

# CHANGES TO THE SHALLOW-WATER GROUPEL RECREATIONAL FISHING MEASURES FOR GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS Framework Action

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*June 2013*



### **What are the new shallow-water grouper regulations?**

- The gag recreational fishing season will open on July 1 and close on December 3, 2013.
- The geographical extent of the shallow-water grouper season closure from February 1 through March 31 is reduced so that it only applies to waters seaward of 20 fathoms.
- For 2014, gag cannot be recreationally harvested until July 1 when the gag recreational season opens.

### **Why does the gag season need to be adjusted?**

- Gag is in a rebuilding plan that allows annual catch limits and targets to increase each year as long as the annual catch limit is not exceeded.
- For 2013, the recreational annual catch target can be increased from 1.031 to 1.287 million pounds.
- Projections indicate that the annual catch target will be caught on December 3, 2013.

### ***Annual Catch Limits***

The amount of fish that can be harvested from the stock each year.

### ***Annual Catch Targets***

A harvest level set lower than the Annual Catch Limit to create a buffer so that overharvest does not occur.

### ***Accountability Measures***

Measures taken to prevent harvest from exceeding the Annual Catch Limit and if exceeded can mitigate or correct the overage.

## Why was the shallow-water grouper February 1 through March 31 closure modified?

- The original recreational shallow-water grouper closure was part of a suite of measures designed to achieve target harvest levels for red grouper and gag, and to end overfishing of gag.
- The closure also protects spawning of many shallow-water grouper species, and in particular gag.
- The effectiveness of the closure was questioned because:
  - Gag is now managed under a separate fishing season.
  - Gag is the only grouper species considered overfished and undergoing overfishing.
  - All grouper species are managed with annual catch limits and accountability measures to reduce the chance of overfishing.
- Restricting the closure to deeper waters where most shallow-water grouper species spawn would continue to protect spawning fish, but still allow some grouper fishing in February and March.

### *Species in the Recreational Shallow-Water Grouper Complex*

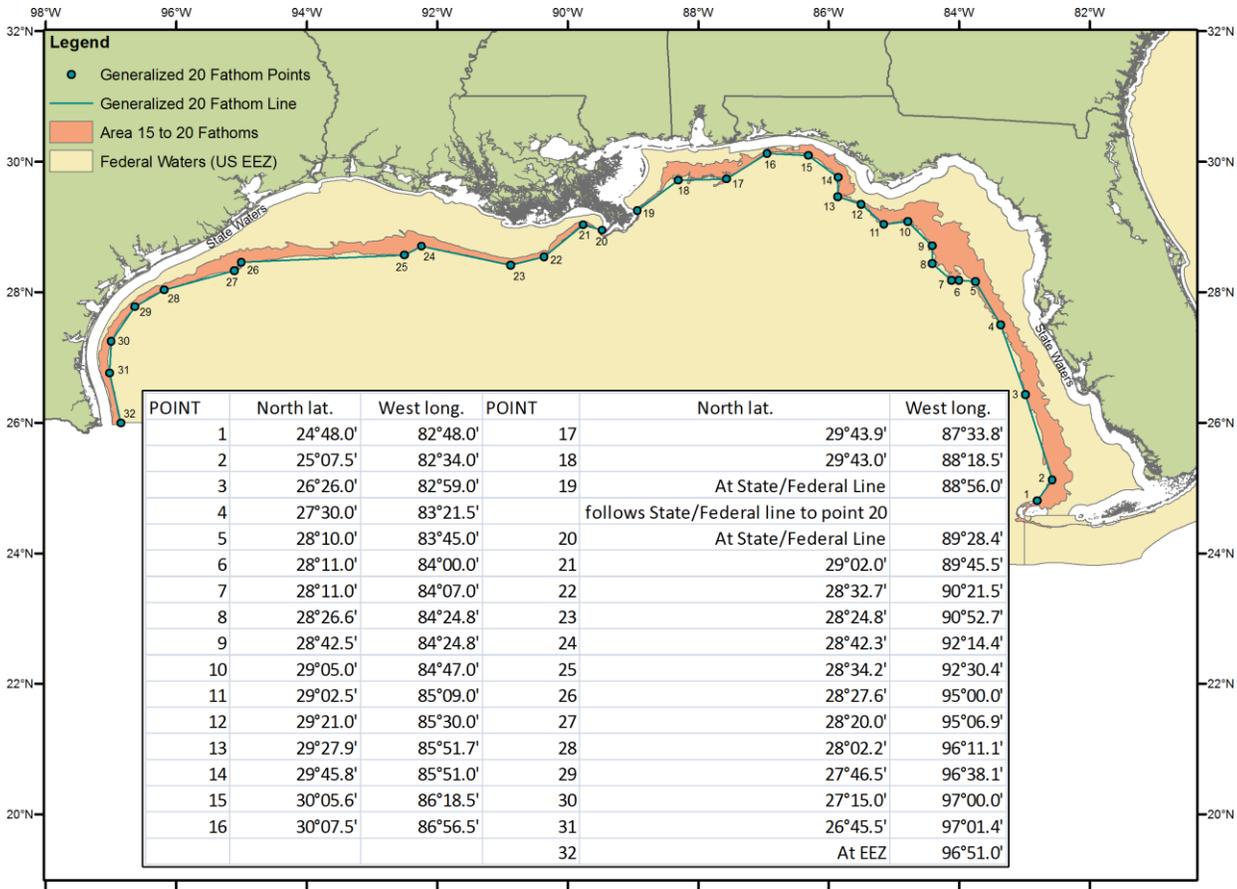
- Black Grouper
- Red Grouper
- Gag
- Yellowfin grouper
- Scamp
- Yellowmouth grouper

## What are the coordinates for the 20-fathom boundary used in the closure?

- The 20-fathom boundary and coordinates are presented in Figure 1.
- For the Gulf of Mexico east of Cape San Blas, the coordinates follow the longline-buoy gear 20-fathom boundary (Points 1-12 in Figure 1).
- For the Gulf of Mexico west of Cape San Blas, new coordinates were developed because the longline-buoy gear boundary moves out the 50 fathoms and the new coordinates are at 20 fathoms (Points 13-32 in Figure 1).

## Related Links:

- [FB13-046: NOAA Fisheries Announces the Gulf of Mexico Gag Recreational Season and Modification to the Recreational Shallow-Water Grouper Closure](#)
- [2013 recreational shallow-water grouper framework action](#)



**Figure 1.** 20-fathom boundary line for the modified shallow-water grouper closure. Points 1 to 12 follow the existing longline and buoy gear 20-fathom boundary. Points 13 to 32 extend the 20-fathom boundary to the rest of the Gulf of Mexico. Across part of Louisiana (between points 19 and 20), the boundary follows the state-federal boundary because the 20-fathom isobath is within state waters.