



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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August 11, 2016
FB16-054

NOAA Fisheries Seeks Comments on Proposed Rule to Modify the Current Seasonal Prohibition on Fishing with Black Sea Bass Pots and Enhance Gear Marking

Comment Period Ends September 12, 2016

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on the proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Regulatory Amendment 16). The proposed rule for Regulatory Amendment 16 published in the *Federal Register* on **August 11, 2016** (81 FR 53109). The comment period ends on **September 12, 2016**.

Currently, fishermen may not fish with black sea bass pots from November 1 through April 30, each year, in the entire management area for black sea bass in the South Atlantic. The seasonal prohibition was established in 2013 as a precautionary measure to prevent interactions between black sea bass pot gear and whales during periods of large whale migrations, and during the right whale calving season off the U.S. southeastern coast. Regulatory Amendment 16 would retain a November 1 through April 30 seasonal prohibition but would reduce the size of the prohibited area. The goal is to reduce the adverse socioeconomic impacts to fishermen resulting from the current seasonal prohibition while continuing to provide the necessary protection to large whales in the South Atlantic region.

The proposed seasonal prohibitions are below. The prohibition shown in Figure 1 would apply annually during November and April. The prohibition shown in Figure 2 would apply annually from December 1 through March 31. The coordinates for the proposed area seasonal prohibitions may be found at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/documents/pdfs/sa_sg_reg16_pr_faqs.pdf.

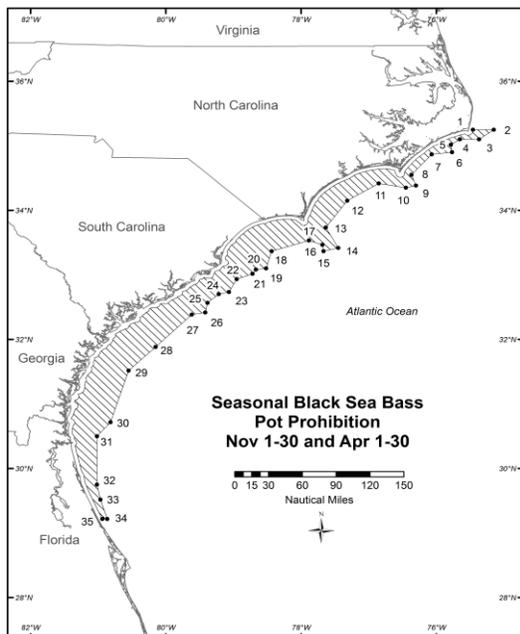


Figure 1.

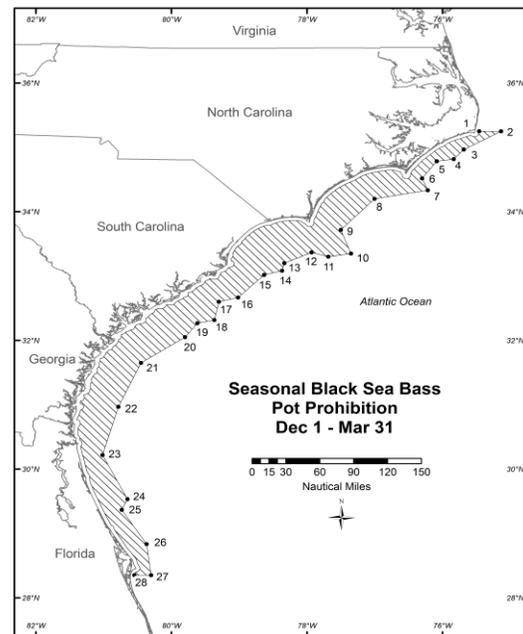


Figure 2.

Regulatory Amendment 16 would also require an additional 12-inch wide purple band in three locations on black sea bass pot lines. The goal is to enhance current gear marking requirements for black sea bass pots to distinguish black sea bass pot lines from other fishing lines.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Regulatory Amendment 16, can be found online at: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/index.html.

Request for Comments

Comments on the regulatory amendment must be received no later than **September 12, 2016**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries. See the **Addresses** section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Electronic copies of Regulatory Amendment 16 may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries website at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/reg_am16/index.html, the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.

Addresses

You may submit comments by the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0165>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- **Mail:** NOAA Fisheries
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
c/o Nikhil Mehta
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin (such as e-mail), may not be considered.

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