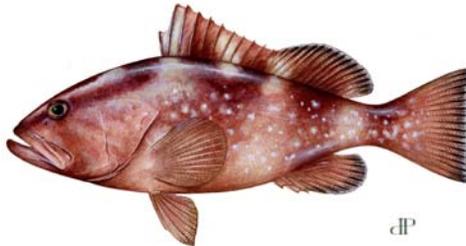


# ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS & ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*September 2011*



RED GROUPER

*Epinephelus morio*

### **What is an Annual Catch Limit (ACL)?**

- An Annual Catch Limit is the level of annual catch of a population or population complex that if met or exceeded triggers accountability measures, such as a seasonal closure or quota closure.

### **What is an Accountability Measure (AM)?**

- Accountability Measures are management controls to prevent ACL's from being exceeded, and to correct or mitigate overages of the ACL if they occur.

### **Why do we need ACLs and AMs?**

- The reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act of 2006 (MSA) made a number of changes to the Act to improve conservation of managed fishery resources. Included in these changes is a requirement that regional fishery management councils develop ACLs for each of their managed fisheries, and establish a mechanism for specifying a harvest level that prevents overfishing, including measures to ensure accountability.
- The MSA provides limited exceptions to ACL requirements; species not subject to overfishing with annual cycles and species managed under international agreements are not required to have ACLs or AMs.

### **When are ACLs and AMs required?**

- Fishery management plans or amendments must establish ACLs and AMs in 2010 for populations or population complexes determined to be subject to overfishing, and in 2011, for all other federally managed fisheries.

### **Which species do not need ACLs and AMs?**

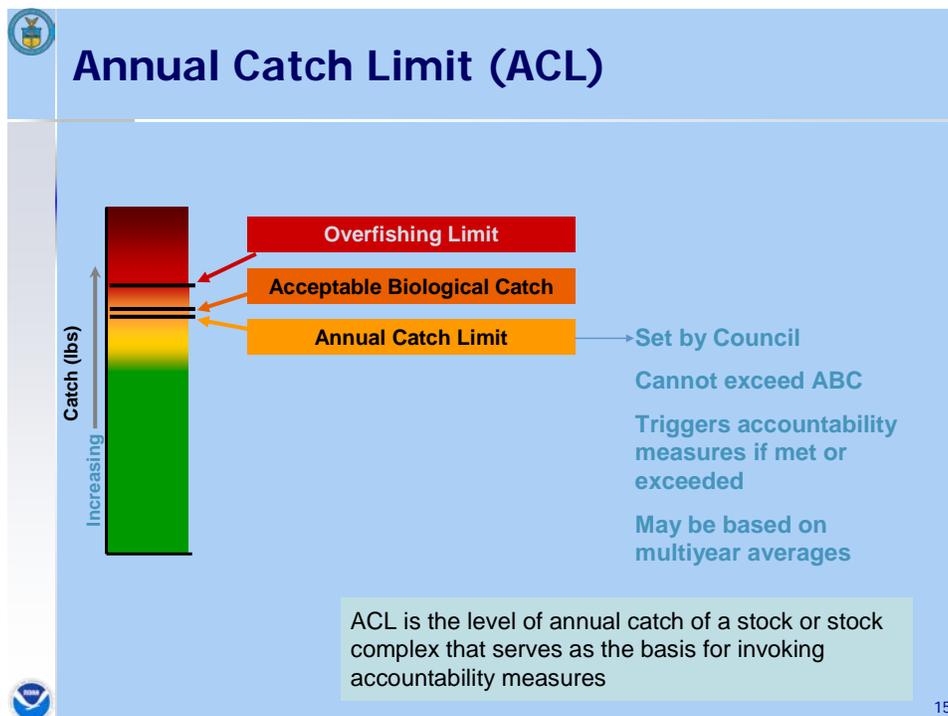
- Ecosystem components species, which are non-target species, not overfished or likely to become subject to overfishing and not generally retained for sale or personal use (e.g., sand perches).

- Species that have an annual life cycle with only one reproductive cycle (e.g., shrimp). Species managed under an international agreement to which the U.S. is a party (e.g., bluefin tuna).

### How are Annual Catch Limits developed?

- ACLs may be set for the fishery as a whole or for various fishery sectors (e.g., commercial or recreational). Separate state-federal ACLs may be set for populations that are targeted in state waters as well as federal waters.
- The setting of an ACL begins with specifying an overfishing limit (OFL).
  - The OFL is an annual estimate of the maximum yield a stock can withstand without being put in jeopardy of overfishing.
- Once an OFL is specified, an acceptable biological catch (ABC) level is recommended by the Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee.
  - The ABC is based on the OFL and should take into account scientific uncertainty, which includes the uncertainty around the estimate of a stock's biomass and its maximum OFL.
- The Council must then set an ACL, which cannot exceed the ABC.
  - ACLs are set by managers and should take into account management uncertainty. Management uncertainty occurs because of lack of sufficient information about catch, and may include late catch reporting, misreporting, and underreporting of catches.

## OVERVIEW



### **How are AMs developed?**

- NOAA Fisheries Service has identified two categories of AMs: in-season AMs that can be implemented during a fishing season, and post-season AMs that take effect in the following season when the ACL is exceeded.
  - Examples of inseason AMs are: quota closure, trip or bag limit changes, gear restrictions, individual fishing quotas, or catch shares.
  - Examples of postseason AMs are: seasonal closures, reduced trip or bag limits, or shortening of the fishing season implemented in the subsequent year.

### **How can I participate in ACL/AM management?**

- Please follow the links on the ACL/AM page for information on proposed regulations f in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and Caribbean regions.
- To comment on any of the rules, visit [www.regulations.gov/#!/home](http://www.regulations.gov/#!/home)
- For more information about current regulations and opportunities to become involved in the Council process, visit:
  - Gulf Council [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)
  - South Atlantic Council [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)
  - Caribbean Council [www.caribbeanfmc.com/](http://www.caribbeanfmc.com/)