

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR part 622 is proposed to be amended as follows:

**PART 622--FISHERIES OF THE CARIBBEAN, GULF OF MEXICO, AND SOUTH ATLANTIC**

1. The authority citation for part 622 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

**§ 622.2 Definitions and acronyms. [Amended]**

2. In § 622.2, remove the definition of *venting device*.

3. In § 622.30, revise the introductory paragraph and add paragraph (c) to read as follows:

**§ 622.30 Required fishing gear.**

For a person on board a vessel to fish for Gulf reef fish in the Gulf EEZ, the following fishing gear must be on the vessel and such person must use the gear as specified in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

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(c) *Gear required by the DESCEND Act of 2020.* For a person on a vessel to fish for Gulf reef fish in the Gulf EEZ, a venting tool or a descending device that is rigged and ready for use while fishing is occurring must be on the

vessel. The requirements in this paragraph are effective until January 14, 2026.

(1) *Venting tool*. A venting tool is a device capable of penetrating the abdomen of a fish to release the excess gases accumulated in body cavity when a fish is retrieved from depth. A venting tool must be a sharpened, hollow instrument that allows air to escape, such as a hypodermic syringe with the plunger removed. A 16-gauge needle, which has an outside diameter of 0.065 inches (1.65 mm), is the minimum diameter hollow tube that must be used. A larger diameter hollow needle is preferred in order to allow more air to escape from a fish rapidly. A device that is not hollow, such as a knife or an ice pick, is not a venting tool and will cause additional damage to a fish.

(2) *Descending device*. A descending device is an instrument capable of releasing fish at a depth sufficient for the fish to be able to recover from the effects of barotrauma.

(i) The descending device must be a weighted hook, lip clamp, or container that will hold the fish while it is lowered to depth. The device must be capable of releasing the fish automatically, by actions of the operator of the

device, or by allowing the fish to escape on its own when at depth.

(ii) The descending device must use a minimum of a 16-ounce (454-gram) weight and a minimum of a 60-ft (15.2-m) length of line.