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NOAA briefly opens red snapper fishing in South Atlantic

Agency sets limited recreational and commercial seasons for September 2012

NOAA Fisheries today approved an emergency action to temporarily open recreational and commercial red snapper fishing in the South Atlantic region – federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida’s east coast.

The recreational season will open for two consecutive weekends of Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, from September 14 through 16 and 21 through 23. During the recreational season, anglers may keep one fish per person per day with no size limit. The 2012 recreational catch limit is 9,399 fish.

The commercial season will open for seven days, from September 17 through 23. During the commercial season, the daily trip limit is 50 pounds, gutted weight, with no size limit. The 2012 commercial catch limit is 20,818 pounds.

“I’m glad to see this opening. Closing this fishery in 2010 was a difficult decision for the South Atlantic Council to make, and certainly a sacrifice for the fishermen,” said Roy Crabtree, southeast regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “I hope this is just the beginning of great red snapper fishing in the South Atlantic and I applaud the council’s efforts.”

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries closed the red snapper fishery on January 4, 2010, to protect the population from too much fishing pressure and to allow the number of fish to increase.

The South Atlantic Council recommended opening the fishery this year after new scientific information projected the population will continue to improve, even with some allowable catch. Opening this fishery supports recreational and commercial fishing jobs and businesses.

The South Atlantic Council is working on a long-term plan to allow for some catches of red snapper as the population continues to grow. Data collected during annual openings for red snapper fishing will also be used in the next population assessment, scheduled to begin in 2014.

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