

South Atlantic
Opening of the 2012 Red Snapper Federal Water Fishing Season
Frequently Asked Questions
August 2012

What is being implemented by NOAA Fisheries?

- Opening of the commercial and recreational 2012 fishing season for red snapper.
- 2012 total annual catch limit for red snapper in the South Atlantic of 13,067 fish.
- 2012 commercial annual catch limit of 20,818 pounds gutted weight.
- 2012 recreational annual catch limit of 9,399 fish.
- The specification of bag and trip limits as described below.

What are the new regulations for the commercial sector?

- The commercial red snapper fishing season will open for seven days beginning 12:01 a.m., local time, September 17, 2012.
- Trip limit of 50 pounds gutted weight during the opening.
- No minimum size limit during the opening.

What are the new regulations for the recreational sector?

- The recreational red snapper fishing season will open for two consecutive weekends made up of Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- The first weekend begins at 12:01 a.m., local time, September 14, 2012, and the second 12:01 a.m., local time, September 21, 2012.
- Bag limit of one red snapper per person per day.
- No minimum size limit during the opening.

Is it possible the 2012 red snapper fishing season dates will change if severe weather conditions occur?

- NOAA Fisheries may change the commercial and recreational season dates if severe weather conditions exist during the currently scheduled seasons.
- If severe weather conditions exist, NOAA Fisheries will file a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register, and announce via NOAA Weather Radio and a *Fishery Bulletin* any change in the 2012 South Atlantic red snapper fishing seasons.

Why is NOAA Fisheries opening the 2012 red snapper fishing season?

- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reviewed new information at their June 11-15, 2012, meeting.
- The new information included red snapper rebuilding projections, 2012 acceptable biological catch levels, and 2012 discard mortality levels.
- After accounting for the 2012 discard mortalities, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council determined that directed harvest of red snapper could be allowed without compromising the rebuilding of the stock to target levels.
- In a letter dated June 19, 2012, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council requested NOAA Fisheries allow harvest and possession of red snapper in 2012 through emergency regulations.

- In addition, the retention of red snapper would create an opportunity to collect important life history information that fishery scientists could use in a future stock assessment.

What are the regulations after the 2012 South Atlantic red snapper fishing seasons end?

- After the fishing seasons, red snapper may not be harvested or possessed in federal waters of the South Atlantic and in state waters for vessels holding federal snapper-grouper permits.

In the future, will new measures be implemented to re-open the red snapper fishing season?

- NOAA Fisheries will monitor the commercial landings and may re-open the commercial fishing season in 2012 if commercial landings are less than the commercial ACLs.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is exploring long-term management of red snapper, including the implementation of a tag program where only fishermen who possessed a tag may retain red snapper.

Where can I get more information on the 2012 red snapper fishing seasons?

- More information can be found online at:
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>