



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Service Announces New Regulations for the South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper Fishery

NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule implementing Amendment 16 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region. The final rule was published in the *Federal Register* on June 29, 2009, (74 FR 30964) and becomes effective on July 29, 2009.

The final rule:

- Establishes a January-April prohibition on recreational and commercial harvest of shallow water grouper species including gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper.
- Establishes a November-March prohibition on recreational harvest of vermilion snapper.
- Modifies the vermilion snapper commercial quota and establishes a gag commercial quota.
- Establishes reductions in recreational bag limits for vermilion snapper, gag, black grouper, and the grouper aggregate.
- Implements a requirement for the commercial and recreational sectors to use dehooking tools when necessary.

For a person on board a vessel for which a federal commercial or for-hire (charter vessel/headboat) permit for the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery has been issued, the provisions of the closures for gag and vermilion snapper will apply regardless of whether the fish are harvested in state or federal waters. Captain and crew on for-hire vessels would be prohibited from retaining vermilion snapper or any species in the grouper aggregate.

Summary table of new snapper-grouper regulations for the South Atlantic.

Measures	New Regulations
Recreational	
Grouper aggregate* bag limit	3 fish
Gag/black grouper bag limit within aggregate	1 gag or black grouper (combined)
Vermilion snapper bag limit	5 fish
Shallow water grouper** closed season	January-April
Vermilion snapper closed season	November-March
Commercial	
Shallow water grouper** closed season	January-April (all shallow-water groupers*)
Gag quota	352,940 lbs gutted weight
Vermilion snapper quota	315,523 lbs gutted weight (January-June); 302,523 lbs gutted weight (July-December)
* Grouper aggregate includes: Misty grouper, red grouper, scamp, tiger grouper, yellowedge grouper, yellowfin grouper, blueline tilefish, sand tilefish, coney, graysby, red hind, and rock hind. Snowy grouper and golden tilefish are also in the grouper aggregate with a maximum of 1 fish per person, for each species.	
** Shallow water grouper include: Gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper.	