

Frequently Asked Questions

Proposed Regulations for Headboat Vessels in the Gulf of Mexico Fishing for Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagics

October 2013

What is the For-Hire Reporting Amendment?

- The Headboat Electronic Reporting Amendment would amend the fishery management plans for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagics.
- If approved, the Headboat Electronic Reporting Amendment would modify data reporting for headboats in the Gulf of Mexico requiring them to submit weekly electronic fishing records to NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fisheries Science Center or at intervals shorter than a week if notified otherwise.

Why is the Headboat Electronic Reporting Amendment necessary?

- One of the purposes of this amendment is to allow better monitoring of recreational annual catch limits to reduce the amount of overages. Currently, overages have the potential to result in significant disruption in fishing behavior the following fishing year and to reduce revenue and profit for fishermen. Overages may also decrease the ability of fish populations to rebuild.
- The increased frequency of headboat data reporting proposed by this amendment would help to improve population assessments because it would provide a more accurate picture of headboat landings.

Who would be required to submit fishing records electronically?

- If approved, headboat vessels fishing for reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic species in the Gulf of Mexico would be required to submit fishing records electronically.

What does it mean to submit fishing records electronically?

- Headboat owners and operators, who are selected by the NOAA Fisheries Science and Research Director, would be required to submit an electronic fishing record of all fish caught through the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, an electronic reporting system developed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center for trips completed. Headboat owners and operators would also be required to submit no fishing reports when no trips are taken.

Would the frequency of reporting change?

- If approved, headboats would be required to report weekly or at intervals shorter than a week, if notified otherwise. If no fishing activity occurred during a week, an electronic report stating so must be submitted for that week.

What if I don't submit fishing records on time?

- Headboat owners and operators who are delinquent in submitting their reports would be prohibited from continuing to harvest and possess Gulf of Mexico reef fish or coastal migratory pelagic fish until they have submitted all required reports.

How do I submit a comment?

- You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.
- Electronic Submission: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2012-0111, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.
- Mail: Submit written comments to Richard Malinowski, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Where can I find more information about the amendment?

- Contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
 - By Mail:
Southeast Regional Office, c/o Rich Malinowski
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
 - By FAX: (727) 824-5308
 - By Phone: (727) 824-5305
- The Headboat Electronic Reporting Amendment is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site: http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/generic/documents/pdfs/2013/final_version_gom_headboat_electronic_reporting_7-18-13.pdf, or, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Web site: <http://www.gulfcouncil.org/>.