

SEA GRANT

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January 10, 2006

By

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Commercial and recreational fishermen will have a chance to comment or suggest other ideas on proposed changes to the management of red snapper and shrimp in federal waters. Changes are needed because a recent stock assessment shows that red snapper continues to be overfished and is undergoing overfishing as defined by NOAA Fisheries. According to federal regulations, when fisheries are classified as overfished, they must be rebuilt in a timely manner and overfishing must be eliminated.

The Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council will hold scoping meetings at 7:00 p.m. Monday, January 23rd at the Holiday Inn Mobile I-10 Bellengrath Garden, 5465 Hwy 90 West (251-666-5600), and 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 25th at the Hilton Garden Inn Orange Beach, 23092 Perdido Beach Boulevard, Orange Beach (251-974-1600).

Under Amendment 27 to the reef fish management plan and Amendment 14 to the shrimp plan, some of the proposals to be discussed include:

- Reduce the total allowable catch of red snapper to between two million pounds and seven million pounds (currently set at 9.12 million pounds).
- Change the minimum size for red snapper.
- Change the recreational fishing season.
- Change the bag limit for recreational fishermen.
- Change the bycatch reduction requirements for red snapper caught in shrimp trawls.
- Set limits in the amount of trawling gear that can be used in federal waters.
- Increase areas closed to shrimping

Under Amendment 28 to the reef fish management plan and Amendment 15 to the shrimp management plan some of the proposals to be discussed include:

- Establish restrictions on the gear used to harvest red snapper.
- Restrict commercial red snapper fisheries by depth.
- Reduce bycatch in the directed commercial and recreational red snapper fisheries.
- Further reduce bycatch in the shrimp fishery.
- Establish a bycatch quota in the shrimp fishery.
- Monitor bycatch.
- Eliminate latent (inactive) shrimp permits.
- Reduce effort in the shrimp fishery.
- Require vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on board shrimp vessels

For more information prior to the meeting, you can call the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at 813-348-1630. Written comments will also be accepted and should be received on or before March 6, 2006. The address is Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Tampa, Florida, 33607.