



F/SER24:DL

Mr. Scott Brown, Program Chief  
Coastal Programs Office  
Department of Environmental Management  
3664 Dauphin St.  
Mobile, AL 36608

Dear Mr. Brown:

This is to advise you of a proposed emergency federal action and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) determination on the consistency of this action with the provisions of your state's Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP) in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). Pursuant to the action requested by the Gulf Council, NMFS would promulgate an emergency rule to modify the Gulf red grouper catch limits as detailed below (catch limits in million pounds).

	<b>Current*</b>	<b>Proposed*</b>
<b>Overfishing Limit (OFL)</b>	5.99	<b>10.64</b>
<b>Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC)</b>	4.96	<b>8.28</b>
<b>Stock Annual Catch Limit (ACL)</b>	4.96	<b>7.45</b>
<b>Commercial ACL (59.6% of Stock ACL)</b>	2.94	<b>4.44</b>
<b>Commercial Annual Catch Target (ACT)</b>	2.79	<b>4.22</b>
<b>Recreational ACL (40.4% of Stock ACL)</b>	2.02	<b>3.01</b>
<b>Recreational ACT</b>	1.84	<b>2.74</b>

\*Note that proposed catch limits were derived, in part, using private recreational landings data from the State of Florida's Reef Fish Survey. Current catch limits were derived, in part, using private recreational landings data from the Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey.

This emergency action would increase red grouper catch limits for the remainder of the 2025 fishing year, which is expected to extend the recreational fishing season and allow increased harvest for commercial fishermen possessing red grouper individual fishing quota (IFQ) allocation.

Under the current recreational ACL in 2024, NMFS closed the red grouper recreational fishing season on July 1. Despite this early closure, preliminary landings indicate that 112% of the recreational ACL was harvested, and that the 2025 season would likely have to be closed early again to avoid exceeding the recreational ACL. The shortened red grouper recreational season, combined with reductions to catch limits for other reef fish species, have resulted in economic hardships to the recreational sector. The commercial sector has also been impacted by catch limit reductions for other reef fish species.



NMFS projects increasing Gulf red grouper catch limits through this emergency action would extend the recreational Gulf red grouper season, allowing the recreational sector, including the for-hire component, an opportunity for increased revenue. Allowing increased red grouper harvest for commercial fishermen possessing red grouper IFQ also is expected to increase revenue to the commercial sector. The Gulf Council has initiated work on an amendment that would adopt the increased catch limits for future years, but that action is not expected to be implemented until 2026. Thus, failure to implement this emergency rule would result in continued economic hardship to both recreational and commercial fishermen targeting red grouper in the Gulf reef fish fishery.

This letter is submitted pursuant to provisions of 15 CFR Section 930 et seq. and Section 307 of the CZMA of 1972, as amended. We have reviewed the proposed emergency action with regard to the provisions of your state's CZMP and determined this action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of that program. NMFS is aware of the requirement to provide CZMA determinations to state agencies at least 90 days before final approval of the federal activity under 15 CFR Section 930.41(a) of the CZMA; however, if the action is implemented by the Secretary of Commerce, the intent is to publish the emergency rule on July 7, 2025. Due to the exigent circumstances of the emergency action, and in accordance with the provisions of 15 CFR Section 930.32(b), we are requesting that you advise us of your agreement or disagreement with our determination by June 5, 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact Dan Luers at (727) 824-5305 or [Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov](mailto:Daniel.Luers@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,

Heather Blough  
Acting Assistant Regional Administrator

cc: Chris Blankenship  
Scott Bannon  
Kevin Anson