Red Snapper Management Comments Sought

NOAA Fisheries Service is requesting comments from the public regarding the proposed temporary rule to address overfishing of Gulf of Mexico red snapper during 2007. The proposed temporary rule will be published in the Federal Register on December 14, 2006. The proposed rule would:

- Reduce the red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) quota to 6.5 million pounds (mp), resulting in a commercial quota of 3.315 mp and a recreational quota of 3.185 mp.
- Reduce the red snapper recreational bag limit from four fish to two fish per person per day.
- Prohibit the captain and crew of for-hire vessels from retaining the recreational bag limit.
- Reduce the commercial minimum size limit from 15 inches to 13 inches total length.
- Establish a target red snapper bycatch mortality reduction goal for the shrimp fishery that equates to 50 percent of the bycatch mortality that occurred during 2001-2003 and a level of shrimp effort equal to that observed in the fishery in 2005.

The public comment period on the proposed temporary rule will extend through the last day of the January 2007 Council meeting to allow the Council to review the issue in light of that input and the provisions of the proposed rule.

Written comments on the proposed rule must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time on January 26, 2007. Comments regarding the proposed temporary rule should be sent to Mr. Peter Hood at NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701. Comments may also be submitted via fax to 727-824-5308 or by e-mail to: 0648-AT87.Proposed@noaa.gov. For e-mail comments, include in the subject line the following identifier: 0648-AT87.

More information on this proposed temporary rule and answers to frequently asked questions on red snapper can be found on the Southeast Regional Office’s Web page at http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov.

Electronic copies of the proposed temporary rule may be obtained from the Federal Register website at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html.

Gulf Council to Meet in Alabama

The next meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council will be held January 22 – 26, 2007 at the Grand Marriott Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama. Information on the meeting can be found at the Council’s website (www.gulfcouncil.org) or by calling 813-348-1630 or 888-833-1844.

Federal Shrimp Permits

If you have a federal shrimp permit that expires before the new moratorium permits are required on March 26, 2007, you will need to renew your existing permit in order to shrimp in federal waters until you receive the moratorium permit. In other words, you will need to do two applications. One is to renew your current permit and one is for the moratorium permit. If you have questions be sure to call the NOAA/NMFS/SERO Permits Office at 727-824-5326.

Implementation of Vessel Monitoring Systems in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery Delayed

NOAA Fisheries Service announced a 90-day delay until March 7, 2007, in the effective date for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirements.

The delay is necessary to (1) Allow fishermen and approved vendors time to purchase, install, and activate approved units; (2) allow red snapper individual fishing quota (IFQ) participants time to receive information about their initial share and allocation under the Gulf red snapper IFQ program, and thus evaluate their overall profitability versus overall costs of VMS; and (3) allow fishermen more time to make a reasonable business decision on renewing and/or transferring their permits.

For questions about VMS units, contact the VMS Support Center (phone: 888-219-9228) or the Southeast Region OLE, 263 13th Avenue South, Suite 109, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701 (phone: 800-758-4833).

Shrimp Imports Continue to Rise

The following is quoted from Seafood.comNews:

“US shrimp imports in October set a record for the highest amount ever imported in a single month—over 140 million pounds, or nearly half a pound per person in the U.S. The increased volume is being driven by white shrimp, shell on and raw peeled and cooked. As is by now completely obvious, the anti-dumping tariffs, although a vehicle that will pay the domestic industry hundreds of millions of dollars, have not changed the dynamics of the market where the huge U.S. demand for shrimp is coming from overseas.
producers. The volume this October topped even the months prior to the tariff, when importers rushed to bring in product.”