

A New Partnership with Fish Rules Mobile App

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The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) has recently partnered with Fish Rules, a free mobile application from web developers, Fish Rules LLC, that hosts saltwater fishing regulations in state and federal waters from Maine through Texas. With the growing number of saltwater anglers in the United States, Fish Rules hopes to expand the reach of the mobile application to all coasts of the United States.



Scan for Android:



Scan for iPhone



Benefits of a mobile application:

Unlike a webpage, a mobile application will store information on a mobile phone even while out of cell range. When fishermen go offshore, it is crucial for them to have access to current regulations in both state and federal waters. Rather than printing out updated documents before every trip, fishermen have been able to access federal regulations in the South Atlantic via a free mobile application.

History of mobile application fishing regulations in the South Atlantic:

The Council launched the mobile application, SA Fishing Regulations, in 2013 to provide recreational and commercial fishing regulations for federal waters of the South Atlantic (NC through Key West, FL). Regulations for federally managed species, Highly Migratory Species and some state managed species were provided. Over the course of 4 years, the SA Fishing Regulations mobile application was being used by over 30,000 anglers. However, due to the

rapid growth in mobile phone operating systems, SA Fishing Regulations was due for an upgrade and users were beginning to experience challenges with the app's compatibility with newer operating systems.

After reviewing a series of proposals including upgrading the old application, building an entirely new one, and partnering with an already available app, the South Atlantic Council pursued a partnership with Fish Rules. Fish Rules is a popular mobile application with a well-established relationship with GARFO (GARFO officially promotes the application and has worked with the developers in their pursuit of grant funding). Since Fish Rules hosts recreational **state and federal** regulations from **Maine through Texas**, fishermen now have a “**one stop shop**” for staying up to date.

Partnership terms with Fish Rules and SAFMC:

The South Atlantic Council has entered into a 5-year contract with Fish Rules. The contract covers initial start-up costs, maintenance of the app, training for Council staff, and potential future upgrades and updates. For the five year contract, the South Atlantic Council will have invested \$26,000. As part of the contract, and per the request of South Atlantic Council staff, Council staff are responsible for updating federal regulations for the South Atlantic region on Fish Rules.

Needed Expansion of Fish Rules:

Fish Rules does not currently host commercial regulations. The South Atlantic Council is working with the Fish Rules app developers to come up with solutions for this. The South Atlantic Council wants to make sure that commercial fishermen also have access to regulations via a mobile application and will be reviewing a proposal for a commercial specific application with the Fish Rules developers in late February. The development of a commercial regulations mobile app may not be financially feasible for one single agency and the South Atlantic Council welcomes any other entities that might be interested in partnering.

CCC QUESTION: WOULD THE CCC SUPPORT REQUESTING NMFS PROVIDE FUNDS TO EXPAND FISH RULES TO INCLUDE COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS AND TO COVER OTHER COUNCIL AREAS?

The Future:

Like all of the Councils, the South Atlantic Council is continually trying to adapt to technological advancements and the exciting opportunities they can afford for better communication and outreach. Stakeholders ought to have access to regulations in a way that is both cost effective to them and easy to use. Mobile applications certainly facilitate these crucial elements. The South Atlantic Council hopes to see Fish Rules continue to expand throughout the United States, serving as a provider of regulatory information from coast to coast. Such a future would be beneficial to stakeholders and managers alike.