



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Thomas McIlwain, Chairman
 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

FROM: Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
 Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: August 2008 Regional Administrator's Report

Fishery Openings and Closings and Quota Monitoring Summary

Shrimp: Federal waters off Texas closed to shrimping May 15 and re-opened on July 15, 2008.

Recreational Red Snapper: Federal waters opened June 1 and will close August 5, 2008.

Commercial Red Snapper: As of July 22, 2008, 65 percent of the quota has been harvested.

Commercial King Mackerel: The 2008-2009 fishing year for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel began on July 1, 2008. The combined commercial harvest of all subzones during the 2007-2008 fishing year was 102 percent of the quota.

Commercial Shallow Water Grouper: As of July 22, 2008, 34 percent of the shallow water grouper quota had been landed; 41 percent of the red grouper quota had been landed.

Commercial Deep Water Grouper and Tilefish: Using landings through mid-April 2008, and projecting subsequent catches based on previous years' landings, NOAA Fisheries Service closed the deep water grouper and tilefish fisheries on May 10, 2008. The projections were optimistic in regard to the anticipated landings, and neither quota was met by the closure date. NOAA Fisheries Service may re-open these fisheries later in the year to allow the remainder of the quota to be harvested.

Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: As of July 22, 2008, approximately 22 percent of the amberjack quota and 36 percent of the gray triggerfish quotas had been landed.

Permits Status

Active permits as of July 22, 2008:

- 1,737 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 319 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,350 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 49 historical captain permits
- 1,474 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)
 (20 commercial king mackerel gillnet)
- 1,472 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,323 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 48 historical captain permits
- 884 commercial reef fish moratorium permits



Amendment Status

Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ): NOAA Fisheries Service continues to monitor, develop, and refine the support infrastructure for the IFQ program. A final report for the 2007 fishing year is nearly complete.

Framework Action to Revise the List of Allowable Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs): NOAA Fisheries Service proposed rulemaking on June 3, 2008, to revise the list of allowable BRDs for the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery. In summary, the allowable placement of fisheye-type BRDs would be restricted for use in the Gulf of Mexico, and the Expanded Mesh BRD would be decertified. Based on a request from the shrimp industry, the comment period on the proposed rule was extended through August 6, 2008.

Reef Fish Amendment 29: This amendment would establish a multi-species IFQ for the Gulf of Mexico grouper and tilefish fisheries. The proposed IFQ must first be approved by a majority of those voting in a referendum among eligible reef fish permit holders. NOAA Fisheries Service will conduct this referendum in the fall of 2008.

Reef Fish Amendment 30A: Amendment 30A proposed regulatory actions to end overfishing of greater amberjack and gray triggerfish. NOAA Fisheries Service announced the availability of the amendment on March 31, 2008, requesting public comments through May 30, 2008. The proposed rule published on April 8, 2008, with comments accepted through May 23, 2008. The final rule published July 3, 2008, with an effective date of August 2, 2008.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B: In 2007, stock assessments for gag and red grouper indicated gag were undergoing overfishing, but were not overfished, and red grouper were determined to be rebuilt. Amendment 30B proposes actions to end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest, and would establish sector specific annual catch limits and accountability measures for these two species. A draft supplemental environmental impact statement is scheduled to be made available for public comment in early August 2008.

Generic Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan: This action would establish a regional permitting process for regulating and promoting environmentally-sound and economically-sustainable aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone, consistent with the goals of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This action originally was intended to be a generic amendment to all Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plans (FMP). Based on recommendations from NOAA General Counsel, this action is being revised to a stand-alone FMP. A draft environmental impact statement is tentatively scheduled to be made available for public comment in September 2008.

Spiny Lobster Joint Amendment: The amendment would establish a minimum import size for spiny lobsters coming into the United States. Public hearings were held in July 2008. Following approval by all three southeastern fishery management councils, the amendment is scheduled to be submitted for review by the Secretary of Commerce by October 2008.