

for the January 1 through June 30, 2016 period as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(a)(4)(i)(D).

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having vermilion snapper onboard must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such vermilion snapper prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015. During the closure, the bag limit specified in 50 CFR 622.187(b)(5) and the possession limits specified in 50 CFR 622.187(c)(1), apply to all harvest or possession of vermilion snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ. During the closure, the sale or purchase of vermilion snapper taken from the EEZ is prohibited. As specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(i), the prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of vermilion snapper that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor. For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the bag and possession limits and the prohibition on sale and purchase apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

#### Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of South Atlantic vermilion snapper and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(f)(1) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for vermilion snapper constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Allowing prior notice and opportunity for public comment is contrary to the public interest because of the need to

immediately implement this action to protect vermilion snapper since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial quota. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment could result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial quota.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: September 16, 2015.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 0907271173-0629-03]

RIN 0648-XE181

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2015 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Snowy Grouper

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS implements accountability measures (AMs) for commercial snowy grouper in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic. NMFS projects commercial landings for snowy grouper will reach the commercial annual catch limit (ACL) (equivalent to the commercial quota) by September 22, 2015. Therefore, NMFS closes the commercial sector for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic EEZ on September 22, 2015, and it will remain closed until the start of the next fishing season on January 1, 2016. This closure is necessary to protect the snowy grouper resource.

**DATES:** This rule is effective 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2016.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Britni LaVine, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: [britni.lavine@noaa.gov](mailto:britni.lavine@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The snapper-grouper fishery of the South

Atlantic includes snowy grouper and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The final rule implementing Regulatory Amendment 20 to the FMP recently revised the commercial quota (equivalent to the commercial ACL) for snowy grouper in the South Atlantic to 115,451 lb (52,368 kg), gutted weight; 136,233 lb (61,794 kg), round weight, for the remainder of the current fishing year, ending December 31, 2015, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(a)(1) (80 FR 43033, July 21, 2015).

Under 50 CFR 622.193(b)(1), NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for snowy grouper when the commercial quota (commercial ACL) is reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register. NMFS projects that commercial landings of South Atlantic snowy grouper will reach the commercial ACL by September 22, 2015. Accordingly, the commercial sector for South Atlantic snowy grouper is closed effective 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2016.

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper with snowy grouper on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such snowy grouper prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015. During the commercial closure, harvest and possession of snowy grouper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is limited to the bag and possession limits, as specified in § 622.187(b)(2)(ii) and (c)(1). Also during the commercial closure, the sale or purchase of snowy grouper taken from the South Atlantic EEZ is prohibited. The prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to the sale or purchase of snowy grouper that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, September 22, 2015, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

For a person on board a vessel for which a Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the bag and possession limits and the sale and purchase provisions of the commercial closure for snowy grouper would apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state

or Federal waters, as specified in 50 CFR 622.190(c)(1)(ii).

#### Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of snowy grouper and the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(b)(1) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for snowy grouper constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect snowy grouper since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL (commercial quota). Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL (commercial quota).

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

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

Dated: September 16, 2015.

**Alan D. Risenhoover,**

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,  
National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 648

[Docket No. 140214138-4482-02]

RIN 0648-XE189

#### Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Bluefish Fishery and Summer Flounder Fishery; Commercial Quota Harvested for the State of Massachusetts

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closures.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the 2015 commercial bluefish and summer flounder quota allocated to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been harvested. Vessels issued commercial Federal fisheries permits for these fisheries may not land bluefish or summer flounder in Massachusetts for the remainder of calendar year 2015, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer from another state. Regulations governing these fisheries require publication of this notice to advise Massachusetts that the quota has been harvested, and to advise Federal vessel and dealer permit holders that no Federal commercial quota is available to land bluefish or summer flounder in Massachusetts.

**DATES:** Effective 0001 hours, September 17, 2015, through December 31, 2015 for summer flounder and effective 0001 hours, September 19, 2015, through December 31, 2015 for bluefish.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Reid Lichwell, (978) 281-9112, or [Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov](mailto:Reid.Lichwell@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations governing the bluefish fishery and summer flounder fishery are found at 50 CFR part 648. The bluefish regulations require annual specification of a commercial quota that is apportioned on a percentage basis among the coastal states from Florida through Maine, while the summer flounder regulations require annual specification of commercial quota that is apportioned based on a percentage basis among coastal states from North Carolina through Maine. The processes to set the annual commercial quotas and the percent allocated to each state are described in § 648.162 and § 648.102 for bluefish and summer flounder, respectively.

The initial coastwide commercial quota for bluefish for the 2015 fishing year is 5,241,202 lb (2,377,371 kg) (80 FR 46848, August 6, 2015). The percent allocated to vessels landing bluefish in Massachusetts is 6.7167 percent, resulting in an initial commercial quota of 352,036 lb (159,681 kg). The 2015 allocation was adjusted to 602,036 lb (273,079 kg) to reflect quota transfers from other states.

The initial coastwide commercial quota for summer flounder for the 2015 fishing year was set at 11,069,410 lb (5,021,000 kg) (79 FR 78311, December 30, 2014). The percent allocated to vessels landing summer flounder in Massachusetts is 6.82046 percent, resulting in an initial commercial quota of 754,985 lb (340,165 kg). The 2015 allocation was adjusted to 760,785 lb (345,086 kg) to reflect quota overages from 2014 and quota transfers from other states.

The Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator), monitors the state commercial quotas and determines when a state's commercial quota has been harvested. NMFS is required to publish a notice in the **Federal Register** alerting Federal commercial vessel and dealer permit holders that, effective upon a specific date, the state's commercial quota has been harvested and no commercial quota is available to land bluefish or summer flounder in that state. The Regional Administrator has determined, based upon dealer reports and other available information, that Massachusetts has harvested its quota for 2015.

Section 648.4(b) provides that Federal permit holders agree, as a condition of the permit, not to land bluefish or summer flounder in any state that the Regional Administrator has determined no longer has commercial quota available. Therefore, vessels holding Federal commercial permits are prohibited from landing summer flounder, effective 0001 hours, September 17, 2015 and/or bluefish, effective 0001 hours, September 19, 2015 for the remainder of the 2015 calendar year, unless additional quota becomes available through a transfer and is announced in the **Federal Register**. Federally permitted dealers are also notified that they may not purchase summer flounder, effective 0001 hours, September 17, 2015 and/or bluefish, effective 0001 hours, September 19, 2015 from federally permitted vessels that land in Massachusetts for the remainder of the calendar year, or until additional quota becomes available through a transfer from another state.