



**NOAA** NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

## **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Bulletin**

*Bringing Fishing News to You*

**FB17-063**

**FISHERY BULLETIN ISSUE DATE:** October 30, 2017

**CONTACT:** Kelli O'Donnell, 727-824-5305, Kelli.ODonnell@noaa.gov



### **Request for Comments: Proposed Rule to Modify the Number of Unrigged Hooks Carried On Board Bottom Longline Vessels**

#### **KEY MESSAGE:**

NOAA Fisheries requests your comments on a proposed rule for commercial bottom longline regulations in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). **Comments are due by November 14, 2017.**

#### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

- The proposed rule would remove the 1,000 hooks per vessel limit onboard a commercial reef fish vessels with a bottom longline endorsement in the Gulf when fishing for reef fish east of 85°30' west longitude (Cape San Blas, Florida).
- The limit of 750 hooks that could be fished or rigged for fishing on commercial reef fish vessels with a bottom longline endorsement in the Gulf would remain unchanged.

#### **HOW TO COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED RULE:**

The comment period is open now through November 14, 2017. You may submit comments by electronic submission or by postal mail. Comments sent by any other method (such as e-mail), to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries.

**FORMAL FEDERAL REGISTER NAME/NUMBER:** FR# 23460, published October 30, 2017

**Electronic Submissions:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.

1. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2017-0081>
2. Click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields.
3. Enter or attach your comments.

**Mail:** Submit written comments to Kelli O'Donnell, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

### Why are these changes needed?

- Amendment 31, implemented in 2010, placed a restriction on the number of hooks bottom longline fishermen could carry on board their vessel to help protect sea turtles.
- Currently, reef fish bottom longline fishermen can only carry 250 extra unrigged hooks onboard their vessels.
- Industry representatives have indicated this is not enough for longer trips due to hook loss and NOAA Fisheries observer data supports this.
- After the 250 extra hooks are used, the vessel must return to port, reduce the number of hooks fished, or be resupplied by another vessel.
- Allowing additional unrigged hooks on board should make multi-day trips more economical while still maintaining the observed reduction in sea turtle interactions since the implementation of Amendment 31.

### Where can I find more information on this rule?

- Number of Unrigged Hooks Carried On Board Bottom Longline Vessels Abbreviated Framework may be found online at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site  
at: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2017/Unrigged%20hooks/Unrigged\\_hooks\\_index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2017/Unrigged%20hooks/Unrigged_hooks_index.html)
- Additional information on bottom longline rulemakings in the Gulf of Mexico may be found  
at: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/policy\\_branch/rules/gulf/reef\\_fish/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/policy_branch/rules/gulf/reef_fish/index.html)
- Contact NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office

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