



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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NOAA Fisheries Seeks Public Comment on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Regional Management of Red Snapper Recreational Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico *Comment Period Ends February 1, 2016*

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a draft environmental impact statement for Amendment 39 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of the document for public review and comment on December 18, 2015 (80 FR 79041).

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is considering actions to establish regional management for recreational red snapper fishing. The purpose of this action is to provide flexibility in the management of the recreational sector's harvest of red snapper. The action would restructure the federal fishery management strategy to allow for regional variations in management measures. Modified accountability measures for recreational overages would better account for biological, social, and economic differences among the regions of the Gulf of Mexico. Two approaches are being considered including delegation and conservation equivalency. Delegation would give management authority for recreational red snapper to the States. The conservation equivalency approach would allow the States to adjust certain management measures, such as seasons and bag limits, to address the regional differences while conserving the stock by not exceeding the regional quota.

The draft environmental impact statement analyzes the effects of implementing regional management through delegation or conservation equivalency, maintaining or ending sector separation, establishing regions, modifying the federal minimum size limit for red snapper, allowing closures in federal waters adjacent to the regions, apportioning the recreational quota among regions, and modifying post-season accountability measures.

Request for Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this draft

environmental impact statement no later than **February 1, 2016**. There will be another opportunity for public comment on the proposed rule when it publishes, and a fishery bulletin will be sent announcing the comment period. You may obtain electronic copies of the draft amendment and environmental impact statement from the NOAA Fisheries Web site at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2015/am39/index.html or the e-Rule Making Portal (see below).

Addresses

You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2013-0078, by either of the following methods:

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0078>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

MAIL: Submit written comments to Cynthia Meyer, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

INSTRUCTIONS: Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on <http://www.regulations.gov> 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. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).