

Oculina HAPC, fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, fish pot, or fish trap is prohibited, as is anchoring by a fishing vessel. The prohibition on fishing for and possessing snapper grouper species remains in effect only within the smaller OECA, which is scheduled to expire in June 2004 and is the subject of Amendment 13A to the Snapper Grouper FMP.

The renewal of fishing restrictions in the OECA is intended to provide continued protection of snapper grouper populations and associated *Oculina* coral. This action is needed to provide a hedge against the high degree of scientific uncertainty associated with the status of these species and to reduce the possibility that these populations may fall below sustainable levels.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 8, 2003.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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