



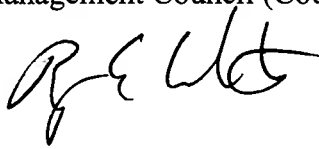
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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JUL 27 2009

F/SER24:SB

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

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

SUBJECT: August 2009 Regional Administrator's Report

Status of Actions under Review by NOAA Fisheries Service

Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ): Several proposed changes to the red snapper IFQ program are included in the rulemaking for Amendment 29 (see below) with the intent of integrating this IFQ program and the pending grouper and 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 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 accepted comments through June 8. The proposed rule published on April 30; comments were accepted through June 15. The Secretary approved the amendment on July 2. A final rule is under review by the Department of Commerce. The IFQ program is scheduled to be implemented on January 1, 2010.

Reef Fish Amendment 30B: The final rule implementing regulations to restrict harvest and end overfishing of gag, increase red grouper harvest, and establish sector specific annual catch limits and accountability measures for these two species became effective May 18. A follow-up final rule, published June 24, corrected the dates (January 1 through April 30) of "The Edges" season-area closure. The closure will be effective for the 2010 fishing year.

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 to NOAA Fisheries Service on February 24. The Notice of Availability (NOA) and proposed rule were transmitted for review by the Secretary on May 29. The NOA published on June 4 with a comment period ending August 3. The proposed rule was sent for review by the Department of Commerce and NOAA General Counsel on June 2. The Secretary must approve, disapprove, or partially approve the FMP by September 2.



Fishery Openings, Closings, and Landings Summary

Recreational:

(The following landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for January through April, 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 federal fishing season began on June 1 and will close August 15.

King Mackerel: 0.319 mp whole weight – 5 percent of the 6.94 mp allocation

Greater Amberjack: 0.256 mp whole weight – 19 percent of 1.368 mp catch target

Gray Triggerfish: 19,729 pounds (lb) whole weight – 5 percent of 356,000 lb catch target

Gag: 0.218 mp gutted weight – 11 percent of 2.06 mp catch target

Red Grouper: 69,947 lb gutted weight – 4 percent of 1.82 mp catch target

Commercial:

Shrimp: Federal waters off Texas opened to shrimping on July 15.

Red Snapper: As of July 22, 2009, approximately 61 percent of the quota had been harvested.

King Mackerel: The 2009-2010 fishing year opened on July 1, 2009. No landing information for the new fishing year is available at this time.

Shallow Water Grouper (SWG): Through July 15, approximately 30 percent of the SWG quota was landed, 29 percent of the red grouper quota was landed, and 31 percent of the gag quota was landed. An emergency rule, effective May 18, prohibited 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 the fishery closed on May 10; 111 percent of the quota was taken. The DWG quota was met and the fishery closed on June 27; 101 percent of the quota was taken. In accordance with the emergency rule noted above, subsequent to the DWG quota closure, the prohibition on the use of longlines to fish for reef fish was expanded to include the entire eastern Gulf of Mexico (east of 85°30' west longitude).

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: As of July 15, approximately 23 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 24 percent of the gray triggerfish quota was landed.

Permits Status

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 July 22, 2009:

- 1,327 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 42 historical captain permits
- 1,296 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 41 historical captain permits
- 1,599 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits (125 have terminated)
- 289 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,478 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 23 commercial king mackerel gillnet
- 1,586 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 909 commercial reef fish moratorium permits; 175 reef fish dealers
- 179 commercial spiny lobster permits and 331 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)