



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 622**

[Docket No. 231127-0277; RTID 0648-XF681]

**Fisheries of the South Atlantic; 2026 Recreational  
Accountability Measure and Closure for Snowy Grouper 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 snowy grouper in South Atlantic Federal waters. NMFS reduces the length of the snowy grouper 2026 recreational fishing season to prevent landings from exceeding the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) in 2026 as they did in 2025. Accordingly, NMFS announces the adjusted closure date for the snowy grouper 2026 recreational fishing season in South Atlantic Federal waters to protect the snowy grouper resource.

**DATES:** The closure is effective at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 7, 2026, until 12:01 a.m., local time, on January 1, 2027.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Karla Gore, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, 727-824-5305, [karla.gore@noaa.gov](mailto:karla.gore@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 NMFS, 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).

For snowy grouper, the recreational ACL is 1,713 fish (50 CFR 622.193(b)(2)(i)). The snowy grouper 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(b)(2)(ii)). Preliminary 2025 landings information shows that snowy grouper recreational landings were 1,957 fish, exceeding the recreational ACL by 244 fish. Therefore, consistent with the recreational AM, NMFS is reducing the length of the 2026 recreational fishing season to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded.

The fishing year for snowy grouper is from January 1 through December 31, annually (50 CFR 622.7). However, the recreational sector for snowy grouper is closed annually from January 1 through April 30, and from July 1 through December 31 (50 CFR 622.183(b)(8)). Data from the NMFS

Southeast Fisheries Science Center have informed NMFS' 2026 season length projection that recreational landings will reach the recreational ACL by June 7, 2026. Therefore, NMFS announces that the snowy grouper recreational sector in South Atlantic Federal waters will close at 12:01 a.m., local time, June 7, 2026, until 12:01 a.m., local time, on January 1, 2027. During the recreational closure, the bag and possession limits for snowy grouper in or from South Atlantic Federal waters are zero. The next recreational fishing season for snowy grouper 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 are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule that established the recreational AM for snowy grouper 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 snowy grouper resource. Additionally, announcing the closure date as soon as possible allows recreational sector participants and businesses to better plan their activities to harvest snowy grouper.

For the reasons just stated, there is good cause under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) (3) to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of this action.

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

Dated: May 29, 2026.

**David R. Blankinship,**

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