

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Amendment 29 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 29)

June 1, 2015

#### What does the final rule for Amendment 29 do?

The final rule for Amendment 29:

- Updates the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's acceptable biological catch control rule to incorporate a new methodology for determining the acceptable biological catch of unassessed species.
- Adjusts the acceptable biological catch value for 14 unassessed snapper-grouper species.
- Revises the annual catch limits for three species complexes and four snapper-grouper species.
- Establishes a minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia for both the commercial and recreational sectors.
- Revises the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off the east coast of Florida.
- Establishes a commercial split season for gray triggerfish.
- Establishes commercial trip limits for gray triggerfish of 1,000 pounds whole weight.

#### Would the annual catch limits change?

Yes, commercial and recreational annual catch limits for the snappers complex, shallow water grouper complex, bar jack, Atlantic spadefish, and gray triggerfish increase. The commercial and recreational annual catch limits for the grunts complex and scamp decrease.

#### How would the minimum size limits for gray triggerfish change?

The final rule for Amendment 29 establishes a 12-inch fork length minimum size limit for gray triggerfish in federal waters off North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia for both the commercial and recreational sectors.

The final rule also increases the commercial and recreational minimum size limit for gray triggerfish off the east coast of Florida from 12 inches total length to 14 inches fork length, which is consistent with the minimum size limit in place off the west coast of Florida.

## **What is the commercial split season for gray triggerfish? How does it work and why is it needed?**

Amendment 29 includes an action to establish a split season for commercial gray triggerfish. Weather conditions can be poor off North Carolina and South Carolina during the early part of the year making fishing for gray triggerfish difficult. Two commercial fishing seasons are expected to provide opportunities to fish for gray triggerfish throughout the South Atlantic and throughout the calendar year.

The split season allocates 50 percent of the commercial gray triggerfish catch limit to January 1 through June 30, and 50 percent to July 1 through December 31. As a result, the commercial annual catch limit would be divided into two equal seasonal quotas of 156,162 pounds whole weight. If the quota was reached for a given season, the harvest of gray triggerfish in the commercial sector would close. In addition, any unused portion of the quota from the first season would be added to the quota in the second season. Any unused portion of the quota specified in the second season, including any addition of quota from the first season would become void and would not be added to any subsequent quota.

Commercial harvest of gray triggerfish was closed on May 8, 2015, because it was determined that the previous annual catch limit of 272,880 pounds whole weight would be met by that date. Since this final rule is being implemented halfway through the 2015 fishing year and commercial landings of gray triggerfish have accumulated, the quota for the 2015 July 1 through December 31 fishing season will be the difference between the new total commercial annual catch limit of 312,324 pounds whole weight and the amount of commercial landings that have occurred by July 1, 2015. Thus, commercial harvest for gray triggerfish will open on July 1, 2015, and will close when the new quota is projected to be met.

## **What is the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish? Why is it needed?**

The final rule for Amendment 29 establishes a commercial trip limit of 1,000 pounds whole weight for gray triggerfish, to extend the commercial fishing season, and reduce derby conditions.

## **When are the regulations effective?**

The regulations are effective on July 1, 2015.

## **Where can I find more information about the amendment?**

- Contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
  - By Mail:  
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263 13th Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
  - By FAX: (727) 824-5308
  - By Phone: (727) 824-5305
- Amendment 29 is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/s\\_atl/sg/2014/am29/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2014/am29/index.html) or, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Web site: <http://www.safmc.net/>.