NOAA Fisheries published a similar control date for the Red Snapper IFQ program. The current notice does not supersede the prior notice, and is intended only to provide additional public notice of potential future action being considered relative to the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ program.

The establishment of a control date does not commit the Council or NOAA Fisheries to any particular management regime. The Council may or may not make use of this control date as part of the requirements for participation in the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program. Fishermen are not guaranteed future participation in the program, regardless of their entry date. The Council may take action that would affect participants who were in the program prior to the control date or the Council may choose to take no further action to control entry or access to the Grouper/Tilefish IFQ Program.

### How to Submit Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this control date no later than **January 7, 2015**. You may submit comments on the notice, identified by "NOAA-NMFS-2014-0140", by one of the following methods:

- Go to the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0140>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). You can also attach additional files (up to 10MB) in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
- Mail written comments to Susan Gerhart, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on the regulations.gov website without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible.