



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

**[Docket No. 140818679-5356-02; RTID 0648-XF640]**

**Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of America; 2026 Red Snapper  
Recreational For-Hire Fishing Season in the Gulf of America**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces the 2026 recreational fishing  
season for the Federal charter vessel/headboat (for-hire)  
component for red snapper in the exclusive economic zone  
(EEZ) of the Gulf of America (Gulf) through this temporary  
rule. The red snapper recreational for-hire component in  
the Gulf EEZ opens on June 1, 2026, and will close at 12:01  
a.m., local time, on October 26, 2026. This closure is  
necessary to prevent the Federal for-hire component from  
exceeding its quota and to prevent overfishing of the Gulf  
red snapper resource.

**DATES:** The closure is effective at 12:01 a.m., local time,  
on October 26, 2026, until 12:01 a.m., local time, on  
January 1, 2027.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Daniel Luers, NMFS  
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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Gulf reef fish fishery, which includes red snapper, is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf (FMP). The Gulf Council prepared the FMP, which was approved by the Secretary of Commerce, and is implemented by NMFS through regulations at 50 CFR part 622 under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

Through this temporary rule, NMFS announces the recreational fishing season for the red snapper recreational sector for-hire component in the Gulf for the 2026 fishing year. The final rule implementing Amendment 40 to the FMP established two components within the recreational sector fishing for Gulf red snapper: the private angling component and the Federal for-hire component (80 FR 22422, April 22, 2015). Amendment 40 also allocated the red snapper recreational annual catch limit (recreational quota) between the components and established separate seasonal closures for the two components. The Federal for-hire component's red snapper annual catch target (ACT) is 9 percent below the for-hire component quota (87 FR 74014, December 2, 2022; 50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(iii)(B)).

The red snapper for-hire component seasonal closure is projected based on an evaluation of when landings are expected to reach the component's ACT. Projecting the for-

hire component's seasonal closure using the ACT reduces the likelihood of the harvest exceeding the component quota and the total recreational quota. The Federal for-hire component ACT for red snapper in the Gulf EEZ is 3,076,322 pounds (1,395,396 kilograms), round weight (50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(iii)(B)).

NMFS has determined that the 2026 Federal Gulf red snapper for-hire fishing season will be 147 days. This is 19 days longer than the 2025 season (90 FR 20127, May 12, 2025; 90 FR 55513, December 12, 2025).

NMFS considered season length projections based on average catch rates for 2021-2023, 2021-2025, and 2023-2025, and using only 2025 preliminary landings. This resulted in a range of season lengths from 97 to 214 days. NMFS decided to set the season at 147 days based on catch rates from the 2023-2025 fishing seasons, which takes into account the variability during the most recent 3-year time period. Therefore, the 2026 recreational season for the Federal for-hire component will begin at 12:01 a.m., local time, on June 1, 2026, and close at 12:01 a.m., local time, on October 26, 2026.

On and after the effective date of the Federal for-hire component closure, the bag and possession limits for red snapper for Federal for-hire vessels are zero. When the Federal for-hire component is closed, these bag and possession limits apply in the Gulf on board a vessel for

which a valid Federal for-hire permit for Gulf reef fish has been issued, without regard to where such species were harvested, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters. In addition, a person aboard a vessel that has been issued a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish any time during the fishing year may not harvest or possess red snapper in or from the Gulf EEZ when the Federal charter vessel/headboat component is closed.

NMFS will monitor landings of the Federal for-hire component for red snapper during the 2026 fishing season. If landings of the for-hire component from the season are less than that of the component ACT, then NMFS may reopen the fishing season to allow harvest of the remaining component ACT (50 CFR 622.8(c)).

### **Classification**

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.41(q)(2)(i) and (ii), 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), there is good cause to waive prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on this action, as notice and comment is unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rules implementing the red snapper for-hire quota and ACT, and the requirement to close the

for-hire component when its ACT is projected to be reached have 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 many for-hire operations book trips for clients in advance and require as much notice as NMFS is able to provide to adjust their business plans to account for the fishing season.

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

Dated: March 31, 2026.

**David R. Blankinship,**

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