



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Announces the Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper Recreational Fishing Season will close on October 8, 2015

The recreational harvest of red grouper in the Gulf of Mexico will close at **12:01 a.m., local time, on October 8, 2015**, and remain closed until January 1, 2016.

Red grouper catches in early 2015 were substantially higher than the same time periods in previous years. Because the recreational red grouper season closed in October 2014 under a higher bag limit, in May 2015, at the request of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries reduced the bag limit to 2 fish with the intent to extend the fishing season for the entire year. However, fishermen have told us abundant red grouper are being found closer to shore in shallower water this year, making them more accessible to the recreational sector. Despite the reduced bag limit, the 2015 landings data indicate the 1,900,000-pound recreational annual catch limit will be harvested by October 7, 2015.

During the closure:

- Recreational harvest or possession of red grouper is prohibited.
- The closure applies in both state and federal waters for vessels that have a valid Gulf of Mexico reef fish charter/headboat permit.

This closure is necessary to protect the red grouper population.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the existing regulations. Full regulations can be found in the *Federal Register*.