



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

Southeast Regional Office
 263 13th Avenue South
 St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
 (727) 824-5305; FAX (727) 824-5308
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

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

FROM: (s) Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
 Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: June 2009 Regional Administrator's Report

Fishery Openings and Closings and Quota Monitoring Summary

Commercial Fisheries:

Shrimp: Federal waters off Texas were closed to shrimping on May 15.

Red Snapper: As of May 20, 2009, approximately 55 percent of the quota had been harvested.

King Mackerel: For the 2008-2009 fishing year, all zones have met their respective quotas, except for the northern zone off the west coast of Florida. All zones will reopen on July 1, 2009; the start of the 2009-2010 fishing year.

Shallow Water Grouper (SWG): Through May 15, approximately 18 percent of the SWG quota was landed; 21 percent of the red grouper quota was landed, and 26 percent of the gag quota was landed. An emergency rule, effective May 18, prohibits the use of bottom longlines to fish for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico inshore of a line approximating the 50-fathom contour. This action is expected to greatly restrict SWG landings over the summer.

Deep Water Grouper (DWG) and Tilefish: The tilefish quota was met and fishery closed on May 10; 109 percent of the quota was reported landed through May 15. Approximately 73 percent of the DWG quota was taken as of May 15. With the bottom longline prohibition affecting the SWG fishery, landing rates in the DWG fishery are expected to increase. After the DWG quota is met, the use of longlines to fish for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico will be prohibited.

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: As of May 15, approximately 18 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 16 percent of the gray triggerfish quota was landed. A commercial closure for greater amberjack is in effect from March 1 through May 31.



Recreational: (NOTE: The following landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for January and February, and do not include headboat or Texas landings.)

Red Snapper: On May 8, 2009, NOAA Fisheries Service announced an early closure of the recreational red snapper season to better ensure the fishery does not exceed the 2.45 million pound (MP) quota. The season begins on June 1 and will close August 15.

King Mackerel: 105,977 pounds (lbs) whole weight – 2 percent of the 6.94 MP allocation

Greater Amberjack: 85,206 lbs whole weight – 6 percent of 1.368 MP catch target

Gray Triggerfish: 7,348 lbs whole weight – 2 percent of 356,000 lb catch target

Gag: 81,650 lbs gutted weight – 4 percent of 2.06 MP catch target

Red Grouper: 19,847 lbs gutted weight – 1 percent of 1.82 MP catch target

Permits Status

(NOTE: The following represents permits issued or renewed within the last 12 months, which can be used to fish in the appropriate fishery. It does not represent activity in the fishery, nor include permits which have expired but are renewable.)

Permits as of May 19, 2009:

- 1,324 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 39 historical captain permits
- 1,295 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 39 historical captain permits
- 1,591 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 283 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,476 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)
(21 commercial king mackerel gillnet)
- 1,520 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 896 commercial reef fish moratorium permits; 173 reef fish dealers
- 179 commercial spiny lobster permits and 321 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)

Status of Amendments under Review

Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ): Several proposed changes to the red snapper IFQ program are included in the proposed rule for Amendment 29 (see below) with the intent of integrating this IFQ program and the proposed grouper/tilefish IFQ program.

Reef Fish Amendment 29: This amendment would establish a multi-species IFQ for the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper and tilefish fisheries. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) submitted the amendment for review by the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) on February 6, 2009. NOAA Fisheries Service announced the availability of the amendment for public review and comment on April 8, and will accept comments through June 8. The proposed rule published on April 30; comments are accepted through June 15. The Secretary must approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment by July 7, 2009. If

approved and implemented through subsequent rulemaking, the IFQ program would initiate on January 1, 2010.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B: Amendment 30B includes actions to end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest, and establish sector specific annual catch limits and accountability measures for these two species. The final rule implementing the actions in the amendment became effective May 18, 2009, replacing and expanding regulatory actions implemented through an interim rule earlier in the year. NOAA Fisheries Service published a second proposed rule that corrects the dates of a season-area closure described in Amendment 30B. The final rule for this follow-up action is under review.

Generic Aquaculture Fishery Management Plan (FMP): 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. The Council approved the FMP at its January 2009 meeting, and submitted the FMP for review by the Secretary on February 24, 2009. NOAA Fisheries Service currently is reviewing the amendment and proposed rule.