

**South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**December 3-7, 2018**  
**Kitty Hawk, NC**

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council held their December meeting in Kitty Hawk, NC. Below are highlights from the Council's weeklong meeting. Additional information from the meeting is available from the Council's website at: <http://safmc.net/december-2018-council-meeting-details/> including a Meeting Report, Story Map, final committee reports, public comments, and briefing book materials.

**Approved for Secretarial Review**

**Vision Blueprint Regulatory Amendment 26**

After considering public comment and much discussion, the Council approved Regulatory Amendment 26 for review by the Secretary of Commerce. However, the Council chose not to take action on measures within the amendment that would have established a deepwater species aggregate (snowy grouper, misty grouper, yellowedge grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and wreckfish) and specified seasons and bag limits for the species within the aggregate. Council members noted that establishing two seasons, one proposed for January and February and the other May through August and modifying bag limits could unfairly impact fishermen in the region. The Council discussed seasonal differences in the fishery for deepwater species in Florida and North Carolina, especially for recreational fishermen targeting blueline tilefish and golden tilefish and chose not to take action. As a result of the discussion, the Council decided to explore options for allocations of the species in the proposed deepwater species aggregate during its June 2019 meeting.

The following actions were approved as part of Regulatory Amendment 26

- Change the recreational minimum size limit of gray triggerfish from 14 inches to 12 inches (fork length) in federal waters off the east coast of Florida to maintain consistency with state regulations currently in place.
- Modify the current 20-fish aggregate bag limit in place (for species without individual bag limits) to specify that no more than 10 fish can be of any one species within the 20-fish aggregate.
- Remove recreational minimum size limits for queen snapper, silk snapper, and blackfin snapper, currently set at 12 inches total length.

The regulatory amendment was developed as part of the Council's 2017-2020 Vision Blueprint for the Snapper Grouper Fishery. NOAA Fisheries will solicit additional public input on the amendment during the Secretarial review process. Regulatory actions in the amendment will be implemented following the review process in 2019, if approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

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## **Other Items:**

### **Yellowtail Snapper – Regulatory Amendment 32**

Council members voted to postpone consideration of Regulatory Amendment 32 that would revise accountability measures for yellowtail snapper with the intent to alleviate socio-economic impacts of in-season closures in the fishery. After considering recommendations from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and public comment, the Council will delay further development of measures until a benchmark stock assessment for yellowtail snapper is completed in 2020.

### **Red Grouper – Regulatory Amendment 30**

The Council delayed final action on Regulatory Amendment 30 addressing red grouper stock rebuilding, modifications to spawning season closures off the Carolinas, and establishment of a commercial trip limit for red grouper. Council members cited concerns about the need to consider new recreational fishing effort estimates from the Marine Recreational Information Program and the need to have input from its Scientific and Statistical Committee. The amendment will be considered again during the Council's March 2019 meeting.

### **Citizen Science Program**

The Council reviewed and adopted the Program's Standard Operating Policies and Procedures that will guide the operation of the Program moving forward. The Program has two citizen science projects in development that fishermen will be able to get involved with in 2019. The first project will focus on collecting data on the lengths of scamp discards using a mobile application called, Release. The app will be available on both Android and iOS platforms and will be available in the Google Play Store and App Store in January 2019. The second project called FISHstory will use crowdsourcing to analyze historic photos from a Florida headboat fleet in the 1940s-70s to document species and length composition. For more information on the projects and getting involved, contact Program Manager [Amber Von Harten](#).

### **Dolphin Wahoo**

The Dolphin Wahoo Committee discussed a request from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to consider managing frigate mackerel and bullet mackerel as ecosystem components in the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan (FMP), acknowledging their role as prey species for both dolphin and wahoo. Discussions will continue during the March 2019 meeting. The Committee also identified potential additional items to include in Amendment 10 to the Dolphin Wahoo FMP, including: allowing bag-limit sales of dolphin by dually permitted for-hire and commercial permit holders; revising annual catch limits and sector allocations for dolphin and wahoo to accommodate new MRIP data; consider modifying recreational vessel limits for dolphin; and modifying gear, bait, and training requirements in the commercial longline fishery to align with HMS requirements. Development of the amendment will continue throughout 2019 with opportunities for public comment.

### **Habitat and Ecosystem-Based Management**

The Committee received an update on collaborative efforts with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and New England Fishery Management Council to address the

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movement of species northward with changing oceanographic and environmental conditions. The Committee will continue to review landings data and discuss priorities and timing for addressing species movements at its March 2019 meeting with representatives of the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils. The Committee also received presentations on renewable energy activities including the proposed Kitty Hawk Wind Development Project, a system of offshore wind generators proposed approximately 27 miles off the coast of Kitty Hawk, NC. Presentations are available as part of the briefing book materials at: <http://safmc.net/briefing-books/briefing-book-2018-december-council-meeting/>.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for March 4-8, 2019 in Jekyll Island, Georgia. Briefing book materials will be available from the Council's website two weeks prior to the meeting at: <http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/>.

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