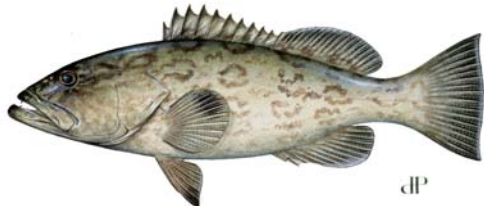


**Gulf of Mexico Commercial Grouper and Tilefish Fisheries**  
**Referendum for a Potential Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**March 2009**



*Please Note:* [Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Amendment 29 - Effort Management in the Commercial Grouper and Tilefish Fisheries](#) implements an IFQ program. NOAA Fisheries Service conducted a referendum to determine whether or not there is support in the industry to implement the IFQ program. Of the 274 referendum votes cast, a total of 220 votes (81 percent) were in favor of the proposed IFQ program, and 50 (18 percent) were opposed to the proposed IFQ program. Four returned ballots were declared invalid. NOAA Fisheries Service approved Amendment 29 on July 2, 2009.

**Was a referendum required for the Gulf Council to submit Amendment 29 to NOAA Fisheries Service?**

- Yes, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson - Stevens Act) requires that for an IFQ program to be approved, a referendum must be passed by a majority of voting permit holders.

**Who was eligible to vote in the referendum?**

- The Magnuson-Stevens Act states only participants who have substantially fished in the grouper and tilefish fisheries are eligible to vote in a referendum. The Gulf Council chose to define individuals who substantially fished as Gulf reef fish permit holders with combined average annual grouper and tilefish landings of at least 8,000 pounds per permit during 1999-2004 (with the allowance of dropping a year).
- Under the 8,000-pound landings threshold selected by the Gulf Council, 301 permits or 29.3 percent of eligible permits qualified for participation in the referendum. These permits accounted for 88.6 percent of the grouper and tilefish landings during the qualifying period.
- Each permit holder was allowed one vote for each of their permits.
- Permits must have been active or renewable as of the effective date of the final rule implementing the referendum.

**How do I know if I was eligible to vote in the referendum?**

- A certified letter with a ballot was mailed to the address listed on the permit on December 5, 2008.
- Only eligible voters received letters and ballots.
- A list of eligible voters is posted on the [NOAA Fisheries Service Web site](#).

**The referendum passed, what happens next?**

- NOAA Fisheries Service approved Amendment 29 on July 2, 2009.
- The IFQ program will be implemented January 1, 2010.
- On or about October 1, 2009, the RA will mail an information package to eligible IFQ participants.

**How can I learn more about the potential commercial grouper and tilefish IFQ program and the responsibilities of IFQ shareholders, allocation holders, and dealers?**

- Amendment 29 to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan is available to download at the [Gulf Council's Web site](#).
- Other Frequently Asked Questions relating to the Grouper and Tilefish IFQ program, IFQ programs in general, and Amendment 29, are available at the [NOAA Fisheries Service Web site](#).
- For additional information or specific questions about the IFQ program, please call the Southeast Regional Office's Sustainable Fisheries Division at 1-727-824-5305.