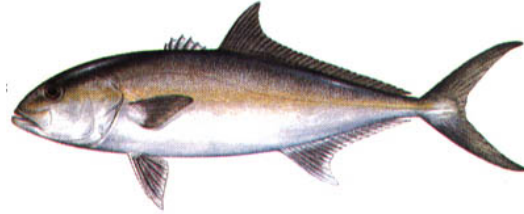


**Gulf of Mexico Greater Amberjack Fishery
2009 Recreational Quota Closure
Frequently Asked Questions
October 2009**



When will the fishery for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack close?

The fishery will close at 12:01 a.m., local time, on October 24, 2009, and will remain closed through December 31, 2009.

Why is the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack recreational fishery being closed?

Recreational landings through August 31, 2009, indicate the 1.368 million pound recreational quota for greater amberjack has been met. NOAA Fisheries Service is required to close the fishery when the quota is met or projected to be met.

Why did the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) and NOAA Fisheries Service implement a quota for the Gulf of Mexico recreational greater amberjack fishery?

Changes to federal regulations in 2006 required regional fishery management councils to develop annual catch limits (ACLs) for each of their managed fisheries, and establish a mechanism for specifying a harvest level that prevents overfishing, including measures to ensure accountability. An ACL is the level of annual catch of a population that if met or exceeded triggers accountability measures, such as a seasonal closure or quota closure. In 2008, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council amended their Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and established a quota as their ACL for the recreational greater amberjack fishery because the population was undergoing overfishing and only five years remained to rebuild the population to sustainable levels. The Council also reduced the commercial quota at that time and set the quota equal to the commercial ACL.

When was a recreational quota established for greater amberjack?

NOAA Fisheries Service implemented new regulations, including a recreational quota, for the greater amberjack fishery on August 4, 2008. The recreational greater amberjack quota was not met in 2008, therefore the fishery remained open all year.

What happens if the recreational quota is exceeded?

If 2009 recreational landings exceed the quota despite the closure of the recreational greater amberjack fishery, then the length of the recreational fishing season in 2010 must be reduced by the amount necessary to recover the overage that occurred during the 2009 fishing year.

Is the commercial fishery for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack also closing?

No, the commercial fishery will remain open. As of mid-September 2009 the commercial fishery had landed 58% of their 503,000 pound quota. If the commercial fishery harvests the remainder of the quota before the end of the year, then the fishery will be closed.

How is the fishery for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack currently managed?

- Recreational greater amberjack fishery
 - 1.368 million pound whole weight quota (when quota is met or projected to be met the fishery closes).
 - 30-inch fork length minimum size limit.
 - Daily bag limit of one fish per person with a zero bag limit for the captain and crew of for-hire vessels.
- Commercial greater amberjack fishery
 - 0.503 million pound whole weight quota (when quota is met or projected to be met the fishery closes).
 - 36-inch fork length minimum size limit.
 - March 1-May 31 closed season.

What is the current status of the Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack population?

Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack are currently undergoing overfishing (the rate of removals is too high) and is currently overfished (population abundance is too low). The greater amberjack is currently in year-7 of a 10 year rebuilding plan. The goal of this plan is to end overfishing and rebuild the population size to sustainable levels by 2012.

When will the status of Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack next be assessed?

The next population assessment for Gulf of Mexico greater amberjack will occur in 2010. The dates, times, and location for this assessment have not yet been scheduled.