

Frequently Asked Questions

Amendment 27 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 27)

December 2013

What actions are contained in Amendment 27?

- Extending the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (South Atlantic Council) management responsibility for Nassau grouper to include the Gulf of Mexico.
- Increasing the number of allowable crew members from three to four on dual-permitted vessels (vessels that have both a federal South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Permit for Snapper-Grouper and a South Atlantic Unlimited or 225-Pound Snapper-Grouper Permit).
- Allowing captains and crew of for-hire vessels with federal South Atlantic Charter/Headboat Snapper-Grouper Permits to retain bag limit quantities of all snapper-grouper species.
- Allowing catch limits and levels to be adjusted through an abbreviated process as needed.
- Removing blue runner from the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Why will the South Atlantic Council assume management of Nassau grouper in the Gulf of Mexico?

- Nassau grouper is primarily caught in South Atlantic waters.
- In 2011, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council announced that it would no longer manage Nassau grouper and the South Atlantic Council agreed to take over management of the species.

Why will the South Atlantic Council consider removing blue runner from the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region?

- Based on updated information, the South Atlantic Council determined blue runner could be removed from the fishery management plan without jeopardizing the health of the fish population.
- The South Atlantic Council received new information that indicates the majority of commercial and recreational blue runner harvest (99 percent) occurs off the state of Florida (in federal and state waters combined), with 76 percent of blue runner landings harvested in state waters.
- Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission intends to extend the following Florida state management measures for blue runner into adjacent federal waters once the final rule for Amendment 27 becomes effective:
 - Establish a statewide recreational daily bag limit of 100 fish per person per day.
 - Extend this bag limit into adjacent federal waters if federal regulations are removed.
 - Clarify that a Saltwater Products License is required for commercial harvest of blue runner in both state and federal waters.
- Blue runner is primarily used as bait, is not commonly retained for human consumption, and is exempt from any federal bag and possession limit restrictions.

When will the final rule for Amendment 27 become effective?

- The final rule will become effective 30 days after it publishes in the *Federal Register*, January 27, 2014.

Where can I get more information on Amendment 27?

- Amendment 27 and its final rule are available online at the NOAA Fisheries Web site http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2013/am27/index.html.
- The contact person for Amendment 27 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.