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SOUTHEAST FISHERY BULLETIN

(Gulf of Mexico)

FB15-006

[Peter Hood](#)

727-824-5305

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NOAA Seeks Comments on a Proposed Rule to Establish Two Recreational Sub-Quotas for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper

Comment Period Ends March 9, 2015

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that would establish distinct private angling and federal for-hire sub-quotas for red snapper. These measures are outlined in Amendment 40 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico submitted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council). The proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on January 23, 2015, with the comment period ending March 9, 2015.

NOAA Fisheries encourages constituents to access the proposed rule and Amendment 40 at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html for more complete information.

If implemented by NOAA Fisheries, this rulemaking would provide a basis for increased flexibility in future management of the recreational sector, and reduce the chance for recreational quota overruns, which could jeopardize the rebuilding of the red snapper stock. This rule would implement the management measures in Amendment 40.

Proposed Management Measures

The rule would 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 other for-hire operators who do not have a federal reef fish charter vessel/headboat permit.

The rule would implement sub-quotas from the 5,390,000-pound red snapper recreational quota using Amendment 40's allocation of 42.3 percent to the federal for-hire component and 57.7 percent to the private angling component.

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

Finally, the rule would establish separate red snapper annual catch target 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 individual 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 2014 recreational landings data as well as the results of an update to the red snapper stock assessment. Contingent on the approval of Amendment 40 and input provided on the proposed rule, season lengths will be announced in the final rule.

Based on a sunset provision selected by the Council in Amendment 40, the management measures implemented through this rulemaking would end 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 proposed rule no later than March 9, 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 and the proposed rule from the NOAA Fisheries Web site:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am40/index.html or the e-Rulemaking Portal: www.regulation.gov.

How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments on the proposed rule, 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 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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[Charlene Ponce](#)

Public Information Officer
888-833-1844 ext. 229