

revision would reduce the ESU's critical habitat, by eliminating Upper Napias Creek from critical habitat. To the extent that Meridian may be impacted by the current designation of Upper Napias Creek as critical habitat, the reduction of critical habitat would lessen Meridian's economic burden, if any, from that impact.

Accordingly, the Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce has certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration that the critical habitat designation, if adopted, would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities, as described in the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

This final rule does not contain a collection-of-information requirement for purposes of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

NMFS has determined that Environmental Assessments or an Environmental Impact Statement, as defined under the authority of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, need not be prepared for this critical habitat designation. See *Douglas County v. Babbitt*, 48 F.3d 1495 (9th Cir. 1995), cert. denied, 116 S. Ct. 698 (1996).

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 226

Endangered and threatened species.

Dated: October 15, 1999.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 226 is amended as follows:

PART 226—DESIGNATED CRITICAL HABITAT

1. The authority citation for part 226 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

2. In § 226.205, paragraph (b) is revised to read as follows:

§ 226.205 Critical habitat for Snake River sockeye salmon, Snake River fall chinook salmon, and Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon.

* * * * *

(b) *Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon* (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Geographic Boundaries. Critical habitat is designated to include the Columbia River from a straight line connecting the west end of the Clatsop jetty (south jetty, Oregon side) and the west end of the Peacock jetty (north jetty, Washington side) and including all Columbia River estuarine areas and river reaches proceeding upstream to

the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers; all Snake River reaches from the confluence of the Columbia River upstream to Hells Canyon Dam. Critical habitat also includes river reaches presently or historically accessible (except reaches above impassable natural falls (including Napias Creek Falls) and Dworshak and Hells Canyon Dams) to Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon in the following hydrologic units: Hells Canyon, Imnaha, Lemhi, Little Salmon, Lower Grande Ronde, Lower Middle Fork Salmon, Lower Salmon, Lower Snake-Asotin, Lower Snake-Tucannon, Middle Salmon-Chamberlain, Middle Salmon-Panther, Pahsimeroi, South Fork Salmon, Upper Middle Fork Salmon, Upper Grande Ronde, Upper Salmon, Wallowa. Critical habitat borders on or passes through the following counties in Oregon: Baker, Clatsop, Columbia, Gilliam, Hood River, Morrow, Multnomah, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco; the following counties in Washington: Asotin, Benton, Clark, Columbia, Cowlitz, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Pacific, Skamania, Wahkiakum, Walla, Whitman; and the following counties in Idaho: Adams, Blaine, Custer, Idaho, Lemhi, Lewis, Nez Perce, Valley.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 990625173-9274-02; I.D. 033199C]

RIN 0648-AL57

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Amendment 16B

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues this final rule to implement Amendment 16B to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP). This final rule establishes size limits for banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, cubera snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, mutton snapper, schoolmaster, scamp, gray triggerfish,

and hogfish; excludes banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, and hogfish from the 20-fish aggregate (combined) reef fish bag limit; establishes new bag limits for hogfish, speckled hind, warsaw grouper, and for banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack combined; and removes queen triggerfish from the listing of Gulf reef fish and from the applicable regulations. The intended effect of this rule is to conserve and manage the reef fish resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

DATES: This final rule is effective November 24, 1999.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Roy E. Crabtree at 727-570-5305; Fax: 727-570-5583.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The reef fish fishery of the Gulf of Mexico is managed under the FMP. The FMP was prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) and is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

On April 14, 1999, NMFS announced the availability of Amendment 16B and requested comments on the amendment (64 FR 18395). On July 2, 1999, NMFS published a proposed rule to implement the measures in Amendment 16B and requested comments on the rule (64 FR 35981). The background and rationale for the measures in the amendment and proposed rule are contained in the preamble to the proposed rule and are not repeated here. No comments were received on Amendment 16B or on the proposed rule. On July 14, 1999, NMFS approved Amendment 16B. The proposed rule has been adopted as final without change.

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, with the concurrence of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, determined that Amendment 16B is necessary for the conservation and management of the reef fish fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and that Amendment 16B is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law.

This final rule has been determined to be not significant for purposes of E.O. 12866.

The Chief Counsel for Regulation of the Department of Commerce has certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration that this rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. No comments were received regarding

this certification. As a result, a regulatory flexibility analysis was not prepared.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 622

Fisheries, Fishing, Puerto Rico, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Virgin Islands.

Dated: October 15, 1999.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 622 is amended as follows:

PART 622—FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC

1. The authority citation for part 622 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

2. In § 622.34, the last sentence in paragraph (g)(1) is revised to read as follows:

§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.

* * * * *

(g) * * *

(1) * * * The provisions of this paragraph do not apply to the following species: dwarf sand perch, hogfish, and sand perch.

* * * * *

3. In § 622.37, the section heading, introductory text, and paragraph (d) are revised to read as follows:

§ 622.37 Size limits.

All size limits in this section are minimum size limits unless specified otherwise. Except for undersized king and Spanish mackerel allowed in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section, a fish not in compliance with its size limit, as specified in this section, in or from the Caribbean, Gulf, South

Atlantic, and/or Mid-Atlantic EEZ, as appropriate, may not be possessed, sold, or purchased. A fish not in compliance with its size limit must be released immediately with a minimum of harm. The operator of a vessel that fishes in the EEZ is responsible for ensuring that fish on board are in compliance with the size limits specified in this section.

* * * * *

(d) Gulf reef fish—(1) Snapper. (i) Lane snapper—8 inches (20.3 cm), TL.

(ii) Vermilion snapper—10 inches (25.4 cm), TL.

(iii) Cubera, dog, gray, mahogany, and yellowtail snappers and schoolmaster—12 inches (30.5 cm), TL.

(iv) Red snapper—15 inches (38.1 cm), TL.

(v) Mutton snapper—16 inches (40.6 cm), TL.

(2) Grouper. (i) Scamp—16 inches (40.6 cm), TL.

(ii) Black, red, and yellowfin groupers and gag—20 inches, (50.8 cm), TL.

(3) Other Gulf reef fish species. (i) Gray triggerfish—12 inches (30.5 cm), TL.

(ii) Hogfish—12 inches (30.5 cm), fork length.

(iii) Banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack—14 inches (35.6 cm), fork length (minimum size); 22 inches (55.9 cm), fork length (maximum size).

(iv) Greater amberjack—28 inches (71.1 cm), fork length, for a fish taken by a person subject to the bag limit specified in § 622.39(b)(1)(i); and 36 inches (91.4 cm), fork length, for a fish taken by a person not subject to the bag limit.

* * * * *

4. In § 622.39, the second and third sentences of paragraph (a)(1), and paragraphs (b)(1)(ii), (b)(1)(v), and (b)(2) are revised; and paragraphs (b)(1)(vi) and (b)(1)(vii) are added to read as follows:

§ 622.39 Bag and possession limits.

(a) * * *

(1) * * * Unless specified otherwise, bag limits apply to a person on a daily basis, regardless of the number of trips in a day. Unless specified otherwise, possession limits apply to a person on a trip after the first 24 hours of that trip.

* * * * *

(b) * * *

(1) * * *

(ii) Groupers, combined, excluding jewfish and Nassau grouper—5 per person per day, but not to exceed 1 speckled hind and 1 Warsaw grouper per vessel per day.

* * * * *

(v) Gulf reef fish, combined, excluding those specified in paragraphs (b)(1)(i) through (b)(1)(iv) and paragraphs (b)(1)(vi) through (b)(1)(vii) of this section and excluding dwarf sand perch and sand perch—20.

(vi) Banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack, combined—5.

(vii) Hogfish—5.

(2) Possession limits. A person, or a vessel in the case of speckled hind or Warsaw grouper, on a trip that spans more than 24 hours may possess no more than two daily bag limits, provided such trip is on a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, the vessel has two licensed operators aboard, and each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that verifies the length of the trip.

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Table 3 of Appendix A to Part 622—Gulf Reef Fish [Amended]

5. In Table 3 of Appendix A to Part 622, the entry, "Queen triggerfish, Balistes vetula", is removed.

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