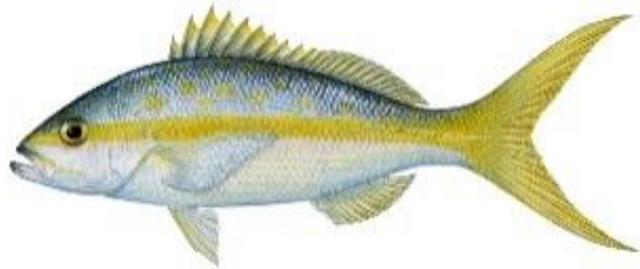


Modification of Gear Requirements and Fishing Year for Yellowtail Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2016



What is being proposed in this Framework Action?

- Remove a requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper south of Cape Sable, Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf).
- Adjust the commercial and recreational fishing year for yellowtail snapper from January 1 through December 31, to August 1 through July 31 to coincide with regulations for the species in the South Atlantic.

Why should J-hooks be allowed for commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper?

- Yellowtail snapper are primarily caught around the southern half of Florida, with the majority of landings coming from the Florida Keys.
- Circle hooks are required when fishing with natural bait for reef fish, including yellowtail snapper, in federal waters of the Gulf. The use of circle hooks is intended to reduce discard mortality caused from fish being gut-hooked by J-hooks.
- For the commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper, the fishermen attract the fish to the surface using chum and then use small hooks with natural bait and cane poles or spinning reels to catch yellowtail snapper. The use of J-hooks for this method allows for decreased handling times due to quicker dehooking methods for retained fish may result in an increase in the efficiency with which the yellowtail snapper component of the commercial reef fish fishery is prosecuted, and may also help reduce discard mortality rates.

Why is the fishing season being changed for both the recreational and commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper?

- Yellowtail snapper are primarily caught around the southern half of Florida, with the majority of landings coming from the Florida Keys.

- The proposed rule would modify the yellowtail snapper fishing year in the Gulf, making it consistent with the new fishing year in the South Atlantic. Having the same fishing year for both the Gulf and South Atlantic would benefit the fishermen that harvest yellowtail snapper in both regions.

How can I comment on the rule/amendment?

- Comments on the environmental assessment and the proposed rule to extend the sunset provision must be received no later than **November 16, 2016**.
- All comments specifically directed to the yellowtail snapper environmental assessment and proposed rule will be addressed in the final rule.
- Note that if your comments on the environmental assessment and the proposed rule are the same, you only need to submit one set of comments.
- You may submit comments on the yellowtail snapper environmental assessment and the proposed rule, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2016-0058, by any of the following methods:
 - Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0058>, click the “Comment Now!” icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
 - Mail: Submit written comments to Cynthia Meyer, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

Links to additional information on this action and rulemaking

- You may obtain electronic copies of the environmental assessment and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/yellowtail_snapper_framework/index.html.
or the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov.