

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

NMFS Permits and Regulations Branch 727-570-5326
(see below for tuna permit applications)

NMFS nationwide federal
fishing violations hotline 800-853-1964

NMFS 24-hour tuna information line 888-USA-TUNA
(also for tuna permit applications)

NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division 301-713-2347

South Atlantic Fishery Mgmt. Council 843-571-4366

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Comm. 228-875-5912

U.S. Coast Guard, 7th District
(Florida east of St. Marks) 305-536-5654

U.S. Coast Guard, 8th District
(St. Marks, Florida to Texas) 504-589-6237

NMFS Enforcement Field Offices
Niceville, FL 850-729-8628
Carriere, MS 601-798-9535
Austin, TX 512-916-5401
Galveston, TX 409-766-3701
Harlingen, TX 956-423-3450
Marathon, FL 305-743-2093

State Agencies:

Alabama Dept. of Conservation and Marine Resources
information or to report state fishing 334-861-2882
violations 334-968-7576

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
information 850-488-9924
to report state fishing violations 800-DIALFMP
800-342-5367
cellular phone - *FMP

Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries
information 225-765-2925
to report state fishing violations 800-442-2511

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
information 228-374-5000
to report state fishing violations 800-237-6278

Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.
information 800-792-1112
to report state fishing violations 512-389-4848
or 713-649-0708
or 800-792-GAME

This is a publication of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council pursuant to National
Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA97FC0010.

COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS

January 2000



Vermilion snapper (*Rhomboplites aurorubens*)

**Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council
The Commons at Rivergate
3018 U.S. Hwy. 301 N., Suite 1000
Tampa, Florida 33619-2266**

**813-228-2815
888-833-1844 (TOLL-FREE)
813-225-7015 (FAX)**

**e-mail: gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org
web page: www.gulfcouncil.org**



This leaflet was prepared for general informational purposes in January 2000 and has no legal force or effect. Fishing regulations are subject to change. A separate summary of recreational fishing regulations is available from the Council.

Report federal fishing violations:
24 hour toll-free hotline: 1-800-853-1964

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- o Reef fish taken under the recreational bag limit may not be sold.
- o The use of longlines and buoy gear for reef fish is prohibited inside of lines approximating 50 fathoms west and 20 fathoms east of Cape San Blas, Florida. Vessels fishing within this zone and possessing longlines or buoy gear may not exceed the recreational bag limits and for reef fish without bag limits, 5 percent by weight of all fish aboard.
- o Stressed areas for reef fish begin at the shoreward boundary of federal waters and generally follow the 10 fathom contour from the Dry Tortugas to Sanibel Island; the 20 fathom contour to Tarpon Springs; the 10 fathom contour to Cape San Blas; the 25 fathom contour to south of Mobile Bay; the 13 fathom contour to Ship Island, Mississippi; the 10 fathom contour off Louisiana; and the 30 fathom contour off Texas. In designated "stressed areas" use of fish traps, roller trawls, and power heads is prohibited.
- o Reef fish gear is limited to no more than 3 hooks in a special management zone off Alabama. Nonconforming gear is restricted to bag limit or for reef fish without a bag limit to 5 percent by weight of all fish aboard.
- o Entangling nets may not be used for directed harvest of reef fish.
- o Vessels with shrimp trawls or entangling net gear aboard may not exceed the recreational reef fish bag limits.
- o Vessels fishing traps other than fish traps, stone crab traps, or spiny lobster traps may not exceed the recreational reef fish bag limits.
- o A reef fish trap endorsement is required for using traps, and vessels are limited to 100 traps. Traps must be returned to shore at the end of each trip and must have degradable panels, mesh no smaller than 1" x 2", 1.5" hexagon, or 1.5" by 1.5". Inside 300' contour, traps may not exceed 33 cu.ft. Two 2" x 2" escape windows required on two sides excluding the bottom (4 openings). Hinges and fasteners of degradable panel or access door must be constructed of either untreated jute string of no more than 3/16" diameter or magnesium alloy. Buoy and trap identification required. Traps (or the ends of a string of traps) must be buoyed and may not be tended at night. Pop up buoys are prohibited. Fish traps will be phased out after 2007.
- o A state may regulate vessels that are registered in that state and are fishing in federal waters for species for which there are no federal fishery management plans or applicable federal regulations.
- o All fish except for bait and oceanic migratory species taken from federal waters must have heads and fins intact through landing. Legal size fish within a bag limit may be consumed at sea.
- o Riley's Hump near the Dry Tortugas is closed to all fishing in May and June.

ERRATA AND UPDATE SHEET

A supplemental "errata and update sheet" will be periodically published to indicate changes in fishing regulations since this pamphlet was published. Contact the Gulf Council to obtain the most recent supplement.

COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS - as of January 2000

Species	Minimum Size Limit (unless noted differently)	Trip Limit	Quotas/Closed Seasons
COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS			
Cobia (ling)	33" fork length	Daily bag and possession limit of 2/person	
King Mackerel	Minimum 24" fork length Maximum of 5% by weight may be undersized.	EASTERN ZONE: FL east coast subzone 11/1-3/31 50 fish per trip until quota filled. 4/1 to 10/31 - South Atlantic regulations apply, refer to South Atlantic Council regulation pamphlet for Atlantic-group. FL west coast subzone: Gillnets 7/1 until gear quota - 25,000 lbs./trip. FL west coast subzone: Hook-and-line 7/1 until 75% gear quota - 1,250 lbs./trip. Then 500 lbs./trip until gear quota filled. WESTERN ZONE: 3,000 lbs./trip until quota filled	quota (subdivided as shown): 3.39 million lbs. (MP) Gulf group EASTERN ZONE: 2.34 MP FL-east subzone 1.17 MP FL-west subzone 1.17 MP gillnets 0.585 MP hook-and-line 0.585 MP WESTERN ZONE: 1.05 MP
Spanish Mackerel	12" fork length	none	quota: 3.99 million lbs. Gulf group. Season opens 4/1 and closes when quota is filled.
REEF FISH			
<u>Snappers</u> Red Snapper	15" total length	2,000 lbs./trip with Class 1 red snapper license 200 lbs./trip with Class 2 red snapper license Commercial harvest prohibited without a Class 1 or 2 red snapper license in addition to a reef fish vessel permit.	quota = 4.65 million lbs. - 3.06 million lbs. on a Feb. 1 opening (open first 10 days of each month until sub-quota filled), remainder on a Oct. 1 opening (open first 10 days of each month until sub-quota is reached).
Vermilion Lane Gray (Mangrove) Mutton* Yellowtail Mahogany Schoolmaster Dog Cubera Blackfin Queen Silk Wenchman	10" total length 8" total length 12" total length 16" total length 12" total length 12" total length 12" total length 12" total length 12" total length none none none none	none none none none none none none none none none none none none	*Riley's Hump is closed to all fishing during May and June to protect spawning mutton snapper. Riley's Hump is located southeast of Fort Jefferson National Monument.
<u>Deep-Water Groupers</u> Misty Snowy Yellowedge Warsaw Speckled Hind	none none none none none	none none none none none	quota: 1.6 million lbs. Includes scamp after shallow-water grouper quota is filled.
<u>Shallow-Water Groupers</u> Red Yellowfin Black Gag Scamp Yellowmouth Rock Hind Red Hind <u>Protected Groupers</u> Jewfish Nassau grouper	20" total length 20" total length 20" total length 20" total length 16" total length none none none Harvest prohibited Harvest prohibited	none none none none none none none none none none	quota: 9.8 million lbs. Includes all groupers other than those classified as deep-water groupers.
Gray Triggerfish	12" total length	none	none
Hogfish	12" fork length	none	none
Greater amberjack	(commercial) 36" fork length	none	Commercial closed season during March, April, and May
Lesser Amberjack	14" to 22" fork length slot limit	none	none
Banded Rudderfish			

Species	Minimum Size Limit	Trip Limit	Quotas/Closed Seasons
OTHER SPECIES			
Red Drum		Illegal to harvest or possess in federal waters.	
SHELLFISH			
Stone Crab	Minimum 2 3/4" claw	none	Season Closed 5/16 - 10/14
Spiny Lobster	Carapace more than 3" or Tail more than 5 1/2" Divers must measure in water.	none	Season Closed 4/1 - 8/5
Shrimp	None, but white shrimp taken in the EEZ and transported to Louisiana must comply with the minimum size limit of that state.	none	Royal red shrimp - 392,000 lbs. tail weight. Royal red shrimp season opens 1/1 and closes when quota is filled.
HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES			
<u>Tuna</u> Bluefin	<u>Size Categories- curved fork length (CFL)</u> school - 27" to <47" CFL large school - 47" to <59" CFL small medium - 59" to <73" CFL large medium - 73" to <81" CFL giant - 81"+ CFL CFL - curved fork length - see next page	Quotas and trip limits vary by size, permit category and allowable days. Telephone the NMFS Highly Migratory Species Management Division's toll-free 24 hour information line for updates on closure notices, inseason quota adjustments, and updates of commercial landings for Atlantic bluefin tuna 1-888-USA-TUNA (1-888- 872-8862).	
Bigeye Yellowfin Blackfin Albacore Skipjack Bonito	27" CFL 27" CFL none none none none	none none none none none none	No quota.
<u>Billfish</u> Blue Marlin White Marlin Sailfish Longbill spearfish	99" LJFL 66" LJFL 63" LJFL none	Sale of billfish prohibited. Blue marlin, white marlin, and sailfish may be harvested by rod and reel only. Possession prohibited on board a vessel using or having on board a pelagic longline. LJFL (lower jaw fork length) - tip of lower jaw to fork of tail.	
Swordfish	29" carcass length or 33 lbs., dressed weight (gutted, headed, and finned). No allowance for undersized fish.	No limit during open season, 15 fish per longline trip during closed season with <u>directed limited access permit</u> . 5 fish/trip non-directed bycatch allowance for squid trawl fisheries. 2 fish/trip non-directed bycatch allowance for other fisheries	Annual directed fishery quota from June 1, 1999 to May 31, 2000 is 2,033.2 metric tons dressed weight (mt dw). This quota is divided into 2 equal semiannual quotas of 1016.6 mt dw. Annual incidental bycatch quota: 300 mt dw.
<u>SHARKS*</u>	Ratio of wet fins to dressed carcass not to exceed 5 Percent. Sharks not retained must be released uninjured. Trip reports required. Dealer permits required. Semi-annual quotas may be adjusted downward or upward to reflect over or under harvest in the preceding period. Illegal to remove the fins and return remainder of shark to sea.		
Large Coastals	none	4,000 lbs dressed weight./trip-with <u>directed limited access permit</u> ; or 5 fish /trip with <u>incidental limited access permit</u>	quota: 642 MT DW per 6 months
Small Coastals	none	none	quota: 880 MT SW per 6 months
Pelagics	none	none	quota: 290 MT DW per 6 months
<u>Prohibited Sharks- Commercial Harvest</u> Basking shark White shark Bigeye sand tiger Sand tiger Whale shark	Harvest prohibited Harvest prohibited Harvest prohibited Harvest prohibited Harvest prohibited		
CORAL AND CORAL REEFS			
Allowable Octocorals			quota: 50,000 colonies
Live Rock	Harvest or possession of wild live rock is prohibited. Harvest and possession of aquacultured live rock allowed by permitted individuals.		
Other Marine Life Organisms	Marine life organisms from the EEZ harvested or possessed by Florida residents or landed in Florida are subject to Florida's Marine Life Rule. Contact Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission for more information (850-488-9924).		

* Commercial shark fishing regulations may change pending the outcome of a legal challenge to new regulations. For up to date information on shark regulations, call the National Marine Fisheries Service Highly Migratory Species Division at (301)-713-2347.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS:							
Stone Crab	Stone crab traps must have a biodegradable panel, and must be permanently marked with their Florida stone crab permit number and color or their federal number and color. Traps must meet Florida construction guidelines.						
Spiny Lobster	Only diving, bully nets, hoop nets, and traps not to exceed 2'x2'x3' allowed. Bycatch of 5% allowed with trawls. Removal of spiny lobster tail allowed only when fishing exclusively in the EEZ on a trip of 48 hours or more, and requires a tailing permit.						
Cobia (ling)	Drift gill nets are prohibited.						
Allowable Octocorals	Allowable octocoral means an erect, nonencrusting species of the subclass Octocorallia, except the seafans <i>Gorgonia flabellum</i> and <i>G. ventalina</i> , plus the attached substrate within 1 inch of an allowable octocoral. Note: An octocoral with attached substrate exceeding 1 inch is considered to be live rock and not allowable octocoral.						
Tuna - Bluefin	Allowable gear: rod and reel (including downriggers), handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and purse seine nets. Incidental catch allowed with purse seine nets, fixed gear, traps, and longline.						
Tuna - others	Allowable gear: rod and reel (including downriggers), handline, harpoon, bandit gear, purse seine nets, longline, and drift gillnet.						
Billfish	Retention prohibited on longline and driftnet vessels; must be released in water alive.						
Swordfish	Allowable gear: only drift gill nets less than 2.5 km, harpoons, and longlines may target, other gear is incidental catch.						
Reef Fish	Sea basses, grunts, and porgies have been removed from federal management, and may be subject to state regulations even if caught in federal waters.						
Sharks: Large Coastals	Sandbar Bull Caribbean reef	Silky Night Tiger	Galapagos Nurse Smooth hammerhead	Lemon Bignose	Narrowtooth Dusky	Blacktip Spinner	Scalloped hammerhead Great hammerhead
Small Coastals	Atlantic sharpnose Caribbean sharpnose	Atlantic angel	Blacknose		Smalltail	Bonnethead	Finetooth
Pelagics	Shortfin mako Longfin mako	Thresher Bigeye thresher	Oceanic whitetip Sevengill	Bigeye sixgill Sixgill	Blue	Porbeagle	
COMMERCIAL PERMIT REQUIREMENTS: (Earned income qualification criteria apply to mackerel, reef fish, and shark permits.) Applications for permits may be obtained from National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Koger Building, 9721 Executive Center Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida 33702 (telephone 727-570-5326), except for tuna permits, which may be obtained by telephoning 888-USA-TUNA.							
Permit	Required For:						
Spiny lobster federal vessel permit or Florida commercial harvester license and certificates	Florida commercial harvester license and certificates required for harvest or possession in excess of the bag limits in the EEZ off Florida or to land or sell in Florida. Federal vessel permit required for harvest or possession in excess of the bag limits in the EEZ other than off Florida or sale other than Florida.						
Spiny lobster tail-separation permit	Possession of a separated spiny lobster tail in or from the EEZ aboard a vessel. Also requires a spiny lobster federal vessel permit or Florida state license and certificates.						
Mackerel vessel permit	Harvest of king or Spanish mackerel under quota and in excess of the bag limits. A proposal for separate permits for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, and a king mackerel permit moratorium, is under review by NMFS.						
King mackerel gillnet endorsement	Harvest of king mackerel in the Florida west coast subzone using a gillnet. Also requires a mackerel vessel permit.						
Reef fish vessel permit	Harvest and sale of all reef fish listed in the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan under quota (where applicable) and in excess of the bag limits (where applicable), except jewfish and Nassau grouper (for which all harvest is prohibited). Issuance of new reef fish permits is under a moratorium until December 31, 2000. Existing permits are transferable.						
Red snapper Class 1 or 2 license	A Class 1 red snapper license is required in addition to a reef fish permit to harvest red snapper at the 2,000 pound trip limit. A Class 2 red snapper license is required in addition to a reef fish permit to harvest red snapper at the 200 pound trip limit. Other reef fish permitted vessels are prohibited from commercial harvest. No new red snapper licenses are being issued, but existing red snapper licenses are transferable.						
Fish trap endorsement	Required in addition to a reef fish permit to harvest reef fish using fish traps. No new fish trap endorsements are being issued. Endorsements are non-transferable except to another vessel owned by the endorsement holder, immediate family members or in case of death or disability of the endorsement holder. After February 7, 2007, all fish trap endorsements become invalid and the use of fish traps to harvest reef fish will be prohibited.						
Aquacultured live rock permit	Possession or harvest of cultivated live rock. Appropriate Florida state permits are also required to land live rock in Florida. Wild live rock possession or harvest is prohibited.						
Allowable octocoral permit	Harvest or possession of allowable octocoral, other than allowable octocoral that is landed in Florida. Appropriate Florida state permits are required to land allowable octocoral in Florida.						
Atlantic bluefin tuna permit - Categories General Category Charter/headboat Harpoon boat	Incidental catch Purse seine boat						
Tuna (other) permit - Commercial Tuna (other) permit -Charter/headboat	Vessels must have one of these permits to sell albacore, Atlantic bonito, bigeye tuna, skipjack tuna or yellowfin tuna (an Atlantic bluefin permit, shark permit, or swordfish permit is also valid to harvest "other" tuna). Purse seine harvest is restricted to those vessels with Atlantic bluefin tuna permits that reported landings of "other" tunas during 1989-1993.						
Swordfish vessel permit	Commercial harvest and sale of swordfish under quota.						
Shark vessel permit	Harvest and sale of sharks listed in the management unit of the Atlantic Sharks Fishery Management Plan under quota and in excess of the bag limits.						
FISH LENGTHS							
Fork length:	Tip of snout to fork of tail			Total length: Tip of snout to tip of tail			
Curved fork length:	Tip of the upper jaw to fork of tail measured along the contour of the middle of the body						
Carcass length:	Curved measure from posterior edge of gill opening to anterior portion of caudal keel						
Dressed weight:	Fish has been gutted and the head and fins removed, but is otherwise in whole condition						