



FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management

HOT SHEET – MAY 2009

(Valid through May 31, 2009)

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Issues covered in this posting:

[Grouper](#), [Emergency Rule](#), [Snapper](#), [Season Updates](#), [Blue Crab](#), [Vandenberg](#), [Boca Grande Pass](#), [Marine Life](#),

Issue: GROUPER

→ Gulf of Mexico

Action: Commercial and Recreational Regulation Changes in the Gulf of Mexico

Information: New federal recreational regulations take effect May 18 in federal Gulf of Mexico waters for shallow-water groupers. These new regulation changes are outlined below.

- Grouper aggregate bag limit reduced to 4 grouper per person per day
- Gag grouper bag limit reduced to 2 fish per day per person within the 4 grouper aggregate bag limit
- Red grouper bag limit increased to 2 fish per person per day within the 4 grouper aggregate bag limit
- The recreational harvest season is closed for all shallow water grouper from Feb. 1 through March 31. Shallow water groupers include gag, red, black, yellowfin, yellowmouth, rock hind, red hind and scamp groupers.

Information: New federal commercial regulations take effect May 18 in federal Gulf of Mexico waters. These new regulation changes are outlined below.

- Red grouper minimum size limit reduced to 18" total length
- Red grouper quota increased to 5.75 million pounds (gutted weight)
- Eliminates the Feb. 15 through March 15 commercial harvest season closure for gag, red, and black groupers

Timeline: Other changes to Gulf grouper regulations are expected later in 2009.

Links for more information:

[Southeast Fishery Bulletin](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/index.html) [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/index.html]
[Grouper Fishery Information](http://www.myfwc.com) [www.myfwc.com]
[FWC News Release – Grouper Regulations](http://www.myfwc.com) [www.myfwc.com]
[DMFM Background Report - Gulf Grouper FPH](http://www.myfwc.com/commission) [www.myfwc.com/commission]
[South Atlantic Council News Release](http://www.safmc.net) [www.safmc.net]

→ South Atlantic

Action: Proposed Federal Regulation Changes in the South Atlantic

Information: The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council has proposed new regulations for all shallow-water grouper species which would reduce harvest by all fishers. These regulations are expected to take effect sometime in 2009, pending final implementation by NOAA Fisheries Service. These proposed changes include:

- January through April closed to all harvest of these species

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- The grouper aggregate bag limit reduced to 3 shallow-water groupers
- Reduced bag limit to one Gag or one Black Grouper (combined) within the three grouper aggregate bag limit

Timeline: Federal changes to Atlantic grouper regulations are anticipated for sometime in 2009. The FWC may address potential changes in state waters after the federal rules are implemented.

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Issue: EMERGENCY RULE

Action: Bottom longline gear restriction in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery

Information: The National Marine Fisheries Service has implemented an emergency rule, effective May 18 through Oct. 28, which prohibits bottom longlining for reef fish in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico shoreward of the 50-fathom depth contour east of 85°30'W (near Cape San Blas). Once the deepwater grouper and tilefish quotas are met, bottom longlining will be prohibited in all federal waters east of 85°30'W.

Links for more information:

[National Marine Fisheries Service-Final Rule](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/index.html) [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/index.html]

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Issue: RED SNAPPER and VERMILION SNAPPER

→ Gulf of Mexico

Action: Proposed Season Change in the Gulf of Mexico

Information: At the April 2009 meeting, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission proposed to change the recreational harvest season for red snapper in Gulf of Mexico state waters from June 1 through September 30 to June 1 through August 14. This would make the red snapper season in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico consistent with the June 1 - Aug. 14 season in federal waters. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) shortened the 2009 federal season because the recreational fishery went over its allowable quota by 1.2 million pounds last year. This overage needs to be accounted for in the current season by a reduction in the length of the season.

The FWC has proposed consistency with the National Marine Fisheries Service regulation changes in order to help the fishery in its rebuilding plan. A final public hearing regarding these proposed changes will occur at the June 2009 Commission meeting.

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release - Red Snapper Season](http://www.myfwc.com) [www.myfwc.com]

[National Marine Fisheries Service - News Release](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/) [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/]

→ South Atlantic

Action: Pending Regulation Changes in the South Atlantic

Information: Potential regulation changes for Red and Vermilion Snapper in federal waters of the South Atlantic were discussed at the March 2009 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting. The South Atlantic Council proposed new regulations for Vermilion Snapper that are expected to take effect sometime in 2009 pending final implementation. These changes would establish:

- A bag limit of five vermillion snapper

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- A closed season from November through March

At their March 2009 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council also recommended an interim rule that would close all harvest of red snapper in south Atlantic federal waters (beyond 3 miles from shore). If this interim rule is approved by NOAA Fisheries Service (probably in June or July), it would be in effect for 180 days, and it could be extended for another 186 days.

Timeline: Vermilion Snapper regulation changes effective in 2009

Links for more information:

[South Atlantic Council March 2009 Meeting Information](#) [www.safmc.net]

[South Atlantic Council News Release](#) [www.safmc.net]

[Snapper Fishery Information](#) [www.myfwc.com]

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Issue: SEASON UPDATES

Action: Upcoming season openings and closures

Information: The following species have upcoming season openings/closures:

- Stone Crab: The recreational and commercial harvest seasons for stone crabs closes May 16 in all state and federal waters off Florida
- Snook: The recreational harvest season of Snook closes May 1 in all of Florida's Gulf of Mexico, Everglades National Park and Monroe County coastal and inland waters. This season will remain closed until September 1, 2009.
- Gag and Black Grouper: The commercial harvest season for Atlantic gag and black groupers reopens May 1 in state and federal waters.

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release – Snook Season](#) [www.myfwc.com]

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Issue: BLUE CRAB

Action: Approved Staggered Closed Seasons to Remove Abandoned Traps

Information: New rules take effect on July 1, 2009 that will establish closed periods of up to 10 days in six regions in the state to identify and retrieve lost and abandoned blue crab traps from Florida waters.

Link to map of closed areas and dates:

[Blue Crab Trap Closure Map](http://www.myfwc.com) [http://www.myfwc.com]

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release – Blue Crab Trap Closed Seasons](#) [www.myfwc.com]

[FWC Background Report - BC Trap Closed Seasons](#) [www.myfwc.com/commission]

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Issue: *Vandenberg* ARTIFICIAL REEF

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Action: Sink date nears

Information: The sinking of the ex-military ship, the *Vandenberg*, is currently scheduled for a sink date between May 21 and June 1, depending on weather conditions. The ship will be sunk 6 miles south-southeast of Key West in 140' of water.

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release – Vandenberg Reef Project](#) [www.myfwc.com]

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Issue: BOCA GRANDE PASS TARPON FISHING RULES

Action: Gear Rules Take Effect

Information: Boca Grande Pass gear rules that took effect April 1st remain in effect through June 30th, and are as follows:

- A maximum of three fishing lines may be deployed from a vessel at any one time while fishing for all species.
- No person shall use, fish with, or place in the water any breakaway gear.

Breakaway gear is defined as any bob, float, weight, lure, or spoon that is affixed to a fishing line or hook with wire, line, rubber bands, plastic ties, or other fasteners designed to break off when a fish is caught.

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release – Boca Grande Pass Rules](#) [www.myfwc.com]

[Brochure with Location Information](#) [www.myfwc.com]

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Issue: MARINE LIFE (Aquarium Trade)

Action: Approved Rules

Information: New rules for the marine life (aquarium species) fishery take effect on July 1, 2009, including changes to the size and bag limits of several species. Several species have been added to the marine life rule, which means that commercial harvesters of these species will need a marine life endorsement to collect them. These species will also be included in the marine life recreational bag limit. For specific details on the rule changes, review the two links below.

Links for more information:

[FWC News Release - Marine Life](#) [www.myfwc.com]

[68B-42, F.A.C. – Marine Life Rule](#) [www.flrules.org]

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