



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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NOAA Seeks Comments on a Rebuilding Plan for Red Grouper in the South Atlantic

Comment Period Ends April 27, 2012

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on Amendment 24 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 24). The notice of availability for Amendment 24 published in the *Federal Register* on **February 27, 2012** (77 FR 11477). The comment period ends on **April 27, 2012**.

Amendment 24 would establish a rebuilding plan for red grouper in the South Atlantic. The red grouper stock of the South Atlantic was assessed in 2008 through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review Process. The assessment determined red grouper to be overfished (population too low) and undergoing overfishing (rate of fish removal too high). The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and NOAA Fisheries Service are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to implement a rebuilding plan within two years after identification of an overfished stock. NOAA Fisheries Service notified the Council of the stock status on June 9, 2010. Amendment 24 would implement a plan that would have an 81 percent probability of stock recovery in 10 years.

Actions in Amendment 24 consider:

- Implementation of red grouper annual catch limits for the commercial and recreational sectors. The sector annual catch limits are based on the Council's proposed allocations of 44 percent commercial and 56 percent recreational.
- Implementation of red grouper accountability measures for the commercial and recreational sectors. Accountability measures are management controls to prevent annual catch limits from being exceeded and to correct overages of the catch limits if they do occur. The accountability measures would close each sector when the sector annual catch limit is projected to be met. If a sector annual catch limit is exceeded, the Regional Administrator would publish a notice to reduce the sector annual catch limits in the following season by the amount of the overage.

- Elimination of the commercial and recreational aggregate annual catch limits and accountability measures for black grouper, gag, and red grouper.
- Revision of the following management benchmarks for red grouper: Maximum sustainable yield; optimum yield; and minimum stock size threshold.

Request for Comments

Comments on the amendment must be received no later than **April 27, 2012**, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the **Addresses** section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Electronic copies of Amendment 24 may be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Service Web site http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/pdfs/SGAmend24_121411.pdf, the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.

If you would like the files in a different format (such as hard copies), please submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the NOAA FOIA Office. Guidelines on submitting a FOIA request can be found on the NOAA FOIA Web page (<http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/foia/>)

You may submit comments by the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (select "Submit Comment," then type in NOAA-NMFS-2011-0298 in the "Keyword or ID" box). All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change.
- **Mail:** NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
c/o Rick DeVitor
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel,

WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin may not be considered.

More information, including Frequently Asked Questions for Amendment 24 can be found online at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.