



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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SEPTEMBER 25-29, 2017 COUNCIL MEETING REPORT CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

The following summary highlights the major issues discussed and actions taken at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council’s September 2017 meeting in Charleston, South Carolina.

Briefing materials, presentations, and public comments are available on the Council’s website at: <http://safmc.net/briefing-books/briefing-book-september-2017-council-meeting/>. Final Committee Reports contain more details of what was accomplished for each committee and are located on the September briefing book page. In addition, the Summary of Motions on the Council’s website includes all motions from the meeting. Read further details and see images and other links at the September 2017 Council Meeting Round-up Story Map: <https://arcg.is/vDj41>. The Meeting News Release is available at: <http://safmc.net/news-releases/092917-safmc-news-release-september-2017-council-meeting/>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Red Snapper	<p>The Council requested emergency action for red snapper to have a 2017 season through Preferred Alternative 4: Temporarily allow limited harvest of red snapper in 2017 and specify a total annual catch limit equal to 42,510 fish. Commercial annual catch limit equals 124,815 pounds (whole weight) and recreational annual catch limit equals 29,656 fish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational bag limit = 1/person/day • Commercial trip limit = 75 pounds gutted weight • No size limit <p>The Council approved Amendment 43 for formal review to set a 2018 red snapper season opening through Preferred Alternative 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the process and equation used to determine the red snapper ACL as specified in Snapper Grouper Amendment 28. • Specify a total annual catch limit equal to 42,510 fish. • Commercial annual catch limit equals 	<p>Official notice about the 2017 fishing season will be available from NMFS very soon. If approved, the season is expected to open in late October or early November.</p> <p>The Council’s goal is to have measures in place in time to allow limited harvest beginning in July of 2018.</p>

	<p>124,815 pounds (whole weight).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational annual catch limit equals 29,656 fish. • If approved, the recreational fishery would open the second Friday in July (July 13, 2018) and the commercial fishery would open the second Monday in July (July 9, 2018). • Recreational bag limit = 1/person/day • Commercial trip limit = 75 pounds gutted weight • No size limit 	<p>The Council will work on additional items in a new red snapper amendment (Amendment 46) at the December 2017 meeting.</p>
Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Recreational Visioning Amendment	Regulatory Amendment 26: Provided guidance and approved a new approach. 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.	Review and finalize actions & alternatives and purpose and need in December 2017. Review analyses, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings in March 2018. Review public comments, modify document, and approve all actions in June 2018. Review and approve for formal review in September 2018.
Commercial Visioning Amendment	Regulatory Amendment 27: Provided guidance to staff on alternatives for trip limits, size limits, split seasons, seasons, and other measures.	Approved the same timing as shown above for the Recreational Visioning Amendment.
Golden Tilefish	<p>The Council received an update from NMFS that the interim measures to reduce overfishing by setting the ACL for 2018 at the projected yield at 75%F_{MSY} (323,000 pounds gutted weight) is on schedule.</p> <p>Briefly reviewed new update & projections prior to the SSC review.</p>	<p>The goal is to implement the new ACL prior to the start of the 2018-fishing season.</p> <p>Review at December 2017 meeting after the SSC review.</p>
Red Grouper	<p>Directed staff to prepare an expedited framework to adjust red grouper ABC & ACL using “low recruitment” projections. The reductions will be substantial given red grouper are overfished and undergoing overfishing.</p> <p>Directed that the SSC review the projections and provide guidance on ABC, stock status, and rebuilding alternatives.</p>	<p>The expedited framework will be available in the December briefing book. The public will have a chance to comment prior to and at the December meeting. The Council will review comments & SSC recommendations, and take final action at the December meeting. The intent is to implement these measures ASAP in 2018.</p>

Issue:	Action Taken:	Schedule:
Mackerel Cobia	<p>The Council provided guidance on CMP Amendment 31 to evaluate options for a complementary plan with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and removal of Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia from the FMP.</p> <p>Directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment for an Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limit of 75 fish from March 1-31.</p>	<p>Review draft Amendment 31 with approved alternatives for management of Atlantic cobia and approve for public hearings at the December 2017 meeting.</p> <p>Review the options at the December 2017 meeting.</p>
Habitat and Ecosystem Based Management	<p>The Council reviewed, modified, and approved the Essential Fish Habitat Policy Statement on Artificial Reefs.</p> <p>The Council reviewed the Draft FEP II Implementation Plan & FEP II Dashboard and provided guidance to staff to develop a draft roadmap to guide implementation.</p>	<p>Revise and post to the Council’s website.</p> <p>Prepare materials for review during the November Habitat Ecosystem Advisory Panel meeting and completion for consideration and possible approval at the December 2017 Council meeting.</p>
SEDAR	<p>The Council adjusted their assessment priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Spanish mackerel in 2020 (standard) • Move red grouper to 2021 (standard) • Add black sea bass in 2021 (update) • Move white grunt to 2022 (benchmark) <p>Request the SEFSC develop a plan for updating the wreckfish assessment. In the event there are impediments to updating the existing assessment, consideration should be given to alternative approaches that could be used to provide the Council information on stock status, and give the SSC information to provide an updated ABC recommendation.</p> <p>Request that the SSC document the specific changes to be considered in the next golden tilefish assessment that justify the standard category, and consider whether an update would be adequate for snowy grouper.</p>	<p>These priorities will be presented to the SEDAR Steering Committee at its next meeting.</p> <p>SEFSC to report status to the Council in December 2017.</p> <p>SSC will address at the October 2017 meeting and report to the Council in December 2017.</p>