



# South Atlantic Update

Published for fishermen and others interested in marine resource conservation issues Spring 2010

## Council Scheduled to Vote in June on Area Closure to End Overfishing

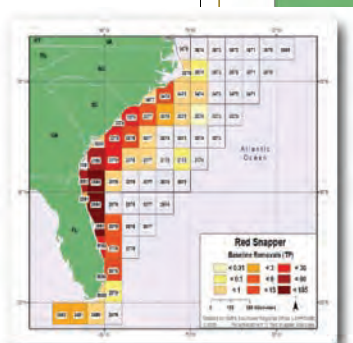
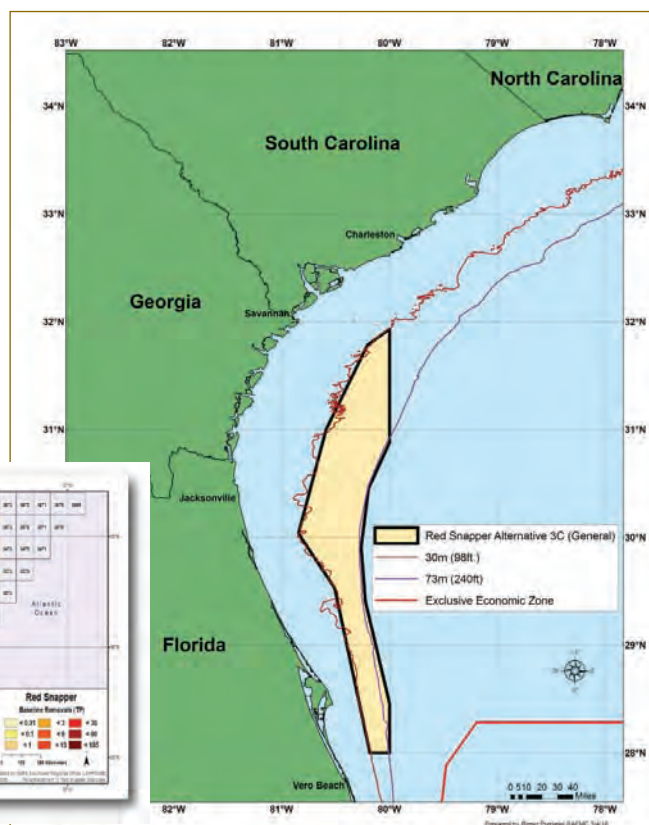
*Amendment 17A includes measures to implement closed area and extend red snapper fishery closure*

The Council modified the size and configuration of a proposed area closure for all snapper grouper fishing during its March meeting in Georgia, choosing a smaller area as its preferred management alternative than previously selected. The area closure is one measure being considered in Amendment 17A to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan to end overfishing and rebuild the red snapper stock in the South Atlantic. In December, the Council selected a larger preferred alternative that included an area off the coast of South Carolina.

The current preferred alternative, known as Alternative 3C, encompasses 6,161 square miles in waters off the coasts of Georgia and northern Florida ranging from 98 feet to 240 feet deep. The area makes up approximately 3% of federal waters off the South Atlantic.

The choice for the closure configuration came after much discussion of alternatives for rebuilding strategies to use for the red snapper stock. A 2008 stock assessment found red snapper severely overfished and undergoing overfishing. The Council continued to choose a more conservative rebuilding strategy, choosing a proxy for estimating Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) that follows the recommendation of its Scientific and Statistical Committee. Using this approach, an 83% reduction in the total number of red snapper killed (harvested and estimated bycatch mortality) is necessary to end overfishing.

*(Continued page 10)*



### Current Preferred Alternative for Area Closure

The Council is considering the use of an area closure to help eliminate the bycatch of red snapper and end overfishing. Fishing for all snapper grouper species would be prohibited within the area closure. The closure targets areas where red snapper catches have historically occurred (see inset). In addition, Amendment 17A would close the red snapper fishery for both commercial and recreational fishermen in federal waters (> 3 miles) in the South Atlantic. The Council will review alternatives and is scheduled to vote on Amendment 17A to implement measures at its June meeting in Orlando.



### Ending Overfishing for Red Snapper: The Perfect Storm

Meeting the mandate of the Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act to end overfishing of red snapper has been a controversial issue since 2008. See inside for the factors leading up to the "Perfect Storm".

**June 7-11, 2010 Council Meeting  
Orlando, FL**

**Informal Question & Answer Session  
Monday, June 7th - 6:00 PM**

**Open Public Comment Session  
Tuesday, June 8th - 6:30 PM**

### Inside This Issue:

Council Letter to Secretary.....	2
<i>In The News</i> .....	3
Catch Share Workshop Summary .....	3
Red Snapper - <i>The Perfect Storm</i> .....	4
Regulations Snap Shot .....	7
Fishery Independent Data Collection.....	8
Mackerel Update .....	9
Law Enforcement @ Work.....	10
June 2010 Meeting Agenda .....	11
Calendar .....	12

## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

**Robert K. Mahood**  
Executive Director

**Gregg T. Waugh**  
Deputy Director

### VOTING MEMBERS

#### Designated State Officials

<b>Brian Chevront</b> Morehead City, NC (252) 726-7021	<b>Mark Robson</b> Tallahassee, FL (850) 487-0554
--	---

<b>Spud Woodward</b> Brunswick, GA (912) 264-7218	<b>Robert Boyles</b> Charleston, SC (843) 953-9304
---	--

#### Appointed Obligatory Members

<b>Ben Hartig</b> Hobe Sound, FL (772) 546-1542	<b>Rita Merritt</b> Wrightsville Beach, NC (910) 256-3197
---	---

<b>Duane Harris, Chairman</b> St. Simons Island, GA (912) 638-9430	<b>Tom Swatzel</b> Murrells Inlet, SC (843) 357-1673
--	--

#### Appointed At-Large Members

<b>George J. Geiger</b> Sebastian, FL (561) 388-3183	<b>Charlie Phillips</b> Townsend, GA (912) 832-3149
--	---

<b>David Cupka, Vice-Chair</b> Charleston, SC (843) 795-8591	<b>Benjamin M. Currin</b> Raleigh, NC (919) 881-0049
--	--

#### NMFS Regional Administrator

**Roy Crabtree**  
St. Petersburg, FL  
(727) 824-5301

#### Non-Voting Members

<b>ASMFC</b> Washington, DC (202) 289-6400	<b>U. S. Fish &amp; Wildlife</b> Atlanta, GA (404) 331-3588
<b>U. S. Coast Guard</b> Miami, FL (305) 415-6778	<b>State Department</b> Washington, DC (202) 647-2883

### *Editor's Note*

The South Atlantic Update is published by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Its purpose is to report developments in fisheries management that would be of interest to its readers. Please credit the Council when reprinting articles used in this newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit information or articles pertaining to fishing or fisheries management, or letters to the editor on a pertinent issue, is invited and encouraged to do so. Submissions may be mailed to Kim Iverson, Editor, *South Atlantic Update*, 4055 Faber Place Dr., Suite 201, N. Charleston, SC 29405, or may be sent via the internet; Email address: kim.iverson@safmc.net.

A publication of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Pursuant to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Award No. NA05NMF4410004.



## Council Sends Letter to Secretary of Commerce Outlining Concerns

*Data deficiencies, economic impacts of Amendment 17A, and cumulative impacts of management mandates highlighted*



Council Chairman  
Duane Harris

During its March 2010 meeting, the Council agreed to send a letter to Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke regarding concerns about the need for better data to meet the requirements of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act - and the impacts of regulations necessary to meet those requirements. A complete copy of the letter is available online at [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net).

“On October 27th, 2009, I testified on the implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management

Act before the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife House Committee on Resources. My comments highlighted issues before the Council involving significant economic impacts based upon proposed closures and deficiencies in the current data collection system. I have attached my testimony and wish to make you aware of the Council's belief that the current data delivery system is grossly inadequate to properly implement the system of annual catch limits (ACLs), accountability measures (AMs), and management measures that the Council is establishing in Snapper Grouper FMP Amendments 17A and 17B and the Comprehensive ACL Amendment.

### Data Deficiencies

Fisheries management in the South Atlantic suffers from a chronic, yet well-documented, lack of basic data which hampers scientists' abilities to evaluate exploited populations and managers' abilities to develop and ensure accountability with management measures. Required data are simply stated: accurate catch statistics, adequate biological sampling (including size and age data), and comprehensive population monitoring. The lack of these data adds uncertainty at all levels of scientific and management processes. The Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act (RMSA) requires the Councils to account for such uncertainty in establishing limits, which translates into an obligation to be increasingly conservative in management specifications. Therefore, it is highly likely that fisheries on stocks that are not overfished nor experiencing overfishing will face increasingly restrictive regulations as such uncertainties are addressed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) in meeting their mandate to account for these uncertainties and prevent overfishing.

One of the biggest challenges, and an issue that constituents find most difficult to grasp, is that stock and fishery uncertainty must be treated as a 'one-tailed' situation. This requires that managers and scientists always error on the side of caution and make recommendations that do not exceed the lower bound of what is in fact a two-tailed, and in many cases very wide, confidence interval.” ....*Read more at [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net).*

*We respectfully request that adequate funding be provided so that NMFS and the Councils can do the job Congress has outlined.*



## In the News:

### Scientists Provide Baseline Values to Council for Establishing Future ACLs

Members of the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee met in April to review available data and provide the Council with values for Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) for many species managed by the Council. These ABC values are the "baseline" used by the Council in making its management decisions, including values for Annual Catch Limits (in pounds or numbers of fish) and accountability measures to make sure the ACLs are not exceeded.

The SSC provided ABC values for many snapper grouper species, king and Spanish mackerel, dolphin and other species. The Council is developing a Comprehensive ACL Amendment to meet the requirements of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act to set ACLs for all species by 2011. Because of the uncertainty of the data, lower ABC values may translate into lower ACLs in the future. The Council will review the SSC report in June. A copy will be included in the meeting briefing book materials.

### Applicants Needed to Participate in Stock Assessment Process Fishermen, NGOs and other interested parties encouraged to apply for pool

The Council is soliciting applicants to the SAFMC SEDAR Advisory Panel. The SEDAR AP functions as a 'pool' of individuals who are eligible for appointment by SAFMC to future SEDAR workshop panels. The AP does not hold meetings, and separate appointment to a particular SEDAR assessment panel is required to participate in that SEDAR. Members of the AP are selected based on their experience and knowledge of South Atlantic fisheries and interest in participating on future SEDAR assessment panels. Existing members of SAFMC advisory panels are included in the SEDAR AP and need not apply for appointment to it separately. Persons interested in applying to the SAFMC SEDAR AP should contact the Council office for application materials. For more information on the SEDAR process and role of appointed individuals, contact John Carmichael, Science and Statistics Program Manager, at john.carmichael@safmc.net or call Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10.



SEDAR Data Workshop participants include agency personnel directly involved in data collection. Fishermen may also have an opportunity to participate in future workshops by applying for the SEDAR pool.

### Red Snapper SEDAR Data Workshop - May 24-28



A data workshop for the new benchmark red snapper stock assessment will be held May 24-28, 2010 in Charleston, SC. The workshop will involve state and federal agency personnel responsible for data collection, plus fisheries consultants, and commercial, recreational and for-hire sector representatives. The workshop will include work groups and daily plenary sessions. Additional information is available by contacting Dale Theiling, SEDAR Coordinator at dale.theiling@safmc.net or calling Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10.

## Catch Shares Topic of Workshop Held in March

A Catch Shares Workshop was held Monday, March 1 in Jekyll Island, Georgia prior to the start of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting scheduled for that week. All Council members were invited and the meeting was open to the public. The meeting provided Council members with a summary of the catch share amendments under consideration as well as an opportunity to discuss and provide comment on NOAA Fisheries' Draft National Catch Shares Policy.

The Council has considered the use of catch shares for golden tilefish, other snapper grouper species, and golden crab. A revision of the wreckfish catch share program is also under consideration.

During the workshop, Monica Medina, Principle Deputy Under-Secretary for NOAA Oceans and Atmosphere and Mark Holliday, Director, Office of Policy for NOAA Fisheries Service were available to answer questions regarding the Draft National Catch Shares Policy. They also requested suggestions from Council members regarding how NOAA Fisheries could help the Council consider catch shares, including information about

catch shares and staff time. The Council expressed concern about receiving both positive and negative information about catch shares. Council members requested staff update current fact sheets on catch shares and distribute new fact sheets discussing "Catch Share Lessons Learned". Council members also requested information about incorporating the recreational sector (including the private sector) into catch share programs and ways that communities can be involved in catch share programs.

Additionally, Council members wanted to ensure that impacts of catch shares were assessed to dealers and other secondary businesses. The Council submitted formal written comments in response to the Draft National Catch Share Policy in April.

After considering discussions during the Catch Shares Workshop and receiving a report from its Catch Shares Committee, the Council approved a motion to develop an options paper for a catch share program for vermilion snapper, golden tilefish, red snapper, black sea bass, and consider shallow-water and deepwater grouper categories. The Council formed an

exploratory workgroup to consider catch share type programs for the commercial snapper grouper fishery in 2007, and similar workgroups for the commercial golden tilefish and golden crab fisheries.

A consensus was not reached by the snapper grouper workgroup after a year-long series of meetings, and the Council decided not to develop a program at the time. The Council is moving forward to develop catch share programs for the commercial golden tilefish and golden crab fisheries based on workgroup recommendations.



The Council will move forward to develop an options paper for the development of catch share programs for vermilion snapper, golden tilefish, red snapper, black sea bass and possibly include shallow-water and deep water grouper as well.



# Red Snapper: Fishery Management's PERFECT STORM

**Perfect storm** (n) An expression that describes an event where a combination of circumstances will aggravate a situation drastically.



Most of us remember the book by Sebastian Junger and the subsequent movie that described a nasty storm system that developed in October 1991 off the Atlantic seaboard - *The Perfect Storm*. The storm system was actually three separate weather systems that were on a perfectly aligned course to create a catastrophic event.

One might consider the current state of Snapper Grouper Management in the South Atlantic as undergoing a perfect storm. A

bit dramatic perhaps; however, if you were to ask fishermen, managers, scientists, or anyone else involved in the situation, they might just say that we are undergoing a combination of circumstances that has aggravated the situation drastically.

Three primary elements have fueled this "perfect storm": 1) the 2008 red snapper stock assessment; 2) the Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act; and 3) the fishing industry's perception of management decisions and distrust of the science.

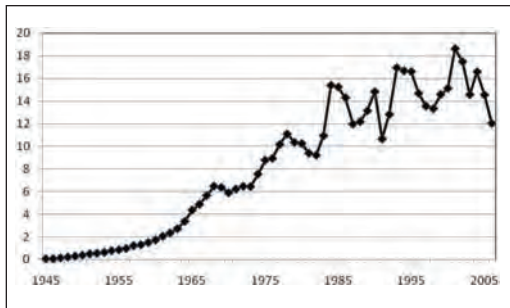
## Part 1 The 2008 Red Snapper Stock Assessment

A stock assessment for red snapper in the South Atlantic was completed in 2008 and found the stock is undergoing a severe level of overfishing and is severely overfished. Data used in the 2008 stock assessment show long-term trends of overfishing from

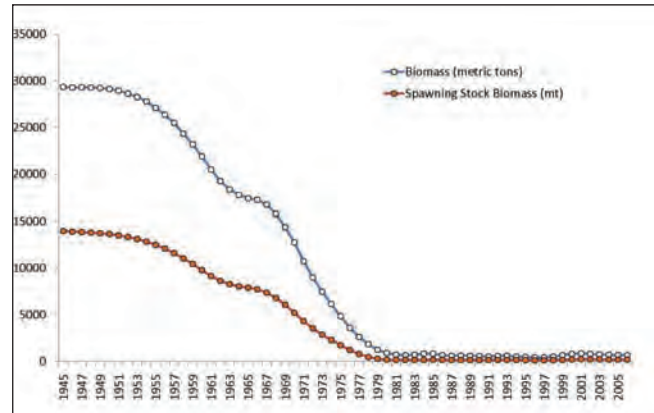
the 1950s through the mid-1980s at about 14 times the sustainable level. The assessment, conducted through the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment program, involved three separate workshops: a data workshop, assessment workshop, and review workshop involving an independent review panel.

Despite management measures that include a 20-inch size limit and a 2 fish recreational bag limit, overfishing has continued, in part because of the high discard mortality rates for red snapper. The bulk of red snapper landings are from the recreational fishery. Between 2000 and 2006, the recreational sector accounted for about 72% of the total red snapper landings. It is estimated that 40% of the fish released by recreational fishermen don't survive, and the number increases to 90% for the commercial sector, based on the deeper areas fished.

Early management decisions were based on the information available for the status of the stock and limited knowledge



**OVERFISHING is occurring at a high degree**  
(Red snapper mortality from fishing activities over time)



**The stock is severely OVERFISHED**  
(Biomass in pounds (top line) and spawning stock biomass over time)

of the life history of red snapper. For example, when the size limit and bag limits were implemented in 1992, managers were confident, based on the data available at the time, that these measures would sustain the stock. The 2008 stock assessment was able to take advantage of better data available for red snapper, including new life history information showing red snapper could live to be up to 54 years old. Earlier estimates from a 1997 assessment suggested a maximum age of 25 years. With the 2008 stock assessment, scientists now have a better picture of the health of the stock, and the picture is not good.

Overall, the stock remains truncated (there are not enough older fish). Far too many fish are not reaching their prime

**One Council member referred to red snapper as a "stable collapsed fishery".**

productive years and even fewer old fish are found in the stock. The 2008 stock assessment estimates that less than 1% of the stock is 10 years old or older.

Although the stock assessment did show an increase in the abundance of red snapper since 1995, the 2008 assessment showed the stock overfished and overfishing was still occurring under the management strategy in place.

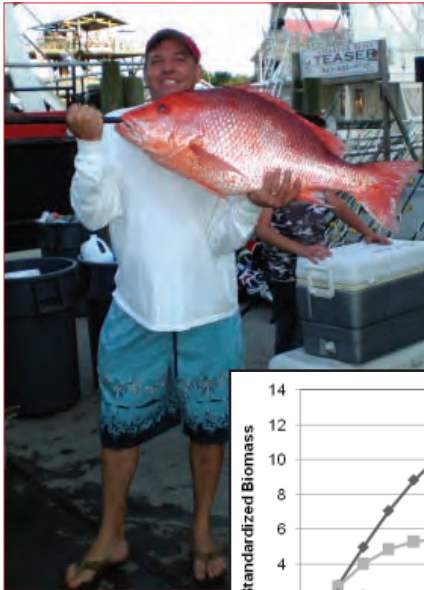
During its June 2008 meeting in Orlando, Florida, the Council received confirmation from its Scientific and Statistical Committee that the red snapper stock assessment was sound and could be used for management purposes. The first part of the perfect storm was brewing.



**Overfishing**  
A rate or level of fishing mortality that jeopardizes the capacity of a fishery to produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) on a continuing basis.

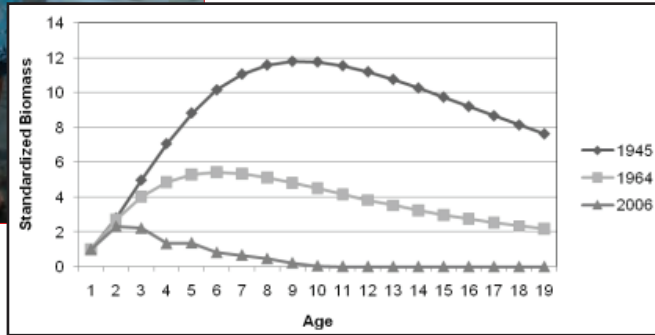
**Overfished**  
When a fish stock is sufficiently small that a change in management practices is required to achieve an appropriate level and rate of rebuilding.





## A matter of maturity

For red snapper, larger fish do not always mean older fish. Ages relative to size vary greatly. Despite recent increases in overall numbers of red snapper, the age structure of the population remains truncated (there are not enough older fish). Red snapper live to 54 years of age, but in 2007 less than one percent of the population was estimated as being age 10 or older. This age structure has tremendous implications on the red snapper stock's ability to reproduce.



## Part 2 The Law

At the same time the Council received the red snapper stock assessment results in June 2008, Council members were given a letter from NOAA Fisheries Service outlining the new requirements of the 2006 Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act. According to the letter, the Council had one year to implement regulations to end overfishing – and the clock was ticking.

Approved by members of Congress, the Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act is the foundation for federal fisheries management and sets new guidelines to end overfishing and rebuild fish stocks across the Nation. It directs managers to act quickly to implement regulations to decrease mortality on the stock in order to end overfishing and rebuild the stock.

The Council could no longer “phase out” overfishing as they had in the past. For example, in 2006 with the implementation of Amendment 13C to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, regulations were not expected to end overfishing immediately of snowy grouper and black sea bass. The Council instead chose to minimize the immediate economic and social impacts to the fishing industry by changing regulations over a three-year period. The regulations were expected to end overfishing of these two species in the 3rd year.

For red snapper, this is not an option. The Council must develop regulations to reduce red snapper fishing mortality by 83% from current levels within a specified time to end overfishing. That mortality includes fish that are landed and those that die as a result of being released.

### Ending Overfishing

In a split-vote, the Council requested NOAA Fisheries implement an interim rule to close the red snapper fishery throughout the South Atlantic in March 2009. This was a step toward meeting the mandates of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act to end overfishing. On January 4, 2010, the temporary closure was implemented for 180 days with an extension possible of 186 days. The decision regarding the extension will be made by NOAA Fisheries in the coming months.

However, a closure of the fishery does not end overfishing for red snapper. Red snapper will continue to die after being released as fishermen pursue other species in the snapper grouper management complex. For example, red snapper co-occur with vermilion snapper, red porgy, white grunt and other reef fishes.

In addition, the Reauthorized Act mandates the Council establish Annual Catch Limits (in pounds or numbers of fish) and Accountability Measures for species undergoing overfishing by the end of 2010, including red snapper. An-

(Continued page 6)



## Red Snapper Management Timeline Overview

### February, April/May 2008

Council holds public scoping meetings on Amendments 17 and 18 to establish ACLs and other measures for snapper grouper species, including red snapper.

### June 2008

Council receives notification the red snapper stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing based on SEDAR stock assessment and has one year to prepare a plan or proposed regulations to end overfishing.

### July 2008

Council continues development of Amendment 17 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan to address overfishing and rebuild the stock.

### March 2009

Council approves a motion (on a 7 to 6 vote) to request a closure of the red snapper fishery through an interim rule.

### November 2009

Council holds a series of public hearings on Amendment 17A throughout the South Atlantic region.

### December 4, 2009

NOAA Fisheries publishes the interim rule for a closure in the Federal Register.

### January 4, 2010

Red snapper fishery is closed in the South Atlantic via an interim rule until June 2, 2010. NOAA Fisheries may extend the closure for an additional 186 days.

### June 2010

Council is scheduled to approve Amendment 17A during its meeting in Orlando, Florida.

## MSA Reauthorization

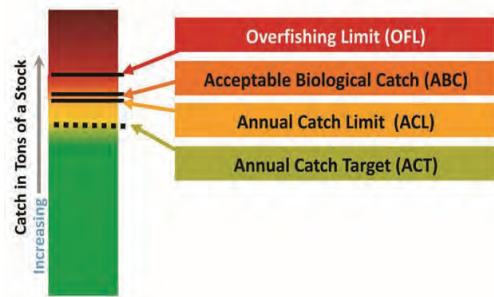


The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act has been reauthorized three times since its development in 1976. The latest revision, signed into law by President Bush in 2007, has three elements that specifically impact the Council's management of red snapper:

1. **Overfishing must be ended immediately** upon implementation of the regulations.
2. The Council has two years to prepare and *implement* regulations to end overfishing *and* rebuild stocks.
3. The Council must establish a system of **Annual Catch Limits** and **Accountability Measures** at or below scientific recommendations by 2010 for red snapper.

## Reference Points

OFL ≥ ABC ≥ ACL ≥ ACT



### Perfect Storm (Continued)

nual Catch Limits must be established that set kill levels with uncertainty in mind, both scientific and management. For red snapper, the Council has chosen an Annual Catch Limit of zero (landings only) because of the inability to accurately monitor bycatch mortality.

### Adding Fuel - Proposed Area Closures

The Council determined that in addition to the red snapper closure, alternatives for large area closures where fishing for all snapper grouper species must be considered to end overfishing and rebuild the stock. In Amendment 17A to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, the Council's current preferred alternative for the area closure includes an area off the coasts of Georgia and northeast Florida in waters from 98 to 240 feet in depth. The southern boundary extends slightly south of Melbourne, Florida (see page 1).

The Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act sets into motion the second part of the perfect storm.



Fishermen have landed higher numbers of red snapper in recent years, adding to the perception that the overall stock is healthy. Although a 20-inch size limit allows some fish to spawn before they become vulnerable to harvest, these younger, mostly first time spawners are less productive than older and heavier fish. Increasing the abundance of older, more mature fish is important to long-term sustainability.

## Part 3 Public Perception

The 2008 stock assessment for red snapper coincided with a subsequent increase in the numbers and sizes of the red snapper fishermen have witnessed on the water over the past few years. Many fishermen have testified during public hearings and scoping meetings that they are catching more red snapper in recent years, and larger fish, especially for those fishing off the coast of Georgia and northeast Florida.

The 2008 stock assessment reflects an increase in the abundance of red snapper since 1995; in fact, abundance estimated for the start of 2007 was nearly twice that estimated for 1995. Strong year classes that occurred in 1998 and 1999 and moved through the fishery over the last several years are also partially responsible for the perception that the stock has improved recently.

Because fishermen are witnessing an increase in red snapper, it has been difficult to argue that a closure of the fishery throughout the entire South Atlantic region is necessary. Fishermen have become very skeptical of the data used within the 2008 stock assessment and of the management process itself.

In addition, regulations are being proposed and implemented during an economic downturn that has impacted nearly all businesses, including those associated with fishing – tourism and fishing charters, bait and tackle sales, boat sales, etc. Public perception and skepticism in management decisions during an economic downturn, combines for the third ingredient in the perfect storm.

Council members have heard from constituents, including local and state governments, state representatives, fishing related business owners, city chambers of commerce, and municipalities along the South Atlantic coast regarding red snap-



Fishermen demonstrate during a rally earlier this year in Washington, DC.

per. Most of the comments and letters center around the economic impacts of the proposed regulations for red snapper and the cumulative impacts of other regulations recently implemented to meet the mandates of

the Reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act. Recent regulatory changes include a 4-month spawning season closure from January through April (both commercial and recreational) for shallow-water grouper species such as gag, scamp, and red grouper; a recreational closure of vermilion snapper from November through March, and severely reduced quotas for the commercial fishing industry.

*“Until the fishing community is convinced management plans are based on highly reliable scientific data, not just the best available, the polarization that presently exists will grow. Who knows when or how it will end.”*

Chairman Duane Harris  
- during his presentation at the national 2010 Recreational Fishing Summit

(Continued next page)



## Actions in Amendment 17A

Establish a **Maximum Sustainable Yield** proxy for red snapper: preferred proxy value is  $F40\%_{SPR}$  (a conservative value)

### Establish a **red snapper rebuilding plan**

- a. Rebuilding schedule:  
preferred = 35 years (max time law allows to help minimize economic impacts. Restrictions in harvest will be reduced as the fishery begins to rebuild before 35 yrs.)
- b. Rebuilding strategy - optimum yield, annual catch limit and accountability measures

### Red snapper **management measures:**

- a. Continue a **red snapper closure** throughout the South Atlantic EEZ
- b. **Area closure** for all snapper grouper species (to reduce bycatch, see p. 1 for preferred alternative)
- c. Require the use of **circle hooks**: preferred applies to natural baits used north of 28 degrees.

### Establish a **red snapper monitoring program**

#### Perfect Storm (Continued)

The Council recently sent a letter to Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke outlining their concerns with the need for improved data and the impacts of proposed management measures in Amendment 17A and other amendments necessary to meet the requirements of the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act (see page 2).

A combination of recent increases in red snapper landings by fishermen, a closure of the fishery during a tough economy, and a general skepticism in government policy have all contributed to the third component of the perfect storm.

#### Timing - What's Next ?



- The Council is scheduled to approve Amendment 17A during its June 7-11, 2010 meeting in Orlando, Florida.
- If approved by the Council, the amendment will be reviewed by NOAA Fisheries Service and management measures implemented over the next few months.
- NOAA Fisheries Service will determine if the red snapper closure will be extended for an additional 186 days past the initial June 2, 2010 closure implemented through an interim rule.
- A new stock assessment for red snapper will be available in late 2010. The Council will review the results of the new assessment during its December 2010 meeting in North Carolina.
- After reviewing the new stock assessment, the Council could request an interim rule to modify regulations in Amendment 17A if warranted. For example, the Council could request a change in the size or configuration of the area closure.

## Snapper Grouper Regulations Snap Shot



### Shallow-Water Grouper

**Closed January 1st through April 30th** - Both commercial and recreational fisheries • includes gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper

### Grouper Aggregate Bag Limit

**3 grouper per person/day** includes: black, gag, misty, red, scamp, snowy, speckled hind, tiger, warsaw, yellowedge, yellowfin, yellowmouth grouper, and also includes blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, sand tilefish, coney, graysby, red and rock hind

#### Note:

- No more than 1 may be a gag **or** black grouper (each 24" TL)
- Speckled hind and warsaw - 1 per vessel per trip. May not be sold or traded; no transfer at sea
- No more than 1 fish may be snowy grouper
- No more than 1 fish may be golden tilefish

Goliath grouper and Nassau grouper - Closed to harvest or possession

Wreckfish - Only ITQ shareholders or their designees may harvest or possess wreckfish

### Snapper

- **Vermilion snapper closed for recreational fishery November 1 through March 31**
- Aggregate bag limit of 10 snapper per person/day (excluding vermillion snapper)
- In addition to the aggregate bag limit, 5 vermillion snapper per person/day (except during the recreational closure) - 12" TL

#### Note:

- **Beginning January 4, 2010, the red snapper fishery is closed to commercial and recreational harvest** for a period of 180 days with a possible extension of 186 days (Interim Rule).
- Maximum of 2 cubera snapper per person (not to exceed 2 per vessel) for fish 30" Total Length (TL) or larger off Florida. These are not included in the 10 snapper bag limit. Cubera less than 30" TL are included in the 10 fish bag limit.

### Fishermen may also retain

- 1 greater amberjack per person/day (in April, for-hire/charter vessels limited to 1 per person/day or 1 per person/trip)
- Limit of 15 black sea bass per person/day - 12 " TL
- 5 hogfish per person/day, off east coast of Florida - 12" FL
- 3 red porgy per person/day or 3 per person/trip, whichever is more restrictive - 14" TL

### Other Regulations

An aggregate bag limit of 20 fish per person inclusive of all fish in the snapper grouper management unit currently not under bag limit, excluding tomtates and bluerunners. You may catch your bag limits and in addition retain up to 20 other fish for which there is no bag limit.

- **Dehooking tools are required for both commercial and recreational fishermen to use when necessary while fishing for snapper grouper species.**
- **Sale of bag limit snapper grouper prohibited unless the vessel owner has been issued a Federal Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit (includes 225-lb. Trip Limit Snapper Grouper permits).**

Visit [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net) for additional information

# The Need for Fishery Independent Research Increases with Restrictions in Fishing Effort

*Fishery Independent Monitoring Workshop Report now available*

As the Council continues to move forward with management measures to end overfishing, questions arise about the loss of data that occurs when fishing effort is removed due to closed seasons, reductions in bag and size limits, quotas that are reached within a few short months and, in particular, proposed large area closures. A proposed area closure off of coastal Georgia extending south to Melbourne, Florida in waters 98 to 240 ft, will eliminate a swath of the South Atlantic to snapper grouper bottom fishing in order to address bycatch mortality associated with the red snapper stock.

Data gaps will occur in this area as a result of the absence of fishery-dependent data, or data collected directly from recreational and commercial fishermen in the form of surveys, trip tickets and logbook reports. Fishery-independent data, or data collected through consistent scientific sampling of the resource and associated habitats, combined with the fishery-dependent data, comprise an integral component in the development of stock assessments.



The recent workshop report addresses types of gear to collect samples in varying offshore depths and habitats.

The need to increase fishery-independent monitoring is becoming critical as the Council considers area closures and scientists and fishery managers look to expand existing monitoring programs.

Currently, the Marine Resources Monitoring Assessment and Prediction Program (MARMAP) is the only existing long-term independent monitoring program for snapper grouper species in place in South Atlantic waters.

## **Workshop**

Building the framework for a wide-ranging fishery independent monitoring program was the focus of the Independent Monitoring Program Workshop held in November, 2009 by Council and NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Fishery Science Center staff. Plans to convene the workshop were coordinated as scientists and fishery managers grappled with how to improve independent monitoring programs with available resources and also monitor change in a fishery as a consequence of proposed regulations including area closures.

Participants in the workshop included representatives from North Carolina State University, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, Georgia and South Carolina



Photo: SCDNR

The R/V *Palmetto*, homeported in Charleston, SC, has been the primary source of fishery-independent data collected in the South Atlantic through the MARMAP program since 1987. Funding for fishery-independent monitoring has recently been increased.

Departments of Natural Resources, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, National Ocean Service and snapper grouper fishermen. Participants represented a wide array of expertise in survey experience, commercial and recreational fishing, fishing gear methods, snapper grouper biology, sampling designs and vessel operations.

Workshop participants broke into working groups and developed recommendations for a comprehensive monitoring program for the South Atlantic region. The program addresses several survey factors: geographical monitoring ranges, gear types identified for use in varying offshore depths and habitats, year round mapping, and bycatch, tagging, and hooking mortality studies.

***“We need accurate catch statistics, adequate biological sampling, and comprehensive population monitoring. There is no comprehensive monitoring program for fisheries resources in the South Atlantic.”***

***Council Chairman Harris  
2009 Congressional testimony***

Based on recommendations from the workshop, the comprehensive independent monitoring program will focus year-round efforts in waters off of the Continental Shelf area, from Central Florida north to around Cape Hatteras, the critical core area where nearly all snapper grouper species are found. The program will also expand upon this geographical range and monitor snapper grouper species in deeper waters north of Cape Hatteras and south of St. Lucie Inlet to the Dry Tortugas.

Video cameras will be the primary sampling tool, eliminating the bias sometimes associated with other types of gear. The use of video cameras has proven to be very effective in the Gulf region. The initial monitoring plan proposal also recommends looking at several

*(Continued next page)*



## Mackerel Update

### Gulf and South Atlantic Councils Work Jointly to Establish Annual Catch Limits for Mackerel - *Neither stock overfished or undergoing overfishing*

*Managing mackerel is a complicated business.* Because of their migratory patterns between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic via the Florida Straight, both king and Spanish mackerel populations are managed jointly between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. Currently, the two councils are working to-



**Fishermen feeling the squeeze of recent regulations impacting snapper grouper fishing have expressed concerns about possible shifts in effort to other fisheries, including king and Spanish mackerel. The Council is aware of the possible shifts in effort and will consider this as it works to develop Mackerel Amendment 18.**

gether to draft Amendment 18 to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan. The amendment establishes Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures for king and Spanish mackerel, as well as cobia.

Annual Catch Limits

(in numbers or pounds of fish) and Accountability Measures must be set for all species managed by the Councils by 2011 under the reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act. Accountability Measures are management controls that ensure ACLs are not exceeded or that provide corrective measures if overages occur. These controls can be actions taken during the fishing season to prevent overages, e.g., quota closures, or corrective post-season actions requiring “payback” of overages in following seasons.

Stock assessments were completed for both South Atlantic and Gulf king mackerel stocks and South Atlantic Spanish mackerel in 2008, concluding the stocks are not overfished or undergoing overfishing. However, there are indications based on projections used in the stocks assessments, that the Allowable Biological Catch (ABC) for Atlantic group Span-

ish mackerel may need to be reduced, subsequently impacting the Annual Catch Limit set by the Council.

The Atlantic group king mackerel fishery has operated under a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 10 million pounds for the past several years. Scientists serving on the South Atlantic Council’s Scientific and Statistical Committee are responsible for setting the ABC for Atlantic group king mackerel, and will provide updated ABCs for the Council to consider during its June meeting in Orlando. These ABC values will be used in Amendment 18 and determine the future of king and Spanish mackerel management measures.

#### Other Measures

Currently, a single stock of cobia is managed between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic through the Coastal Migratory Pelagic FMP. Amendment 18 includes alternatives to establish separate migratory groups of cobia in the South Atlantic and in the Gulf of Mexico, based on supporting scientific evidence. This would allow for separate Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures for each group. The amendment also includes alternatives to remove bluefish, cero, little tunny and dolphin from the joint Coastal Migratory Pelagic FMP. The two councils have never managed these species under the FMP, however, they were originally included for data collection purposes in order to determine whether future management was warranted. After over 20 years, the councils have not seen the need to add these stocks to the management unit, and the South Atlantic Council has elected to manage dolphin and wahoo under a separate FMP. The amendment would also modify framework procedures to incorporate the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) stock assessment process as part of the management plan.

The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils’ Mackerel Committees will meet jointly Tuesday, June 8th as part of the South Atlantic Council’s June 7-11, 2010 meeting in Orlando, FL to continue working on Amendment 18. Public hearings are currently planned for October/November of this year. Copies of the draft amendment will be included in the June Council meeting briefing book materials.

#### Fishery-Independent Workshop (Continued)

capture gear types used in the snapper grouper fishery including longlines, different bandit reel types, pot gears, and chevron traps. The final recommendations contain many components which together form a comprehensive survey of the snapper grouper resource in the South Atlantic.

Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, Director of the NOAA Fisheries’ Southeast Fishery Science Center in Miami, shared promising news during the March Council meeting that \$1.5 million has been allocated in this year’s federal budget towards fishery-independent sampling in the South Atlantic. “We’ll be looking at what we’ve learned from the workshop in November, taking the critique we are

getting from our scientists and members of the industry to refine these ideas, and piece together the long-term monitoring plan components that make the most sense for the resource.” Dr. Ponwith further noted many more biological samples will be collected through this fishery-independent monitoring effort, providing information that will help to improve stock assessments, addressing basic scientific needs such as age-distribution data. The comprehensive independent sampling programs will begin in 2010.

A copy of the 2009 Fishery-Independent Workshop Report is available by contacting the Council office.

## Snapper Grouper Amendment 18 Update

Council members will once again review actions and management alternatives for Amendment 18 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in June. Current actions in the amendment include expanding the Snapper Grouper FMP northward (north of North Carolina). The action is being considered in response to fishing effort occurring on South Atlantic species, such as snowy grouper, outside of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's area of jurisdiction and the requirement to track those landings. The amendment also designates Essential Fish Habitat in the new areas under consideration.

In addition, Amendment 18 includes management measures affecting both the golden tilefish and black sea bass commercial fisheries in the South Atlantic. As quotas decrease and spawning season closures are implemented for other snapper grouper species, the Council anticipates an increase in fishing effort for black sea bass and golden tilefish. Actions in Amendment 18 are designed to limit participation in the commercial fisheries by requiring endorsements for the golden tilefish and limiting the number of tags issued for the black sea bass fishery. In addition, measures are being considered to cap the number of black sea bass pots used by individual fishermen and require that traps be removed from the water after each trip in order to reduce bycatch.

The amendment also includes measures to improve fisheries data. A series of public hearings were held in November 2009 regarding Amendment 18. A copy of the draft amendment will be available in the June meeting briefing book materials.



### Actions in Amendment 18:

- Extend the range of the snapper-grouper FMP northward
- Designate Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in new northern areas
- Limit participation in the South Atlantic golden tilefish fishery through an endorsement program
- Allow for transferability of endorsements
- Change the golden tilefish fishing year
- Change golden tilefish trip limits
- Modify management of the black seabass fishery in the South Atlantic to limit participation and effort and reduce bycatch
- Improve the accuracy, timing, and quantity of fisheries data

### Area Closure to End Overfishing (Continued from page 1)

The Council is targeting areas where red snapper landings are highest to maximize the effect of the area closure and meet the required reduction, while striving to minimize negative economic and social impacts. This has not been an easy task and Council members continue to be divided on the best overall approach. The Council is using a model as one tool in the decision-making process. The model provides a range of percent reductions coupled with various scenarios that may occur within the fishery after regulations are in place, including possible shifts in effort, overall reductions in fishing effort, and compliance with regulations.

In choosing the smaller area for its preferred alternative, the Council considered its conservative approach in choosing a proxy value for MSY (resulting in the estimated 83% reduction), reviewed the various scenarios in the model, and

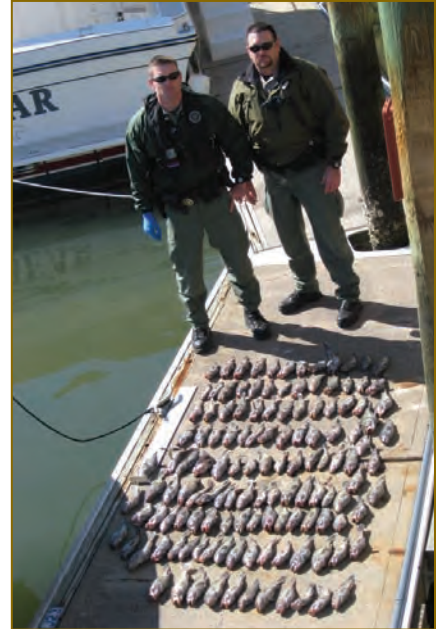
## Law Enforcement @ Work

Black sea bass target of inspection off Florida coast

Officers Ben Boots, Corey Bridwell and Jeff Hickman were on a JEA (Joint Enforcement Agreement) patrol offshore of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida in early March when the officers conducted a fisheries inspection of an anchored vessel approximately 20 miles offshore.

The fishermen onboard were targeting black sea bass during the closure of several snapper and grouper species. While it was legal to recreationally fish for black sea bass in federal waters, the four fishermen on board were in possession of 157 black sea bass, 97 more than the allowable 15 sea bass per fisherman per day. In addition, 131 of the fish were undersize (12-inch minimum in federal waters).

The officers seized the fish and issued the men individual federal citations for exceeding the daily bag limit of black sea bass and possession of undersize black sea bass. Officers Boots and Bridwell turned over the seized fish and other evidence to NOAA Fisheries' Office For Law Enforcement Special Agent Richard Chesler for federal prosecution of the violations. (From the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's LE Weekly Field Report for March 4, 2010)



Law enforcement officers confiscate illegal black sea bass harvested in excess of the federal bag limit off the east coast of Florida. Joint Enforcement Agreements between state and federal law enforcement agencies allow for greater coverage of fisheries enforcement.

considered public testimony regarding the economic impacts of the current red snapper closure and proposed closed areas before making its decision. The Council also continued to support a preferred alternative to allow the use of spearfishing gear within the closed area due to the lack of bycatch mortality associated with the fishing method, and a transit provision. An earlier preferred alternative to allow the use of black sea bass pots within the area was removed.

The Council will review all of the alternatives in Amendment 17A during its June meeting in Orlando and is scheduled to approve the amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. Discussion of the amendment during Council session is scheduled to begin on Wednesday, June 9th. A public comment period will be held on Tuesday evening, June 8th, beginning at 6:30 PM.



## Mark Your Calendar

**Monday, June 7 at 6:00 PM**

**Informal Q&A Session**

Join NMFS Regional Administrator Dr. Roy Crabtree and Council Chairman Duane Harris to discuss current fisheries issues.

**Tuesday, June 8 at 6:30 PM**

**Open Public Comment**

**(Including Snapper Grouper Amendment 17A)**

Interested persons will be provided the opportunity to present oral or written statements regarding matters on the Council agenda. (Time limits may apply based on the number of individuals wishing to comment.)

**Update!**

**We've changed our provider for live video feed.**

**TO WATCH THE COUNCIL MEETING LIVE FROM ORLANDO  
CHOOSE DIRECT LINK FOR LIVE VIDEO FEED AT**

**[WWW.SAFMC.NET](http://WWW.SAFMC.NET)**

## SAFMC Meeting Dates and Locations 2010 Schedule

**March 1-5, 2010**

Jekyll Island Club Hotel  
371 Riverview Drive  
Jekyll Island, GA 31527  
Phone: 1800/535-9547

**September 13-17, 2010**

Charleston Marriott Hotel  
170 Lockwood Boulevard  
Charleston, SC 29403  
Phone: 1800/968-3569

**June 7-11, 2010**

Renaissance Orlando  
5445 Forbes Place  
Orlando, FL 32812  
Phone: 1800/545-1985

**December 5-10, 2010**

Sheraton New Bern  
100 Middle Street  
New Bern, NC 28562  
Phone: 1800/326-3745

## Acronyms

**ABC** - Allowable Biological Catch

**ACCSP** - Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program

**ACL** - Annual Catch Limit

**AM** - Accountability Measure

**ACT** - Annual Catch Target

**AP** - Advisory Panel

**ASMFC** - Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

**BRD** - Bycatch Reduction Device

**EEZ** - Exclusive Economic Zone

**EFH** - Essential Fish Habitat

**EFH/HAPC** - Essential Fish Habitat/Habitat Area of Particular Concern

**FMP** - Fishery Management Plan

**HMS** - Highly Migratory Species

**ITQ** - Individual Transferable Quota

**LAPP** - Limited Access Privilege Program

**MSY** - Maximum Sustainable Yield

**MRFSS** - Marine Recreational Fishing Statistics Survey

**NMFS** - National Marine Fisheries Service

**OY** - Optimum Yield

**SEDAR** - Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review (stock assessment process)

**SSC** - Scientific & Statistical Committee

**SFA** - Sustainable Fisheries Act

**TAC** - Total Allowable Catch

**VMS** - Vessel Monitoring System

## South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting

**June 7-11, 2010**



Renaissance Orlando Hotel Airport

5445 Forbes Place

Orlando, FL 32812

For a detailed agenda contact the Council office toll free at 1-866 SAFMC-10 or 843/571-4366. The agenda will also be available on the Council's web site [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)

### MEETING AGENDA

<b>Monday</b>	<b>10:30 - 5:00</b>	<b>Joint SAFMC and Gulf Council Spiny Lobster Committees and Advisory Panels</b>
	<b>6:00 PM</b>	<b>Informal Public Q&amp;A Session</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>8:30 - 3:00</b>	<b>Joint SAFMC and Gulf Council Mackerel Committees Meeting</b>
	<b>3:15 - 6:15</b>	<b>COUNCIL SESSION*</b>
	<i>* Note: All subsequent Committee business will be conducted as the Committee of the Whole Council.</i>	
	<b>3:15 - 3:30</b>	<b>Introductions/Approvals/Presentations</b>
	<b>3:30 - 6:15</b>	<b>Snapper Grouper research presentations</b>
	<b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>Public comment on agenda items (including Snapper Grouper Amendment 17A)</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>8:30 - 5:30</b>	<b>COUNCIL SESSION</b>
	<b>8:30 - 5:30</b>	<b>Snapper Grouper Committee (Full day)</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>8:30 - 6:00</b>	<b>COUNCIL SESSION</b>
	<b>8:30 - 9:00</b>	<b>Briefing on Litigation (Closed Session)</b>
	<b>9:00 - 10:00</b>	<b>Golden Crab</b>
	<b>10:00 - 11:00</b>	<b>Dolphin/Wahoo</b>
	<b>11:00 - 12:00</b>	<b>Executive/Finance</b>
	<b>1:30 - 3:00</b>	<b>Ecosystem-Based Management</b>
	<b>3:00 - 4:00</b>	<b>SEDAR</b>
	<b>4:00 - 5:00</b>	<b>SOPPS</b>
	<b>5:00 - 6:00</b>	<b>SSC Selection (Closed Session)</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>8:30 - 12:00</b>	<b>COUNCIL SESSION</b>
	<b>8:30 - 12:00</b>	<b>Reports, presentations and other business</b>

*Mark your calendar...*

- May 24-28**      *SEDAR 24 Red Snapper Data Workshop*  
Charleston, SC    [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)
- June 7-11**      *South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting*  
Orlando, FL    [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)
- June 8-10**      *Capitol Hill Oceans Week*  
Washington, DC    [www.nmsfocean.org](http://www.nmsfocean.org)
- June 8-10**      *Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting*  
New York, NY    [www.mafmc.org](http://www.mafmc.org)
- June 14-17**      *Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Meeting*  
Gulfport, MS    [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)



**Inside: Red Snapper Overview** - See page 4 for details

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration

**South Atlantic  
Fishery Management Council**  
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201  
North Charleston, SC 29405

First Class  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Charleston, SC  
Permit G-19



Printed on  
recycled paper