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**FB15-002**

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### **Notice of Availability for Public Comments on a Proposal to Establish Two Recreational Sub-Quotas for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper**

***Comment Period Ends March 17, 2015***

NOAA Fisheries seeks public comment on Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has submitted Amendment 40 to NOAA Fisheries for review, approval, and implementation. The Notice of Availability for public comment on this amendment published in the *Federal Register* on January 16, 2015. This bulletin only summarizes the proposed actions and their effects. NOAA Fisheries encourages constituents to access Amendment 40 and its associated Final Environmental Impact Statement at

[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/am40/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html)

for more complete information.

#### **Purpose of the Amendment 40**

If approved by NOAA Fisheries, Amendment 40 would provide a basis for increased flexibility in future management of the entire recreational sector, and reduce the chance for recreational quota overruns, which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock.

#### **Proposed Management Measures**

Amendment 40 proposes to establish sub-quotas for federally permitted for-hire vessels and private anglers who fish for red snapper for a three-year period beginning in 2015.

- The federal for-hire component would be comprised of all for-hire operators with a valid or renewable federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.
- The private angling component would be comprised of private recreational anglers and for-hire operators who do not have a federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.

Amendment 40 would allocate the 5,390,000-pound red snapper recreational quota based on historical landings data for each sub-group. Federally permitted for-hire vessels would receive 42.3 percent of the recreational quota, and private anglers would receive 57.7 percent of the recreational quota.

- The federally permitted for-hire quota would be 2,279,970 pounds.
- The private angling quota would be 3,110,030 pounds.

Finally, Amendment 40 would establish separate red snapper annual catch targets and season closure provisions for the federal for-hire and private angling components. For both components, each season would start June 1 and continue until the component's annual catch target is projected to be caught. A 20 percent buffer is applied to the recreational quota to get the annual catch target, which is then allocated between components. At this time, NOAA Fisheries cannot project season lengths for the components because it is waiting to receive final 2014 recreational landings data as well as the results of an update to the red snapper stock assessment.

The Council proposes to sunset this action after three years unless the Council takes additional action. The Council is currently evaluating other measures to manage the recreational sector including red snapper regional management.

#### **Request for Comments**

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this notice no later than March 17, 2015. We will address all comments specifically directed to Amendment 40 or the subsequent proposed rule in the final rule. You may obtain electronic copies of Amendment 40 from the NOAA Fisheries Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/am40/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html) or the e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulation.gov](http://www.regulation.gov).

### How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2014-0107, by any of the following methods:

**Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2014-0107>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments.

**Mail:** Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

### About Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. The Council prepares fishery management plans, which are designed to manage fishery resources within the 200-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico.



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