



# South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 29, 2017

CONTACT: Kim Iverson  
Public Information Officer  
Toll Free: 866/SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366  
kim.iverson@safmc.net

### **Federal Managers Continue to Address Snapper Grouper Management**

*Council votes to allow for Red Snapper seasons in 2017 and 2018*

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council began their week-long September Meeting with a Full Council Session to discuss red snapper management in the South Atlantic. The Council voted to request a 2017 Red Snapper Emergency Action, which would allow for recreational and commercial harvest this year. The request was sent to NOAA Fisheries and then on to the Secretary of Commerce. A decision is expected in the coming weeks and will be announced by NOAA Fisheries. For more details about the 2017 Emergency Action request, please refer to the Council's earlier news release from September 25 and see the Council's Story Map: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=8928fd890b6841949238a2390ef0b27c>.

In addition to the 2017 Emergency Action request for red snapper, the Council continued to move forward with changes to red snapper management for 2018 with the approval of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 43 for formal review by the Secretary of Commerce. The amendment follows the same actions outlined in the 2017 Emergency Action request, setting a total annual catch limit of 42,510 fish to be harvested in 2018. If approved, the amendment is expected to go into effect in the summer of 2018 with the recreational fishery opening the second Friday in July (July 13, 2018) and the commercial fishery opening the second Monday in July (July 9, 2018).

#### **Vision Blueprint Recreational Amendment**

The Council continued development of Vision Blueprint Recreational Regulatory Amendment 26, an amendment born from stakeholder guidance during the Council's visioning process and workshops. After much discussion, the Council agreed on restructuring the approach to the amendment to reflect how the fishery currently operates, consider predictable seasons, and simplify regulations. Under this new approach, the recreational aggregates would be divided into three groups - deep-water species; shallow-water groupers; and other shallow-water species. Alternatives include options for modifications to bag limits, seasons for deep-water species and shallow-water groupers, and size limits for deep-water species and triggerfish that would help streamline the regulations for anglers, law enforcement, and managers. Council provided further guidance to staff and development of the amendment will continue at the December Council Meeting.

#### **Atlantic Cobia Management**

Discussion on the future of cobia management in the South Atlantic continued this week through the development of Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) Amendment 31. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is currently holding public hearings to gather input from stakeholders about the Draft Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia (GA-NY), a plan that complements federal regulations already in effect in the South Atlantic. Since drafting this plan, ASMFC has requested that the Council consider removing Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia from the federal Fishery Management Plan and transferring total management jurisdiction to the ASMFC. Fishermen from all corners of the region have expressed concerns about the current recreational cobia closure in federal waters. To address public concerns, the Council began work on CMP Amendment 31, which proposes alternatives for a total transfer of jurisdiction or complementary management with ASMFC. The Council approved the alternatives in the document for

further development and will continue to discuss the federal role in cobia management at the December meeting in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

### **Magnuson-Stevens Act Revision Discussion**

The Council reviewed and approved modifications to the Council Coordinating Committee Working Paper that outlines the views of all 8 Councils on issues related to MSA Reauthorization. Impacts of various MSA-related senate and house bills were also reviewed. Topics include rebuilding timelines, annual catch limits, experimental fishing permits, recreational/commercial data needs, and many others. The Council expressed support for exploring ways to obtain more flexibility in managing recreational fisheries.

### **Election of New Chair and Vice Chair**

During the full Council session on Thursday, Council members, staff, and audience members applauded Dr. Michelle Duval's time as Chair of the South Atlantic Council. Dr. Duval, as noted by her peers, has proven to be a dedicated and driven leader. Council members and staff remain grateful that she will continue to offer her profound guidance and support as North Carolina's state agency representative. Vice-Chair Charlie Phillips, the commercial representative from Georgia, was elected as the new Chair and South Carolina's recreational representative, Mark Brown, will serve as the Vice-Chair. Chair Charlie Phillips expressed his gratitude and said, "I look forward to keeping the Council on track and to following up on the needs of stakeholders. Considering we have such great Council members and staff, there is no reason we cannot do that." The Council is pleased to have these two career fishermen at the helm and looks forward to their leadership in the coming years.

The next meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will be held December 4-8, 2017 in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina. Additional information about this week's meeting, including an interactive story map, meeting report and summary reports from each committee are available from the Council's website at: <http://safmc.net/safmc-meetings/council-meetings/>.

**The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, one of eight regional councils, conserves and manages fish stocks from three to 200 miles offshore of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and east Florida.**