

**STATE OF FLORIDA
FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Order No. EO 16-16

Lionfish Removal Panhandle Pilot Program

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission of the State of Florida (FWC), acting under the authority of Article IV, Section 9, of the Florida Constitution, and acting through its Executive Director under Delegations of Authority Paragraph 17 and Paragraph 22, hereby authorizes individuals who harvest 100 lionfish from waters off of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin counties, and verify their harvest at an FWC-approved checkpoint between May 14, 2016 and May 19, 2017, to harvest a single red grouper or cobia over the bag limit from state waters when using an FWC-issued tag as provided below. A list of FWC-approved checkpoints can be located on the Commission's website at the following link: <http://www.myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/lionfish/challenge/>. This opportunity is hereby created as a means to further encourage public involvement in lionfish removal and to reward successful lionfish harvesters in the described region. The authorized recreational harvest of red grouper and cobia is as follows:

1. FWC shall issue a single red grouper or cobia tag for each 100 lionfish that a harvester removes from state or federal waters off Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, or Franklin counties between May 14, 2016 and May 19, 2017. The lionfish landings shall be verified through an FWC-approved checkpoint prior to tag issuance. FWC shall issue such red grouper and cobia tags until such time that the supply is exhausted or until May 19, 2017, whichever occurs first. A total of 100 red grouper and 30 cobia tags shall be available for issue to successful harvesters during this time period.
2. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in chapter 68B-14, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), or chapter 68B-19, FAC, a harvester is allowed to harvest a single red grouper or cobia in addition to that allowed by the recreational bag limit for each relevant FWC-issued tag in their possession. All other persons are subject to the recreational bag and possession limits as specified in rules 68B-14.0036, FAC, and 68B-19.004, FAC.
 - a. Qualifying lionfish must be harvested and verified through FWC-approved methods prior to FWC issuing a tag.
 - b. Each FWC-issued tag may be used only once and only to harvest the species for which the tag was issued.
 - c. An FWC-issued tag must be permanently affixed through the mouth of any red grouper or cobia harvested over the recreational bag limit, in accordance with the provisions of this Executive Order.
 - d. Tags issued in accordance with this Executive Order shall be valid for harvest of red grouper or cobia from Florida's state waters between the date of execution of this Executive Order and May 19, 2017.

- e. Red grouper with a legally affixed tag shall not count toward the harvester's grouper aggregate bag limit.
 - f. Cobia with a legally affixed tag shall not count toward the general vessel limit.
3. This order does not allow for spearing in areas where spearing is prohibited.
 4. All other rules of the Commission relating to harvest of red grouper (chapter 68B-14, FAC), cobia (chapter 68B-19, FAC), and lionfish (rule 68B-5.006, FAC) shall remain in effect.
 5. This order shall take effect upon execution and expire at 12:01 A.M. on May 20, 2017.

Specific Authority:
Law Implemented:

Article IV, Section 9, Florida Constitution
Article IV, Section 9, Florida Constitution and
120.81(5), Florida Statutes

Given under my hand and seal of the Florida Fish and
Wildlife Conservation Commission on this 20th day of
May, 2016.





Nick Wiley
Executive Director

Attest: 
Agency Clerk