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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NOAA increases Gulf Red Grouper catch limits by more than one million pounds**

*Rule increases commercial quota and recreational bag limit*

NOAA Fisheries Service is increasing quota for both recreational and commercial fisherman who fish for red grouper in the Gulf of Mexico. Combined, their catches will increase by more than one million pounds.

Under the new rule, the quota for commercial fisherman increases from 4.32 million pounds to 5.23 million pounds and the recreational annual catch limit increases from 1.36 million pounds to 1.65 million pounds. Additionally, the recreational bag limit will increase from two to four fish within the four fish aggregate grouper bag limit. The rule becomes effective on **November 2, 2011** and applies to federal waters in the Gulf.

In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council recommended these actions to the fisheries service.

“Due to lower than predicted landings in 2010 the Council requested an updated population assessment for red grouper, which was conducted earlier this year,” said Roy Crabtree, southeast regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Service. “We are pleased to be able to raise the quotas, while maintaining a sustainable population of this popular species.”

The assessment supported increasing the 2011 quota from 5.68 million pounds to 6.88 million pounds, a total increase of 1.2 million pounds. The findings also support increases to the 2012-2015 quota.

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources.

**On the web:**

NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

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