



# 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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FB15-023

## NOAA Seeks Comments on an Application for an Exempted Fishing Permit to Collect Red Drum in Federal Waters off Mississippi

NOAA Fisheries is accepting comments on an application for an exempted fishing permit from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The application proposes to allow Mississippi-licensed for-hire vessels to harvest and possess red drum from federal waters during the course of regular for-hire fishing trips. This two-year study would collect biological information on offshore red drum to aid biologists in assessing the status of the population in a future stock assessment.

### Dates and Addresses:

Comments must be received no later than **April 23, 2015**. You may submit comments on the application, identified by RIN 0648-XD816, by any of the following methods:

- **E-mail:**  
[0648.XD816.Red.Drum.EFP@noaa.gov](mailto:0648.XD816.Red.Drum.EFP@noaa.gov).  
Please include "Red Drum EFP" in the subject line of the e-mail.
- **Mail:**  
Steve Branstetter, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701.

This bulletin only provides an overview of the application. For additional information, contact Steve Branstetter at 727-824-5305 or by e-mail at [Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov](mailto:Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov).

### Program Concept

If approved, as many as 70 Mississippi-licensed for-hire vessels would be permitted possession of one red drum per angler per trip from federal waters. Mississippi will enforce its 18-inch total length minimum size limit, but will not have a maximum size limit for fish caught under this program. A maximum of 30,000 pounds of red drum (ca. 2,000 fish) would be harvested over the two-year period. Vessel captains would be required to report each trip for dockside intercepts by state biologists. Anglers would be allowed to keep their fish upon completion of data collection and removal of tissue/hard parts needed for analyses. Adjustments to collections would be made during the program to ensure the self-imposed 30,000-pound "quota" is not exceeded. All data collected within the program would be available for state-based and federal stock assessments upon request. The sampling program would occur year round.

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.