



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 1710319998630-02; RTID 0648-XG084]

Fisheries of the South Atlantic; 2026 South Atlantic Red Snapper Recreational Fishing Season

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; recreational fishing season.

SUMMARY: For the 2026 fishing year, NMFS announces the red snapper recreational fishing season dates in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Announcing the opening and closing dates of the red snapper recreational season is an accountability measure (AM) for the recreational sector and allows fishers the opportunity to harvest the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) while also managing harvest to protect the red snapper resource.

DATES: The South Atlantic red snapper 2026 recreational fishing season opens at 12:01 a.m., local time, October 9, 2026, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on October 12, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nikhil Mehta, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, 727-824-5305, nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The South Atlantic snapper-

grouper fishery 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 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).

The South Atlantic red snapper recreational ACL is 22,797 fish and the length of the recreational fishing season serves as the recreational AM. During the red snapper recreational open fishing season the recreational bag limit is one red snapper per person, per day, and there is no red snapper minimum or maximum recreational size limit.

Consistent with the regulations in 50 CFR 622.183(b) (5), for the 2026 fishing year, the red snapper recreational season opens at 12:01 a.m., local time, on October 9, 2026, and closes at 12:01 a.m., local time, on October 12, 2026. During the recreational open fishing season, the recreational bag limit is one red snapper per person, per day. After the closure of the recreational sector in the South Atlantic EEZ, the recreational bag and possession limits for red snapper are zero.

NMFS notes that the red snapper commercial sector in the South Atlantic EEZ closed on August 24, 2026, and

remains closed through December 31, 2026 (91 FR 54246, August 21, 2026).

On August 10, NMFS announced in the **Federal Register** the receipt of three applications for exempted fishing permits (EFP) from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (91 FR 51467, August 10, 2026). NMFS issued these EFPs in September 2026 and they allow participants to fish for red snapper, under the specified terms and conditions, from October 9, 2026, through October 22, 2026. The EFPs exempt the participating fishermen from specific Federal regulations applicable to the recreational harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic off their respective states. These EFPs will allow each applicant to test a state-led data collection and management strategy for red snapper during an extended recreational fishing season in Federal waters off their respective state. Participants in any of these EFP projects must land or possess recreationally harvested red snapper under their state's respective EFP, and cannot participate in the recreational season announced in this temporary rule. For more information about the issued EFPs, see <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/recreational-fishing-data/south-atlantic-red-snapper-state-data-collection-and-management>.

North Carolina did not apply for an EFP for the 2026 fishing season. Therefore, NMFS projected the Federal red snapper recreational season length based on North Carolina landings and catch rates from previous years. NMFS expects the resulting 3-day Federal recreational season to provide recreational fishing opportunities in 2026 while constraining overall recreational harvest of red snapper to the recreational ACL.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 622.183(b)(5)(i) and 622.193(y), which were 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 would be unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule establishing the requirement to announce the red snapper recreational fishing season dates and the red snapper recreational ACL and AM has already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the recreational fishing season dates. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because announcing the opening and closing dates of the recreational season as soon as practicable allows

recreational sector participants and businesses to better plan their activities to harvest red snapper.

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

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

Dated: September 21, 2026.

Shannon Bettridge,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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