



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Southeast Regional Office  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505  
(727) 824-5305, Fax: (727) 824-5308  
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

F/SER:KM

**OCT 27 2010**

Mr. David M. Cupka, Chair  
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council  
4055 Faber Place Dr. Suite 201  
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Dear Mr. Cupka:

By this letter, I am approving Amendment 17A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 17A). As you know, Amendment 17A includes measures to end overfishing and rebuild red snapper in the South Atlantic.

Amendment 17A will:

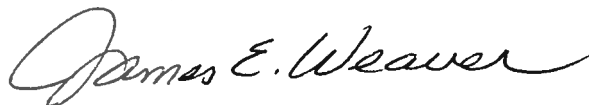
- 1) Specify the numerical value of the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) of red snapper as 2,431,000 lbs whole weight (ww) based on pre-defined reference points (MSY = yield associated with fishing at  $F_{MSY}$  or  $F_{30\%SPR}$ );
- 2) Specify the numerical value of the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) of red snapper as 12,247,000 lbs (5,555,146 kg) (ww) based on pre-defined reference points ( $MSST = (1 - M) * SSB_{MSY}$ );
- 3) Define a rebuilding schedule for red snapper equal to 35 years;
- 4) Define a rebuilding strategy for red snapper that sets the rebuilding goal equal to  $SSB_{MSY}$  and sets the catch rate equal to  $F_{OY}$ , which is  $98\%F_{MSY}$  ( $98\%F_{30\%SPR}$ );
- 5) Establish an annual catch limit of zero based on landings and establish three accountability measures for red snapper including tracking catch per unit effort (CPUE) via fishery-independent monitoring, tracking the biomass and CPUE via fishery-dependent sampling, and evaluating CPUE every three years to determine if management measure adjustments are necessary;
- 6) Prohibit all harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic exclusive economic zone and in state waters for vessels holding any federal snapper-grouper permit;
- 7) Establish a closed area that extends from southern Georgia to Cape Canaveral, Florida, within which harvest and possession of all snapper-grouper species will be prohibited except when using black sea bass pot gear or spearfishing gear to fish for species other than red snapper;
- 8) Require the use of non-stainless steel circle hooks when fishing for snapper-grouper species with hook-and-line gear north of 28 degrees N. latitude; and
- 9) Require a fishery-independent monitoring program to track the progress of red snapper rebuilding efforts in the South Atlantic.

The final rule to implement Amendment 17A will likely publish in the second-half of November.



On behalf of the agency, I thank the Council for their continued dedication to ending overfishing of red snapper in the South Atlantic. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James E. Weaver". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping tail.

*For* Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator