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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 200124-0029; RTID 0648-XG205]

Reef Fish Fishery in the Gulf of America; 2026 Recreational Private Angling Component Closure for Red Snapper in Federal Waters off Texas

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

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS closes the 2026 recreational fishing season for the red snapper private angling component in Federal waters of the Gulf of America (Gulf) off Texas. The recreational private angling component in Federal waters off Texas is closed on November 21, 2026, and this closure continues through the remainder of 2026. This red snapper closure is necessary to prevent the private angling component from exceeding the annual catch limit (ACL) in the Texas regional management area and to prevent overfishing of red snapper.

DATES: This closure is effective and begins on November 21, 2026, and continues through December 31, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Frank Helies, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: *frank.helies@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Gulf reef fish fishery includes red snapper and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf (FMP). NMFS and the Gulf Fishery Management Council prepared the FMP, which was approved by the Secretary of Commerce, and NMFS implements the FMP under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

(Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The final rule implementing Amendment 40 to the FMP established two components within the recreational fishing sector 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 ACL (recreational quota) between the components and established separate seasonal closures for the two components. On February 6, 2020, NMFS published a final rule implementing six FMP amendments (Amendments 50A through F to the FMP), which delegated authority to Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida to establish specific management measures for the recreational harvest of red snapper in Federal waters by the private angling component (85 FR 6819, February 6, 2020). The final rule allocated state a portion of the private angling component quota of red snapper to each state, and each state is required to constrain red snapper landings to its allocation.

As described at 50 CFR 622.23(c), a state with an active delegation may request that NMFS close Federal waters off that state to the harvest or possession of red snapper by private recreational anglers. Under Amendment 50A, the state is required to request the closure by letter to NMFS and to provide dates and geographic coordinates for the closure. If the request is within the scope of the analysis in Amendment 50A, NMFS will publish a notification in the **Federal Register** to implement the closure. Based on the analysis in Amendment 50A, Texas may request a closure of all Federal waters off the state to allow a year-round fishing season in state waters. As described at 50 CFR 622.2, "off Texas" means Federal waters west of a rhumb line from 29°32.1' N latitude, 93°47.7' W longitude to 26°11.4' N latitude, 92°53' W longitude, which line is an extension of the boundary between Louisiana and Texas.

On November 10, 2026, NMFS received a letter from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) requesting that NMFS close Federal waters off Texas to

red snapper harvest by the private angling component beginning on November 21, 2026. NMFS has determined that the TPWD request is within the scope of analysis contained within Amendment 50A, which analyzed the potential impacts of a closure of all Federal waters off Texas when a portion of the Texas private angling component ACL has been harvested. As explained in Amendment 50A, Texas intends to maintain a year-round fishing season for red snapper in state waters, during which private recreational fishermen could harvest the remaining portion of the state private angling component ACL.

The closure for the red snapper recreational private angling component in Federal waters off Texas begins on November 21 and will remain closed through the rest of 2026. This closure applies to all private anglers on vessels that have not been issued a valid charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish, regardless of which state they are from or where they intend to land.

During the closure implemented by this temporary rule, the harvest and possession of red snapper in Federal waters off Texas by the private angling component is prohibited, and the red snapper bag and possession limits for the private angling component in the closed area are zero.

Classification

NMFS issues this action pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. This action is required by 50 CFR 622.23(c), 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 final rule implementing the area closure authority and the state private angling component ACL 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 a failure to implement the closure immediately would be inconsistent with Texas' state management plan and may result in less access to red snapper in state waters.

For the reasons just stated, there is also 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: November 17, 2026.

Shannon Bettridge,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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