



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

[Docket No. 230914-0219; RTID 0648-XF686]

**Fisheries of the South Atlantic; 2026 Recreational  
Accountability Measure and Closure for Gag in the South  
Atlantic**

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; closure.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS implements an accountability measure (AM) and closure for the recreational harvest of gag in South Atlantic Federal waters. As a result of gag recreational landings exceeding the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) in 2025, NMFS reduces the length of the gag 2026 recreational season to prevent landings from exceeding the recreational ACL in 2026. Accordingly, NMFS announces the gag 2026 recreational season in South Atlantic Federal waters will close on August 2, 2026.

**DATES:** This temporary rule is effective from 12:01 a.m. on August 2, 2026, until 12:01 a.m., local time, on January 1, 2027.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nik Mehta, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, 727-824-5305, [nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov](mailto:nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov).

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

the South Atlantic includes gag 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, approved by the Secretary of Commerce, and 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). All weights in this temporary rule are in gutted weight.

For gag, the recreational ACL was 176,665 pounds (lb) (80,134 kilograms (kg)) in 2025, and is 220,030 lb (99,804 kg) in 2026 (50 CFR 622.193(c)(2)(i)). The gag recreational AM states that if recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, then during the following fishing year, NMFS will reduce the length of the recreational fishing season to prevent recreational landings from exceeding the recreational ACL (50 CFR 622.193(c)(2)(ii)). In 2025, preliminary landings information shows that gag recreational landings were 187,751 lb (85,162 kg), exceeding the 2025 recreational ACL by 11,086 lb (5,029 kg). Therefore, consistent with the recreational AM, NMFS is reducing the length of the 2026 recreational season by the amount necessary to prevent the 2026 recreational ACL from being exceeded.

The fishing year for gag is from January 1 through December 31, annually (50 CFR 622.7). However, the

recreational sector for gag is closed annually from January 1 through April 30 (50 CFR 622.183(b)(1)). Data from the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center have informed NMFS' 2026 season length projection that recreational landings will reach the recreational ACL by August 2, 2026.

Therefore, NMFS announces that the gag recreational sector in South Atlantic Federal waters will close at 12:01 a.m., local time, August 2, 2026, until 12:01 a.m., local time, on January 1, 2027. During the recreational closure, the bag and possession limits for gag in or from South Atlantic Federal waters are zero. The next recreational fishing season for gag begins on May 1, 2027.

#### **Classification**

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 622.193(c)(2)(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. Such procedure is unnecessary because the rule that established the recreational AM for gag has already been subject to public notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the end date of the recreational season. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment on

this action is contrary to the public interest because of the need to protect the South Atlantic gag resource. Additionally, since the recreational fishing season begins on May 1, 2026, announcing the length of the season prior to that date allows recreational sector participants and businesses to better plan their activities to harvest gag.

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

Dated: April 17, 2026.

**Kelly Denit,**

*Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,*

*National Marine Fisheries Service.*