



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 29, 2008
FB08-006

NOAA Fisheries Service Announces the Publication of a Final Rule Implementing Regulations to Rebuild the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Stock *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) has published a final rule implementing the approved regulatory actions in Joint Amendment 27 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and Amendment 14 to the FMP for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico (Amendment 27/14). The intent of the rule is to reduce the red snapper catch, bycatch, and discard mortality in the directed commercial and recreational fisheries, as well as in the shrimp fishery. These regulations are designed to ensure a reasonable probability of ending red snapper overfishing by 2010 and rebuild the stock by 2032.

Elements of the Rule

- Fishing mortality on red snapper will be restricted to a commercial quota of 2.55 million pounds and a recreational quota of 2.45 million pounds.
- Discard mortality in the directed fisheries will be reduced by:
 - Reducing the commercial minimum size limit to 13 inches total length.
 - Requiring the use of venting tools, dehooking devices, and non-stainless steel circle hooks (when using natural baits) for all reef fish fishery sectors.
- Shrimp effort, and the associated bycatch discard mortality of juvenile red snapper, will be controlled, as needed, through time-area closures to ensure shrimp trawl bycatch mortality of red snapper is reduced 74 percent below the 2001-2003 time period. This reduction can be modified in the future as red snapper rebuild.
- The recreational harvest will be constrained to the new quota by reducing the recreational bag limit from four fish to two fish, setting the bag limit for captains and crews of for-hire vessels at zero, and shortening the recreational fishing season to June 1-September 30. The 16-inch total length

minimum size limit for recreational fishermen will stay the same.

These actions become effective **February 28, 2008**, except for the requirement to use non-stainless steel circle hooks, venting tools, and dehooking devices, which becomes effective **June 1, 2008**.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This bulletin provides only a summary of the information about the rule. Discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the final rule are available by contacting NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office at 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701. The final rule can be obtained in electronic form from the *Federal Register* Web site: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html> (use advanced search for final rules using "AT87" as a keyword).

How Can We Improve These Fishery Bulletins?

If you have any suggestions on how we may improve the contents of future fishery bulletins, please contact: Kim Amendola, Communication Specialist, Phone: 727-551-5707, FAX: 727-824-5320, e-mail: SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov

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