



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

[Docket No. 121004515-3608-02]

RTID 0648-XD246

**Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2023 Commercial Closure for South Atlantic Red Snapper**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS implements an accountability measure for red snapper in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic. NMFS projects that commercial landings of red snapper have reached the commercial annual catch limit (ACL) for the 2023 fishing year. Therefore, NMFS is closing the commercial sector for red snapper in the South Atlantic EEZ. This closure is necessary to protect the red snapper resource.

**DATES:** This temporary rule is effective from 12:01 a.m., eastern time, on August 18, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: [mary.vara@noaa.gov](mailto:mary.vara@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes red snapper 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 commercial ACL for red snapper in the South Atlantic is 124,815 lb (56,615 kg), round weight, as specified in 50 CFR 622.193(y) (1).

Under 50 CFR 622.193(y) (1), NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for red snapper when the 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 has determined that the commercial ACL for South Atlantic red snapper will be reached by August 18, 2023. Accordingly, the commercial sector for South Atlantic red snapper is closed effective at 12:01 a.m., eastern time, on August 18, 2023. For the 2024 fishing year, unless otherwise specified, the commercial season will begin on the second Monday in July (50 CFR 622.183(b) (5) (i)).

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having red snapper on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such red snapper prior to 12:01 a.m., eastern time, on

August 18, 2023. Because the recreational sector closed on July 16, 2023 (88 FR 33838, May 25, 2023), after the commercial closure that is effective on August 18, 2023, all harvest and possession of red snapper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ is prohibited for the remainder of the 2023 fishing year.

On and after the effective date of the closure notification, all sale or purchase of red snapper is prohibited. This prohibition on the harvest, possession, sale or purchase applies in the South Atlantic on a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, regardless if such species were harvested or possessed in state or Federal waters (50 CFR 622.193(y) (1) and 622.181(c) (2)).

#### **Classification**

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 622.193(y) (1), which was issued pursuant to section 304(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b) (B), the NMFS Assistant Administrator (AA) finds good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because

the rule that established the commercial season, ACL, and accountability measure for red snapper has already 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 red snapper because the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and could potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL.

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: August 10, 2023.

Jennifer M. Wallace,  
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,  
National Marine Fisheries Service.