

the adaptive management provision in paragraph (c)(1) of this section) that do not change the findings made for the regulations or result in no more than a minor change in the total estimated number of takes (or distribution by species or years), NMFS may publish a notice of proposed LOA in the **Federal Register**, including the associated analysis of the change, and solicit public comment before issuing the LOA.

(c) An LOA issued under § 216.106 of this chapter and § 217.76 for the activity identified in § 217.70(a) may be modified by NMFS under the following circumstances:

(1) Adaptive Management—NMFS may modify (including augment) the existing mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures (after consulting with AAC regarding the practicability of the modifications) if doing so creates a reasonable likelihood of more effectively accomplishing the goals of the mitigation and monitoring set forth in the preamble for these regulations:

(i) Possible sources of data that could contribute to the decision to modify the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures in an LOA:

(A) Results from AAC's monitoring from the previous year(s);

(B) Results from other marine mammal and/or sound research or studies; and

(C) Any information that reveals marine mammals may have been taken in a manner, extent or number not authorized by these regulations or any LOA issued under §§ 216.106 and 217.76 of this chapter.

(ii) If, through adaptive management, the modifications to the mitigation, monitoring, or reporting measures are substantial, NMFS shall publish a notice of proposed LOA in the **Federal Register** and solicit public comment.

(2) Emergencies—If NMFS determines that an emergency exists that poses a significant risk to the well-being of the species or stocks of marine mammals specified in §§ 217.70(b) and 217.72(a), an LOA may be modified without prior notice or opportunity for public comment. A notice shall be published in the **Federal Register** within 30 days of the action.

§ 217.78 [Reserved]

§ 217.79 [Reserved]

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## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### 50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 130403320-4891-02]

RIN 0648-XF283

#### Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Snapper-Grouper Resources of the South Atlantic; 2017–2018 Recreational Fishing Season for Black Sea Bass

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

**ACTION:** Temporary rule; recreational season length.

**SUMMARY:** NMFS announces that the length of the recreational season for black sea bass in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the South Atlantic will extend throughout the 2017–2018 fishing year. Announcing the length of recreational season for black sea bass is one of the accountability measures (AMs) for the recreational sector. This announcement allows recreational fishers to maximize their opportunity to harvest the recreational annual catch limit (ACL) for black sea bass during the fishing season while managing harvest to protect the black sea bass resource.

**DATES:** This rule is effective from 12:01 a.m., local time, April 1, 2017, until 12:01 a.m., local time, April 1, 2018, unless changed by subsequent notification in the **Federal Register**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nikhil Mehta, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: [nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov](mailto:nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The snapper-grouper fishery includes black sea bass in the South Atlantic and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council prepared the FMP and the FMP 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 final rule implementing Regulatory Amendment 14 to the FMP revised the recreational fishing year for black sea bass to be April 1 through March 31 (79 FR 66316, November 7, 2014). The final rule also revised the recreational AMs for black sea bass. Prior to the start of each recreational

fishing year on April 1, NMFS will project the length of the upcoming recreational fishing season based on when NMFS projects the recreational ACL to be met and will announce the recreational season end date in the **Federal Register** (50 CFR 622.193(e)(2)). The purpose of this AM is to have a more predictable recreational season length while still constraining harvest at or below the recreational ACL to protect the stock from experiencing adverse biological consequences.

NMFS estimates that recreational landings for the 2017–2018 fishing year will be less than the 2017–2018 recreational ACL. To make this determination, NMFS compared landings in the last 3 fishing years to the 2017–2018 fishing year's recreational ACL of 848,455 lb (384,853 kg), gutted weight, 1,001,177 lb (454,126 kg), round weight. The recreational ACL was set through the final rule for Regulatory Amendment 19 to the FMP on September 23, 2013 (78 FR 58249). Landings in each of the past 3 years are below the 2017–2018 recreational ACL; therefore, recreational landings in 2017–2018 are projected to be less than the 2017–2018 recreational ACL. Accordingly, the season end date for recreational fishing for black sea bass in the South Atlantic EEZ, south of 35°15.9' N. lat., is the end of the 2017–2018 fishing year, March 31, 2018.

#### Classification

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

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(e)(2) 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 Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds that the need to immediately implement the notice of the recreational season length constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), because prior notice and opportunity for public comment on this temporary rule is unnecessary. Such procedures are unnecessary, because the rule establishing the AM

has already been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the recreational season length.

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: March 20, 2017.

**Karen H. Abrams,**

*Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

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