



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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## NOAA Fisheries Lists Nassau Grouper as *Threatened* under the Endangered Species Act

NOAA Fisheries has listed Nassau grouper as threatened under the Endangered Species Act due to a decline in its population. The species is in need of more conservation efforts given its population has not yet recovered. A final rule was published in the *Federal Register* on June 29, 2016 ([81 FR 42268](#)) and will become effective on July 29, 2016.

This listing does not change current fishing regulations in the U.S. (including federal waters in U.S. Caribbean territories), as harvest of this species is already prohibited in state, territorial, and federal waters. Commercial and recreational fishing for this species was first prohibited in U.S. federal waters in 1990 when it was listed as a Species of Concern.

Prior to 1990, historical harvest greatly diminished the population of Nassau grouper and eliminated many

spawning groups. Because Nassau grouper is a slow growing, late maturing fish, the population has yet to recover despite conservation efforts. In addition, Nassau grouper is still harvested in several Caribbean countries and fishing pressure on the remaining spawning groups continues to threaten the species.

While a threatened listing status does not afford the same strict prohibitions on import, export, and incidental catch that an endangered status does, NOAA fisheries will assess whether to add additional regulatory measures in future rule makings. NOAA fisheries will also organize a recovery team to begin development of a plan to guide the conservation and recovery of the species. The plan will lay out the criteria and actions necessary to ensure species recovery. It will also be used to ensure recovery efforts are on target and being met effectively and efficiently.