

**REEF FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO  
AMENDMENT 38**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
OCTOBER 2012**

**What changes to reef fish management would be implemented through Amendment 38?**

- Post-season accountability measures for shallow-water grouper would be modified.
- The triggering method for accountability measures would be changed.
- The framework procedure, a set of management guidelines, would be revised.

**What are shallow-water grouper?**

- Gag and red grouper are shallow-water grouper species that have individual catch limits.
- Other shallow-water grouper include black grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, and yellowmouth grouper. These species are grouped into a complex with a catch limit for the complex.

**What are accountability measures?**

- Accountability measures help keep landings within the catch limits or catch targets and may also impose management measures if those levels are exceeded.
- In-season accountability measures are implemented during the same season the catch limit or catch target is reached or projected to be reached, such as an in-season closure.
- Post-season accountability measures are implemented in the following season if the catch limit or catch target is exceeded, such as shortening the season the next year.

**Why do accountability measures and the triggering method need to be changed?**

- Currently, if recreational landings exceed the catch limit for gag or red grouper in a year, the recreational season for all shallow-water groupers will be shortened the following year. This rule would modify the accountability measure to shorten the season only for the stock which had landings exceeding the catch limit, avoiding unnecessary closures for other shallow-water grouper.
- The current method for triggering accountability measures uses a three-year moving average of recreational catches compared to the annual catch limit. However, the use of a moving average has not been practical due to frequent changes in the gag annual catch limit. This rule would change the trigger method to one that compares one year of landings to the annual catch limit.

**What is a framework?**

- The framework procedure provides a guideline for implementing routine actions more quickly than developing an amendment to the fishery management plan.
- The framework procedure describes what specific actions can be implemented under the framework and the methods for developing those actions.

**What specific changes would be made to the framework through Amendment 38?**

- Currently, a change to accountability measures requires an amendment to the fishery management plan. This rule would allow changes to accountability measures to happen more quickly with faster implementation.

**How can I comment on the amendment and proposed rule?**

- Comments must be submitted by December 11, 2012.
- You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.
  - **Electronic Submissions:** Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)  
Enter the following docket number into the “Search” box: **NOAA-NMFS-2012-0149**.
  - **Mail:** Steve Branstetter  
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