



**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 (Council)

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

SUBJECT: October 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, and a final rule was published on August 31, 2009. NOAA Fisheries Service mailed, certified return receipt, preliminary share estimates to all eligible participants on October 5, 2009. The IFQ program is scheduled to be implemented on January 1, 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service anticipates submitting additional rulemaking to remove the trip limit restrictions for the various grouper components of the fishery.

Reef Fish Amendment 31: The intended effect of Amendment 31 is to reduce the take of sea turtles by the bottom longline component of the reef fish fishery. Actions in the amendment include a seasonal area closure for bottom longlines fished in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, a restriction that would allow continued participation by only those longline vessels that have a substantial historical activity in the reef fish fishery, and a restriction on the amount of longline gear that can be fished. The Council approved the amendment for review by the Secretary at its August 2009 meeting. Pending final staff editing, the draft environmental impact statement should be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in early October, and a proposed rule by November. If the amendment is subsequently approved by the Secretary, a final rule could be effective by late March 2010. NOAA Fisheries Service anticipates developing separate rulemaking to allow the bottom longline component of the fishery to re-open, with certain restrictions, until the final regulations for Amendment 31 become effective.



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 (MSA). 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. In accordance with procedures of the MSA, the FMP was approved September 2, 2009.

### **Fishery Openings, Closings, and Landings Summary**

#### ***Recreational:***

The following recreational landings and percentages are based only on the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for January through June 2009, and do not include headboat or Texas landings.

Red Snapper: Federal waters opened June 1 and closed August 15, 2009. Through June, 1.66 million pounds (mp) were landed of the 2.45 mp quota (68 percent).

King Mackerel: 1.29 mp whole weight of the 6.94 mp allocation (19 percent) had been landed through June.

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Through June, 0.938 mp whole weight of the 1.368 mp greater amberjack quota (69 percent) had been landed. For gray triggerfish, 261,007 pounds (lb) whole weight, or 73 percent of the 356,000 lb catch target had been landed.

Gag and Red Grouper: For gag, 0.748 mp gutted weight, or 36 percent of 2.06 mp catch target had been landed through June. For red grouper, 0.361 mp, or 20 percent of 1.82 mp catch target had been landed. Recreational fishing for shallow water grouper will be closed February 1 through March 31 in 2010.

#### ***Commercial:***

Red Snapper: Through September 30, 2009, 78 percent of the 2.55 mp quota had been harvested. 2009 allocations were issued to 524 accounts.

King Mackerel: The 2009-2010 fishing year for the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel began on July 1, 2009. The 1.01 mp quota for the western Gulf of Mexico was met and the fishery was closed on September 12, 2009. Through September, very few landings have occurred in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Beginning November 1, the boundary between the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic groups of king mackerel will shift from the southwest coast of Florida to the northeast coast of Florida. The southern sub-zone gillnet fishery will open on January 19, 2010.

Greater Amberjack and Gray Triggerfish: Through September 15, 2009, approximately 37 percent of the greater amberjack quota and 50 percent of the gray triggerfish quota had been

landed. A commercial closure for greater amberjack will be in effect from March 1 through May 31, 2010.

Shallow Water Grouper (SWG): Through September 15, 2009, 52 percent of the 7.48 mp SWG quota had been landed; 64 percent of the 5.75 mp red grouper quota was landed; and 36 percent of the 1.32 mp gag quota had been landed. To reduce sea turtle takes, longlining for SWG was closed in the eastern Gulf of Mexico (east of Cape San Blas, Florida) inshore of the 50-fathom contour on May 18, 2009, through emergency rulemaking effective until October 28, 2009.

Deep Water Grouper (DWG) and Tilefish: The 440,000 lb commercial quota for tilefish was met on May 15, and the fishery closed. The 1.02 mp quota for DWG was met on June 27, and the fishery closed. With the closure of the DWG component of the fishery, longlining for reef fish in the eastern Gulf of Mexico was prohibited through the emergency rulemaking discussed above.

### **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. Active permits as of October 1, 2009:

- 1,576 moratorium Gulf shrimp permits and 286 royal red shrimp endorsements
- 1,298 for-hire coastal pelagic moratorium permits; 39 historical captain permits
- 1,459 commercial king mackerel moratorium permits (includes South Atlantic)  
(21 commercial king mackerel gillnet)
- 1,575 commercial Spanish mackerel permits (includes South Atlantic)
- 1,272 for-hire reef fish moratorium permits; 38 historical captain permits
- 869 commercial reef fish moratorium permits
- 169 commercial spiny lobster permits and 331 tailing permits (includes South Atlantic)