



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Susan.Gerhart@noaa.gov
727/824-5305, FAX 727/824-5308

September 23, 2011

FB11-071

NOAA Announces Repeal of the Fishery Management Plan for the Stone Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico *Small Entity Compliance Guide*

On September 23, 2011, NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule in the *Federal Register* to repeal the Fishery Management Plan for the Stone Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico (76 FR 59064). This rule will be effective October 24, 2011. In June, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission voted to extend state regulation concerning stone crab fishing into federal waters. Because federal regulations and state regulations were essentially the same, no change is expected in how the fishery is conducted.

The commercial stone crab fishery is prosecuted primarily in Florida coastal waters. The federal fishery management plan was originally implemented in 1979 to close areas and reduce conflict arising from competing gear use between stone crab and shrimp fishermen. The plan applies only to federal Gulf of Mexico waters adjacent to Florida waters. The fishery management plan for the Shrimp Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico establishes the same closed areas, so those closed areas will remain in place.

In the process of developing new federal regulations, NOAA Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reviewed all fishery management plans to determine which species are in need of federal management. National standard guidance lists criteria to consider in deciding whether a fishery needs federal

management, including if the fishery could be or already is adequately managed by states. Because the stone crab plan only covers waters adjacent to Florida state waters and Florida has essentially the same regulations, the Council felt Florida could adequately manage the fishery.

The action will promote management of the stone crab fishery in the most efficient manner, while maintaining conservation of the resource and the ecosystem and properly conform to National Standard Guidance under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

The environmental assessment, final rule, and other information on this topic can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/StoneCrab.htm>. The final rule is also available via the Internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

This bulletin provides only a summary of the information pertinent to the rule. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the rule as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.