

Frequently Asked Questions

Final Rule to Modify Management of South Atlantic Vermilion Snapper and Red Porgy

Why is Regulatory Amendment 18 needed?

- Stock assessment updates for vermilion snapper and red porgy were recently completed. The vermilion snapper update indicated the stock is no longer undergoing overfishing (fish are being taken from the population too quickly) and is not overfished (there are not enough fish in the population). The red porgy update indicated the species is not undergoing overfishing but is still overfished. Based on the outcome of the stock assessment updates, several management measures for vermilion snapper and red porgy are being modified.

What actions are contained in Regulatory Amendment 18?

Vermilion Snapper

- The acceptable biological catch level and the annual catch limit for vermilion snapper will increase. Currently, the annual catch limit is 1,066,000 pounds whole weight. The annual catch limits for the next four years are illustrated in Table 1.
- The commercial annual catch limit is split into a January-June and July-December quota. Any portion of the quota not used during the January-June season rolls over to the July-December season.

Table 1 New acceptable biological catch levels and annual catch limits for vermilion snapper for 2013-2016.

Year	Acceptable Biological Catch Whole Weight	Total Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight	Commercial Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight	Commercial Annual Catch Limit Jan-June Whole Weight	Commercial Annual Catch Limit July-Dec. Whole Weight	Recreational Annual Catch Limit Whole Weight
2013	1,372,000	1,372,000	932,960	466,480	466,480	439,040
2014	1,312,000	1,312,000	892,160	446,080	446,080	419,840
2015	1,289,000	1,289,000	876,520	438,260	438,260	412,480
2016	1,269,000	1,269,000	862,920	431,460	431,460	406,080

- Reduce the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper from 1,500 pounds gutted weight to 1,000 pounds gutted weight, and when 75% of the commercial annual catch limit has been met or projected to be met, the commercial trip limit would be reduced to 500 pounds gutted weight.
- Remove the November 1 – March 31 recreational closed season for vermilion snapper. The recreational size limit remains 12 inches total length, and the recreational bag limit remains five fish per person per day.

Red Porgy

- Reduce the annual catch limit for red porgy. **Table 2** contains the modified acceptable biological catch levels and annual catch limits for red porgy for the next six years.

Table 2. New acceptable biological catch levels, annual catch limits, and recreational annual catch targets for red porgy for 2013-2018.

Year	Acceptable Biological Catch Whole Weight	Total Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Commercial Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Recreational Annual Catch Level Whole Weight	Recreational Annual Catch Target Whole Weight
2013	306,000	306,000	153,000	153,000	109,670
2014	309,000	309,000	154,500	154,500	110,746
2015	328,000	328,000	164,000	164,000	117,555
2016	354,000	354,000	177,000	177,000	126,874
2017	379,000	379,000	189,500	189,500	135,834
2018	401,000	401,000	200,500	200,500	143,718

Why is the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper being reduced?

- Even though the annual catch limit is increasing for vermilion snapper, the rate of harvest is expected to result in early in-season closures for each of the two commercial split seasons. Reducing the trip limit is expected to slow the rate of harvest and increase the probability that fishing opportunities can be extended further into each of the split seasons.

Why is the annual catch limit for red porgy being reduced?

- The new stock assessment update indicates that red porgy are still overfished. Even if all directed fishing of red porgy were to stop, the stock would not rebuild within its rebuilding schedule time frame, which ends in 2018.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) has requested that a new benchmark stock assessment for red porgy be completed in 2014. Based on the outcome of the new benchmark assessment, the Council will re-visit the rebuilding strategy for red porgy.

When will the changes in Regulatory Amendment 18 become effective?

- The final rule for Regulatory Amendment 18 published in the *Federal Register* on August 6, 2013. The final rule will become effective September 5, 2013.

Where can I get more information on Regulatory Amendment 18?

- Regulatory Amendment 18 is available online at the Council’s Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.
- The contact person for Regulatory Amendment 18 is Kate Michie of NOAA Fisheries Office of Sustainable Fisheries. She may be reached at: (727) 824-5305, or by e-mail at Kate.Michie@noaa.gov.