



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Announces Re-opening of Commercial and Recreational Sectors for Snowy Grouper in the South Atlantic with New Regulations *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

The final rule for Regulatory Amendment 20 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region published on **July 21, 2015 (80 FR 43033)**. Regulations will be effective on **August 20, 2015**.

The final rule for Regulatory Amendment 20 will:

- **Increase the commercial and recreational annual catch limits for snowy grouper as a result of the latest population assessment.** The annual catch limits will increase during 2015 to 2019, and remain at 2019 levels until a new population assessment takes place. The new values in pounds gutted weight and numbers of fish are:

Year	Commercial Annual catch limit	Recreational Annual catch limit	Recreational Numbers of Fish
Current	82,900	4,400	523
2015	115,451	23,647	4,152
2016	125,760	25,758	4,483
2017	135,380	27,729	4,819
2018	144,315	29,558	4,983
2019	153,935	31,529	5,315

- **Increase the commercial trip limit for snowy grouper from 100 pounds gutted weight to 200 pounds gutted weight.** The relatively small increase in the commercial trip limit could help maintain a longer fishing season when combined with the increase in the commercial annual catch limits.

- **Modify the recreational fishing season for snowy grouper from 1 fish per vessel per day year-round to 1 fish per vessel per day from May through August with no recreational retention during the rest of the year.** The recreational annual catch limit was exceeded in 2012, 2013, and 2014, resulting in closures of the recreational sector on May 31 in 2013, on June 7 in 2014, and on July 6 in 2015. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council determined that reducing the current year-round recreational fishing season to May through August would help minimize the risk of exceeding the recreational annual catch limit and provide recreational fishers throughout the South Atlantic the opportunity to fish for snowy grouper when weather conditions are best.

Re-openings:

Commercial Sector

The commercial sector for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic Region will reopen on August 20, 2015, with an annual catch limit of 115,451 pounds gutted weight. The commercial sector will close when this new annual catch limit is met or projected to be met. As of July 15, 2015, 86,149 pounds gutted weight have been landed.

Recreational Sector

The recreational sector for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic Region will reopen on August 20, 2015, with an annual catch limit of 23,647 pounds gutted weight or 4,152 fish. The recreational sector will close at 12:01 a.m. (local time) on September 1, 2015. The recreational sector will re-open on May 1, 2016.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

More Information

For more information on the final rule for Regulatory Amendment 20, please follow this link to the Frequently Asked Questions:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/sg/2015/reg_am20/index.html