



BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 140819686-5999-02]

RIN 0648-XF779

**Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic;
Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic; 2017 Recreational
Accountability Measure and Closure for Greater Amberjack**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS implements an accountability measure (AM) for the recreational sector of greater amberjack in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ) through this temporary rule. NMFS estimates that recreational landings have reached the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic. Therefore, NMFS closes the recreational sector for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic EEZ for the remainder of the current fishing year (see **DATES**). This closure is necessary to protect the greater amberjack resource in the South Atlantic.

DATES: This rule is effective from 12:01 a.m., local time,

October 31, 2017, until 12:01 a.m. local time, on March 1, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: *mary.vara@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes greater amberjack and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The recreational ACL for South Atlantic greater amberjack is 1,167,837 lb (529,722 kg), round weight, as specified at 50 CFR 622.193(k)(2)(i). The fishing year for South Atlantic greater amberjack is from March 1 through the end of February (50 CFR 622.7(d)). Under the recreational AM at 50 CFR 622.193(k)(2)(i), when landings of the greater amberjack recreational sector reach, or are projected to reach, its ACL, NMFS is required to close the recreational sector for greater amberjack by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal Register unless NMFS determines that no closure is necessary based on the best scientific information available.

NMFS has determined that the recreational ACL has been reached in the current fishing year of March 1, 2017, through February 28, 2018, and that a closure is necessary. Therefore, this temporary rule implements an AM to close the greater amberjack recreational sector in the South Atlantic for the remainder of the current fishing year. As a result, the recreational sector for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic EEZ will close effective at 12:01 a.m., local time October 31, 2017.

On October 18, 2017, NMFS closed the commercial sector of greater amberjack in the South Atlantic because the sector had reached the commercial quota (equivalent to the commercial ACL) (82 FR 47640, October 13, 2017). Because the commercial sector for South Atlantic greater amberjack has already closed for the remainder of the current fishing year, all harvest of South Atlantic greater amberjack will end on October 31, 2017. Both the commercial and recreational sectors for South Atlantic greater amberjack will reopen on March 1, 2018, the start of the next fishing year.

During this closure, the bag and possession limits for greater amberjack in or from the South Atlantic EEZ are zero. The prohibition on harvest or possession of greater amberjack applies on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial

or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, without regard to where the greater amberjack was harvested or possessed, *i.e.*, in state or Federal waters.

Classification

The Regional Administrator for the NMFS Southeast Region has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of South Atlantic greater amberjack and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(k) (2) (i) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA) finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the recreational sector for greater amberjack constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b) (B), because such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest.

Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule implementing the AM itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect South Atlantic greater amberjack. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially allow the recreational sector to exceed the recreational ACL.

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d) (3).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: October 26, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes,
Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2017-23667 Filed: 10/26/2017 4:15 pm; Publication Date: 10/31/2017]